

God is a man. Not.

From last week's mailbag:

Dear Martin: So what you're saying is that all the misery and pain in the world, God is responsible for. That seems very twisted and punitive to me, like we have this capricious God playing a cosmic chess game. I can't say I like serving a God like that.

—B.T. Memphis, TN

Dear B.T.

If you're serving a God like that, then you're serving a God of your own invention. God is neither twisted, punitive, nor capricious. And he does not play games.



I'm sure this chess player is a nice man. But he isn't God.

Concerning misery and pain, it's not about what I'm saying, but about what Ephesians 1:11 is saying: "God operates all in accord with the counsel of His will." So yes, "all" would certainly include all misery and pain. Your job is to believe Ephesians 1:11 and then trust God. Instead, you're believing Ephesians 1:11, but then assuming that God is a man; man is twisted, punitive, capricious, and a game player. Yikes, B.T. Are you sure you want to put the Deity into that same category?

The vital point of last week's edition was: temporary evil is essential to eternal bliss. The vital point here is: God is not a man.

Yours because of grace,

Martin

Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

Behind the scenes at the creation of Satan

Before He could demonstrate His power, love, and salvation, God needed an enemy to wrestle against. Since enemies were once non-existent, God had to create His own. God did not enjoy creating an adversary. In fact, He hated it; it pained His heart. And yet, for the ultimate sake of His creatures, He had to do it. So He did.



I pray that, by the time you finish this article, you will see God's heart in the creation of evil. I want you to see how hard it was for Him (in the short term) to provide for your eternal happiness and security. As I have dis-

You believe Him, but you hesitate to embrace Him.

cussed with you before, there can be no such thing as eternal happiness and eternal security without the very real and painful struggle against adversity. God did this for you, not to you. Still, He wrestled with it.

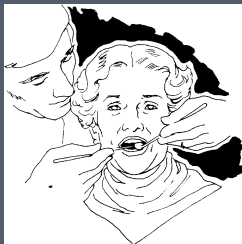
Some of you are writing me—especially on the heels of last week's edition—telling me how

you balk against believing in a God who created evil (Isaiah 45:7), and made the Adversary the way he is (Jn. 8:44; 1 Jn. 3:8). Those of you strong enough to accept this scriptural fact tend to hold such a God at arm's length. It's as if you do not fully trust Him. You can *believe* in a God Who creates evil, but you hesitate to embrace that One. Deep down, you fear Him. Today, I want you to change your heart and mind about God.

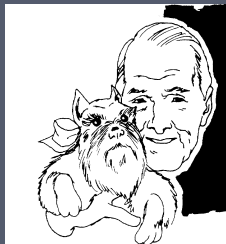
How can you continue fearing your Father? How can you continue fearing the One Who demonstrated His love for you by sending His only Son to die for your sake? How can you

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CGN PRESENTS: THE CRAZY FAMILY



"God has nothing whatsoever to do with this toothache!"



"I'm glad Satan has a realm of untouchable sovereignty."



"Serving an out-of-control Deity is the awesomest!"



"A loving God in total control of this world would be, like, a nightmare!"

"Um, will someone please get me the heck out of here?"



...the creation of Satan

(Continued from pg. 1)

continue fearing Him Who has only the best—the *ultimate* best—in His heart for you?

I understand your struggle, but you are about to learn something of God's heart. I pray that God use this revelation to ease your spirit and give you peace concerning the temporary afflictions (yes, they're temporary) now besetting you, your loved ones, and the world-at-large.

Here is a verse you may never have seen before. In one simple sentence, God is giving us a behind-the-scenes look at one of the most sublime yet harrowing acts of creative acumen in universal history. I am speaking Job 26:13—

“By His spirit, He hath garnished the heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent.”

At first glance, this verse seems not to be telling us much. That is why we must slow down and, with reverence, analyze its details.

In Scripture, the serpent often represents Satan. I believe that to be the case here. Note how the holy spirit gives Job two different ways to describe the making of the heavens and the making of the serpent, and also two different sources of divine action for each creation. This is no accident. God *garnished* the heavens by His spirit, yet it is His hand that *formed* the fugitive serpent.

“Garnished” comes from the Hebrew root, *shiphrah*, meaning “beauty.” To garnish is “to provide or supply with something ornamental; adorn; decorate.” Picture the joy of an artist sprinkling paint on a canvas. If God could pirouette, that's what He did it at the creation of galaxies, stars, and planets.

With the heavens in place, however, God must now create a terrible adversary to withstand Him and provide the necessary backdrop for a display of His love and grace. Does He garnish the crooked serpent? No! He grits His teeth (it's a figure of speech, folks) and *forms* it.



“Formed” is a much colder, nastier word. The Hebrew word is *chalal*. A chef *garnishes* a salad, but a potter *forms* a pot. One word suggests flair, fun, enjoyment, the other, mere function—even struggle. The Concordant Version translates: “His hand *travailed* with the fugitive serpent.”

Now note the means of creation. God garnished the heavens “by His spirit.” This suggests a task near and dear to Him. Indeed, the heavens emerged from God's innermost Being. The crooked serpent, however, comes from His hand. This suggests sheer creative prowess rather than communion. It was a necessary work, but one which God held out at arm's length, a mile from His heart.

God does *not* rejoice in the necessary evil He brings to your life. Like you, He grits His teeth. But know this: He's with you in it. He does not light the fire and run; He knows what He's doing; He is neither crazy, capricious, nor a gambling man; He will not give you more than you can handle. Through all of the pain, He is bringing you nearer to Him.

Trust Him. God sees the end of what all this is leading to—and so will you. ■

What a Revelation!

SPECIAL EDITION

SATAN HAD NO CHANCE TO BE OTHER THAN WHAT HE BECAME—AND NEITHER DID THIS CURRENT EON

Warning: The following are life changing verses. Read at your own risk. Ecclesiastes 7:12, 13:

“And the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom keeps alive those possessing it. See the work of the One, Elohim; For who can set in order that which He has overturned?”

It will shock some readers to learn that God Himself overturns things. Few like to think of the gentle Lamb of God barging into the temple and overturning the tables of the money-changers, but that's what He did—and made a heck of a point. I like Ecclesiastes 7:12 from the King James Version: “For who can make that straight, which He hath made crooked?” God purposely makes some things crooked. Why? It's this simple: To provide the contrast to His straightness.



Look at verse 12: “The advantage of knowledge is that wisdom keeps alive those possessing it.” The wisdom of these verses will keep you alive. In other words, when you start getting frustrated at God and wanting to quit your faith—or even your life—you'll gut through, even with a smile, when you realize that Satan is *supposed* to be the way he is; you won't fear him any more. Likewise, when you realize that this eon is wicked because it's *supposed* to be wicked (Gal. 1:4), you won't freak out or die straining to set it in order—because you will *not* set in order that which God has overturned.

My recommendation?

Stop fighting God and rest.



Help us get the CGN out there!

Dear CGN readers: Your glowing comments about the CGN are coming in fast and furiously, and I will be publishing some of them in an upcoming edition. Membership is growing by the week. In the meantime, please help us get this newsletter to your friends and relatives who badly need some GOOD NEWS for a change. Forward this copy of *Clanging Gong News* to anyone you think might enjoy it. Take some chances! Be a fellow evangelist, together with me. To those who are reading this CGN for the first time, go to www.martinzender.com and sign up to receive the newsletter for yourself!

Martin

Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.



So much for the church picnic

If the devil fouled God's plans *once* (as the Christian religion claims he did in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve), what guarantee do we have that he won't do it again? A certain Mr. Smith of the Nazarene church here in town tells me:

"He just won't, *that's* all."

"But how do you know that?" I ask. "He did it once, did he not?"

"Certainly. He did it *once*. But God will not let him do it again."

"Was the first foul up God's original intention?"

"Of course not! You just blasphemed there, and are in danger of not being invited to the men's breakfast."

"I will be more careful in the future. But aren't you suggesting that God will prevent the devil from wrecking His future plans, simply because He wishes them accomplished?"

"That is correct."

"But, according to what you have told me, He also wished to accomplish His former plans, having no intention at all for an enemy to disrupt them. Yet Satan disrupted them anyway. Therefore, I cannot see how this time differs from the previous time, or how anyone can relax for five minutes with a God Who—"

"Your invitation to the men's breakfast has just gotten lost in the mail, sir!"

On to the next point.

If human free will is true, then every person on earth is his or her own sovereign entity. Assuming this, any one of these people can effect whatever evil he or she pleases, in whatever degree, for whatever duration, untrammelled. I wonder if this scares anyone. Should God wish to curtail any measure of this evil, well, too bad. Not even the Deity can interfere with a will that is free.

"What becomes of those who exercise their free wills in resistance to the Deity?" is my new question, directed at Mr. Smith some days later.

"The are tossed into the lake of fire," he tells me.

"But what if they do not wish to go?" I ask.

"They *must* go," he says.

"But what if they do not *wish* to?" I persist.

"God *forces* them to. Honestly, Zender. Are you really this stupid?"

"Thank you for bearing with me, Mr. Smith. It is just that your assertion raises what to me is an insurmountable difficulty. Free wills cannot be forced."

Silence.

"Free wills cannot be forced," I say again.

"God takes their free will *away*," is the answer, a bit subdued except for the italics.

"But what if they do not *wish* their free will to be taken away?" I ask, bouncing his italics back at him, where they smack into the middle of his now-furrowed forehead.

I think I have irritated Mr. Smith, for instead of answering me, he asks if I am aware of the upcoming picnic his church is hosting for the residents of the town.

"I am aware of it," I answer.

"Good," says Mr. Smith, "*because you are not invited!*"

If eating in this community depended on church handouts, I would be dead. ■



The men's rest room at Wal-Mart successfully combats this evil eon

Hyperlink Scratch Pad®



1. Place tip of thumb on scratch pad
2. Rub vigorously back and forth
3. Sniff

Back in Issue 3, I told you of my bi-weekly trips to Wal-Mart. You may remember how I waxed eloquent about the air freshener used in the men's rest room there; it seemed like a divine odor to me; a real stress reliever. Fortunately, the technology is now available to share that smell with you. Across from this text frame is what is called a Hyperlink Scratch Pad®, enabling you to get a whiff of the men's rest room air freshener at Wal-Mart. To make this work, you must have the latest version of Adobe Reader—version 9. Also, the Scratch Pad may not operate with some earlier versions of XP. Please let us know if you cannot get the scratch pad to smell, and we will send you a Help file. ■