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829TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, APRIL 3RD, 1939, AT
4.30 P.M.

THE REV. W. J. DOWNES, M.A., B.D., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read, confirmed and signed and the Hon. Secretary announced the following elections:—As Members: Arthur Pierson Kelley, Esq., M.A., Ph.D., George H. Ramsay, Esq., Vernon Hewes, Esq., and William Brooke Grant, Esq., A.M.I.Mech.E.

The CHAIRMAN then called on R. E. D. Clark, Esq., M.A., Ph.D., to read his paper entitled "The Mystery of Evil in Relation to the Divine Economy" (being the Langhorne Orchard Prize Essay, 1939).

The meeting was then thrown open to discussion in which the Rev. A. Payne, Dr. Barcroft Anderson and Mr. G. Brewer took part.

Written communications were received from Lt.-Col. T. C. Skinner, Mr. L. G. Moser, Mrs. M. W. Langhorne Cooper, and the Revd. Principal H. S. Curr.

THE MYSTERY OF EVIL IN RELATION TO THE
DIVINE ECONOMY.

BY R. E. D. CLARK, M.A., Ph.D.

(Langhorne-Orchard Prize Essay, 1939.)

"We never see evil of any kind take place where there is not some remedy or compensating principle ready to interfere for its alleviation."

ROBERT CHAMBERS,
*Vestiges of the Natural History
of Creation*, 1844, p. 378.

WHETHER or not we think evil is a mystery depends chiefly on our theological beliefs. If there is no God and therefore no Divine Economy to be considered, evil presents no moral problems and it must simply be accepted as a fact. In this connection Dr. G. B. Brown has compared the "problem of evil" with the "problem of imperfection" (non-circularity) in the orbits of the stars which puzzled an earlier generation of astronomers. He rightly points out that

knowledge could not progress until such conceptions were disregarded. (*Science Progress*, 1934, 29, 744.)

The mystery of evil cannot, however, be dismissed so lightly. There is abundant evidence that Mind, or something with properties akin to mind, lies at the back of nature. This Mind must be concerned with the welfare of His Creation for, unless this were the case, it is hard indeed to understand the careful planning which has been responsible for the intricacies of biological organisms or the general evidences of design in the world on which we live. In addition, Christians are convinced that Jesus Christ revealed God and in doing so revealed more of the Divine love than human reason could ever have fathomed.

Thus we have a God of love on the one hand and a world in which His love is but partly expressed on the other. These two facts appear to be contrary the one to the other. They can most easily be reconciled by the discovery of some purpose which evil fulfils in the Divine economy. But this is by no means the only possibility, and before returning to it it will be well to consider very briefly the different types of solutions to the problem which have been put forward in the past.

Fortunately, the conceivable solutions of the problems of evil are not innumerable. Indeed, the simple process of exclusion would appear to confine the possible explanations within the sharpest limits.

To begin with, evil is either real or unreal. Many philosophers have decided that it is mere illusion—that things are only evil because we regard them so. But such a solution is no solution at all and rests in the last resort upon a purely verbal definition of “real” which differs from the meaning usually attached to the word. It is enough that created beings think they suffer, for the very meaning of evil lies in thought and consciousness, not in physical events of themselves.

The reality of evil must, then, form the starting-point of all discussion. But then there comes the crucial question: Is it God's fault? If it is God's fault and He actually planned the miseries of man and beast long before they had consciously sinned against their Creator—if indeed children and animals are capable of deliberate sin—then it would seem as if He must lose our respect and devotion. No earthly father gives a stone when his children are in need of bread, and the Lord Jesus taught us that His Heavenly Father far surpasses in His goodness those who, being evil, give good gifts to their children.

It is at this point that the Gnostic and the modern Unitarian enter the argument. They urge with every show of reason that we have here an unassailable dilemma: if God made evil He is not perfectly good; if He did not, He is not almighty. Of the two they choose to believe in a limited God Who is ever struggling onwards with, or perhaps "within" His creation in one great triumphal evolutionary march. Or, according to another view, there is a devil or a "demiurge" ever thwarting the plans of God and causing Him to do other than He would, and it is against this being that God is always striving—piteously unable to subdue His bitterest enemy. Or, yet again, it was suggested in ancient times that God did not create the world but fashioned it, as best He could, out of a pre-existing amorphous mass which was too intractable to function in accordance with the Divine desires.

Thus a discussion of the mystery of evil seems to lead at once to a dilemma. God is either not good or not almighty, and in either case the traditional Christian doctrine falls to the ground. So strong is this argument felt to be that many Christians have come to the conclusion that the problem cannot be solved by the human mind at all.

Before continuing, it will be well to inquire carefully into what is meant by the term "evil." Observation reveals at once that evil is of two kinds—which may roughly be divided into *moral* and *physical*. Moral evil is the evil which we choose to do ourselves and, if we accept the view that the will is free, it does not implicate the Creator. But there is another kind of evil in which the situation is quite different. Forces of destruction sometimes work indescribable havoc, yet they do not appear to be the result of anyone's wrong choices, but rather of the way the world in which we find ourselves was made by God.

Evil of the second kind is conveniently grouped under the word "physical," though it is as often caused by biological organisms as by earthquakes and floods. Now a little thought shows that all such evil is really of the nature of maladjustment. Thus cocaine is not of itself evil; indeed, it is a valuable material to the optician and the surgeon while the world would in some respects be a poorer place if it had not been discovered. It only becomes an evil when it is used in a particular way. Similarly disease germs are not harmful except when they are allowed to multiply under special conditions. It is true that most of them

are not of any particular value at the present time. Nevertheless, despite the harm they have done in the past, man may one day be profoundly thankful for their existence. Perhaps, for instance, they will ultimately be employed to synthesise complicated compounds, just as to-day we employ moulds for preparing citric acid from sugar. Or again it is possible that some of the most dangerous viruses and microbes may yet be found essential to forms of life which, in turn, are of benefit to man.

What is true of poisons and germs is also true of other forms of physical evil. Road accidents, shipwrecks, earthquakes, volcanoes and fires are all nothing more or less than maladjustments. The same is true of the cruelty in nature. Cats do not play with mice out of cruelty, for they treat paper in the same way, while birds of prey and poisonous snakes only kill for food or in self-protection. If the different species were better adapted to one another's needs nature would be no longer red in tooth and claw.

Then, again, there is the difficulty of pain. Pain in moderation, is no doubt an essential of life. It gives warning when any of our organs are wrongly treated and it tells us to alter their environment immediately. Without such warnings we should destroy ourselves by fire or machinery, or by eating poisonous foods. Pain may well have been designed by God and it is more suggestive of His love than otherwise. But here, once more, there is a fundamental lack of adjustment. There seem to be some relics of a mechanism in the human body by means of which pain may be stopped if it becomes too severe—a mechanism for producing unconsciousness. But often this mechanism fails to function and long agonies result, even when there is no hope of alleviating their cause. Here, again, there is some fundamental maladjustment.

Concerning death, of course, we know very little. But biologically it is by no means impossible that man was designed to be immortal. The cells of which the body is composed are able to function for long periods and to react continuously to changes in the environment. Many cells are known, such as those of cancer, which never lose this power and are in the strictest sense immortal. But for reasons as yet quite unknown, the cells of which the body is composed lose their powers with advancing age. Here again, it appears that something goes wrong with the cell mechanism.

Such maladjustments are the order of the day in nature. They are to be found even among the instincts. A good example is afforded by comparing the dog and the cat. Both are innately endowed with a scratching reflex which causes them to cover up their excreta. In the cat this is often very effective, but the dog will scratch without looking to see whether the earth he removes is being thrown in one direction or another, or for that matter whether he is merely pawing the ground. In both cases the facts suggest that a beneficent Mind has planned that dung should be covered up, but something has gone wrong in the case of the dog, where the relics of the "instinct" perform no useful function. And what is true here is true throughout the whole realm of nature. Everywhere adjustment and maladjustment lie side by side. The mystery of evil is the mystery of maladjustment.

Having determined the real meaning of evil, the Gnostic argument of "either-or" appears in a very different light. Maladjustment is not something positive which needs creating. Rather it is something negative; it is one of those things which ought to have been done and yet have been left undone. And the question now is not: "Why did God create evil?" or "Did someone else create it against His will?" but "Why did God not finish His creation?" There is thus no reason at all to bring in a Gnostic demiurge who stopped the work of creation or who waited until it was finished and then undid a great deal of it. True, such a view is not finally excluded, but it is by no means the most obvious solution to the difficulty. It is more straightforward to inquire whether a perfectly good God could have created the world and yet failed to do all that was necessary, knowing that the incompleteness of His work might cause suffering and misunderstanding.

A hint of a reason for the unfinished work of creation is given repeatedly in the Bible. In Genesis we read that God made man in His own Image and after His own likeness. Moreover, He commanded man to multiply so that he might replenish the earth and subdue it and wield dominion over "the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. i, 26-28.) There can be little doubt what these words mean. They mean that God intended to retire from His creation and, instead of exercising control over the world Himself, He created man in His own Image as a guardian of what He had created.

That this is the meaning of the passage is strongly confirmed by what follows. After man's first failure "The Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man and beast and creeping thing, and fowl of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." (Gen. vi, 7.)

Now it is clear that snakes and birds had not offended God. His ground for destroying them also lay in the fact that there was now no guardian of creation, no one to have dominion over the world and use that dominion for the right ends.

The same view is put forward again in later times. Thus the Psalmist says that man was made but little lower than God and was created to have dominion over the work of the Creator's hands. (Ps. viii, 4-8.) But in the New Testament it is recognised that man himself will never take this Divine trust seriously until the coming of Christ, Who with the saints will rule as man himself should have ruled. (Heb. ii.)

In the light of these suggestive passages the eternal mystery of maladjustment largely disappears. Far from having deliberately left evil to work in its own cruel way, the Creator was most careful to create a being in His own Image who could eliminate maladjustments continuously every time they threatened to appear.

But could man have done what was required of him? That is a big question; yet, to-day, no one with imagination is likely to answer it in the negative. The resources of science are great indeed, but nothing compared with what they might be. In the last three centuries a minute fraction of the human race have applied themselves to discover the secrets of nature and, in the last few years alone, their efforts have met with prodigious success. What might not have been the result if man had from the first set to work to do his duty?

In the days of our forefathers, when an anti-scientific attitude had sunk into the very bones and marrow of society, it was no cause for wonder if the problem of evil baffled men beyond their powers. Lacking in imagination, it must have seemed impossible to them that man could ever grapple with the inclemencies of the weather, with meteorites or earthquakes, let alone with disease, famine and storms. Yet to-day our imagination knows no such bounds. Weather prediction is becoming ever more reliable and the weather can even be controlled in part by

afforestation and the breaking of icebergs. The exact location of a future earthquake is well within our powers, while earthquake-proof houses can be made without difficulty at an additional cost of only $1\frac{1}{4}$ –6 per cent. Only the failure to use the methods which have already been made available is responsible for the devastations which periodically occur.

Recent investigations have shown how even avalanches can be predicted to some extent, and ultimately there is hope that such predictions will prove thoroughly reliable. In any case, it is possible even at the present time to protect important places from their destructive action, as has already been done on an ambitious scale at the entrances to the Loetschberg tunnel in Switzerland.

Again, the gigantic water-pockets which form in the glaciers of the Alps used at one time to burst forth and cause appalling disasters. But to-day an aerial watch is kept and long before the crisis comes the imprisoned waters are harmlessly released.

Immense numbers of other examples of the triumphs of technical and scientific methods over the forces of nature might easily be cited. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that there is not one of the evils which our fathers regarded as wholly beyond man's control which is either not already under control or where at least substantial progress has not been made.

Thus there is no reason why man should not subdue the physical world. But what of the lower creation? Is it conceivable that man's dominion should extend to the countless fishes of the ocean, to the birds and to "every living thing that moveth upon the earth?"

Far from this creating a difficulty, it is the very thing which is now happening throughout the whole realm of biology wherever it is economically desirable. Man and not chance determines the number of whales in the ocean, while oysters and herrings and many other fish are carefully controlled. In addition, modern research on genetics has shown that it is possible to pick out certain desirable characters in an animal and to ensure that these and no others shall be carried forward to the next generation. Recently the possibilities of speeding up such changes have increased enormously. A technique has been developed by which the spermatozoa of a selected male can be carried hundreds of miles by air and then successfully used to fertilise a female animal, so that one male might be used to fertilise millions of females in a season.

So far, the dominion of the world has been undertaken for economic rather than for moral ends. Men talk as if the problem of evil in the lower creation was a first-class philosophical difficulty, but they do so little to alter the present state of things that it is hard to believe that such difficulties are always real. It is as though a very wealthy man complained bitterly of the way God had arranged the social system of the world because he saw thousands around him dying of starvation, yet did little or nothing to help them. In like manner, perhaps a few relatively small societies for the protection of domesticated animals from cruelty, or for the preservation of wild animals, is the sum total of human endeavour in the direction we are considering, save in those cases where purely economic interests are at stake. No wonder if, as St. Paul remarked, the whole lower creation being in travail, is yearning for the day when the Governments of the world will consider its interests in addition to the interests of man.

Perhaps we may permit our imagination to soar further than this. Who knows that in the end it might not be possible to produce peaceful and contented lions and eagles with which a child might play, just as to-day the child plays with the descendants of ferocious dogs and cats. Perhaps Isaiah's picture of the child and the wild beasts could be realised in years to come if man showed a determined desire to see its fulfilment. Such a speculation is no more absurd than many another which has seen fulfilment.

A concrete instance of the possibilities ahead would not be out of place. It is found among chickens that if one is wounded and blood is lost, all the rest peck it to death. On the face of it this appears to be sheer cruelty about which man can do very little—except, perhaps, to isolate wounded chickens. But in point of fact no cruelty is involved. Chickens simply peck at anything that is red, and if they are kept under coloured glass so that red looks black, the wounded individuals are not attacked and are able to make a satisfactory recovery. Doubtless the apparent cruelty is due to a gene, and it might be possible to eliminate it altogether by breeding.

Of course, the task of eliminating all the cruelty in the world is stupendous. However, we have abundant evidence that there is no acute suffering in the case of low forms of life or even in small though highly complex creatures such as the insects, so the task is by no means indefinitely great.

However, it is, perhaps, becoming more difficult as the ages go by and biological maladjustments have greater and greater chances to establish themselves. W. H. S. Jones, for instance, has pointed out that the ancient Greek physician had incomparably fewer diseases with which to deal than has the doctor of to-day. (*Malaria and Greek History*, Manchester, 1909.) It is possible, then, that the problem confronting early man was not so great as it is for us.

But even so, God has made careful provision against the repeated failure of man. The world has not been made like some vast airship which will crash in flames as the result of the slightest mistake on the part of the navigator. Far from it. There is throughout nature a tendency for things to restore themselves so that maladjustment cannot continue to increase indefinitely. Thus, if man makes no serious attempt to stop a new disease, the processes of nature may eventually give the inhabitants of a country a relative immunity, though at the cost of much suffering. In just the same way, the sufferings of the lower animals often benefit their species, although the species could doubtless be benefited just as well by scientific means and the suffering is totally unnecessary.

Thus the door to world dominion is not finally closed, even if it becomes more difficult to enter as time passes by.

Finally, it is of course true that man does not at the moment possess anything like enough knowledge to do all that is required of him. But that is beside the point. If there were a determination to obtain and apply the necessary knowledge, the right discoveries would be made in the end. "He that seeketh findeth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" applies to scientific as well as to religious knowledge.

Such is a picture of what the world might be, if men were not given up to selfish pursuits. Indeed, the very contrast between things as they might be and things as they are should of itself be enough to make us say with the Psalmist: "There is not one that doeth good, no not one."

But before continuing, it will be well to ask whether evil could be *entirely* eradicated by the right use of science or whether, no matter how carefully man attempted to control the world, a certain amount might yet remain.

The answer is that we do not know. It is easy to suggest certain things, such as vivisection, which seem at the moment

to be necessary though cruel. But here it is quite possible that cruelty could be avoided. More to the point, perhaps, is the possibility of accidents. However careful man tries to be, he may occasionally make mistakes or, again, he may occasionally be the victim of some quite unforeseen circumstance. Surely such occurrences could never be avoided, no matter how seriously man were to take his trusteeship of the world.

Now it is on this very subject that abundant evidence has come to light. Again and again tragedies are preceded by a foreboding of ill to come and, very frequently, these forebodings have resulted in the saving of life. Thus it seems as if God has actually supplied that which is lacking in man's capabilities. It is interesting to note that though these warnings of coming death or danger have come to men and women of all opinions, yet those who have had them most strongly developed have often been Christians. Many of the early Quakers, for instance, had the power to a remarkable extent, as has been shown by the researches of J. W. Graham. (*Psychical Experiences of Quaker Ministers*, Friends' Hist. Soc. Supplement No. 18, 1933, etc.) These powers are still present in our midst, but, as the late Dr. A. T. Schofield was able to show, they are now heeded so little that disasters often occur despite the warnings.

A consideration of this strange assistance which, perhaps, is often sent directly by God, opens many possibilities. The old motto to the effect that God helps those who help themselves may be to the point in this connection. It is surely perfectly possible that if we as a race were to try to live up to the Divine trust, God would Himself, in answer to prayer, assist us in the case of all those evils with which we cannot deal unaided.

But in addition to this, it is perfectly true that certain theoretical difficulties might yet be unsolved. The lower animals were apparently created long before man, so that perhaps the problem of evil would have to be regarded in a different light in the days when there was no guardian of creation. But this is a merely theoretical difficulty which would only trouble the learned. And besides, it would be difficult to rule out the view that God had been trying some other scheme before He made man—a view which is still held by some people at the present time on other grounds. In any case, it is impossible to deny that if men did their utmost to look after the world, the problem of evil as we know it to-day would not exist. The sceptics, in

particular, who so constantly make use of the evil argument against Theism, would not find a hearing.

So far this inquiry has been concerned with the nature of evil and the possibility of overcoming it with good. But it is time to consider the probable reason for its existence. Why has God left man to deal with maladjustment in all its forms? Why did not the Creator deal with all these imperfections Himself? In short, what is the position of evil in relation to the Divine economy of the world?

In the past some philosophers have made goodness the defence of evil. They argue that, just as light might mean nothing to us save in contrast with darkness, so good might mean nothing save in contrast with evil. In this form such a view has little to commend it, yet it seems to contain a germ of truth.

A more careful analysis suggests that what we mean by "goodness" in its moral sense would be impossible were it not for two main factors. In the first case there must be a desire for achievement and in the second there must be the possibility of working together with others for the good of all.

The first point is obvious enough. Character cannot develop unless there is a desire to act and achieve something by acting. It is a fact of universal experience that when this longing for achievement has failed, either under the influence of narcotic drugs or as a result of mental disease, that which is good in character disappears, or at least cannot increase. Now this longing for achievement is exactly what we find in all normal people unless it has been crushed by failure. But what is there to achieve? As it is there is nothing less than dominion of the world in which all men might have a share. But suppose there were no maladjustments in nature, so that man could find nothing to do which seemed "worth while," would not the inevitable consequence of such a state of affairs be that the desire for achievement would become misdirected into evil channels? In other words, does it not look as though goodness and physical evil would have to be sacrificed together—as though it were impossible to have the one without the other? Or to put the matter more precisely, if there is to be any "goodness" in man's character, must there not also be maladjustments in the world of nature which can be righted by man?

If these views are well grounded, evil must appear in a new light. Instead of casting a slur upon the character of the

Creator it will make us adore Him for His love and kindness for having entrusted us with so much and for having given us a task which fires our imagination as nothing else could do.

In actual fact, of course, we men have misdirected the Creator's gift. Instead of rejoicing at the sight of mighty rivers harnessed at last to give comfort and light in thousands of homes, or at the thought that through our efforts we have made the lot of many a dumb creature far happier than it was before, we more often take pride in wielding dominion over one another. In much of the education of the youth of the world at the present time, this is the sole outlet for our God-given instinct which is presented to the minds of children. History is distorted into the story of wars and battles and the exploitation of man by man. The very idea of man's trusteeship of the world scarcely ever has a hearing.

Despite all these abuses, however, the presence of physical evil in the world has, nevertheless, had a great effect in limiting the perversion of our desire for achievement. To some extent men realise the desperate necessity for looking after the world in which they live and in every war of history this vital necessity has reduced bloodshed to a minimum. Never has it been possible for more than a few per cent. of a population at war to remain fighting for long. Even so war has usually caused the breakdown of adequate protective measures against disease, starvation and floods, and these factors have frequently been far more disastrous than war itself, and have brought fighting to a close. Hans Zinsser, in his fascinating book *Rats, Lice and History* (1935), has shown how little actual fighting has settled the destinies of nations.

In this respect the presence of maladjustment in the world has been of incomparable value throughout the ages. Sooner or later the horrors of moral callousness become replaced by the equally terrible horrors of physical and biological maladjustment. This acts as an automatic reminder to us that we cannot long choose wrongly with impunity. It serves to remind us of the true values when we have cast them aside.

The second essential to the development of character lies in the possibility of joint co-operation with others. The control of the physical world and of the lower creation cannot be achieved by a few individuals, but only by the mass of mankind working together for the common good. Now there is no better way by which friendships may be deepened or kindness and sym-

pathy shown than by being fellow-workers with others towards the same ends. Indeed, probably none of the higher qualities of human nature would be able to show themselves were it not that individuals are able to work and strive together. But if this be so, then the presence of maladjustment becomes once more a sign of God's deep love for the human race. He has given us all, every individual in the world, a common interest and one which is of the greatest importance. Thus although there is no uniformity in our other desires and interests—and the world is the more interesting for the varieties of men which it contains—yet the most vital of all practical endeavours has been designed to make us feel love for our fellow human beings.

From such arguments as these, it seems to follow that the presence of evil is of great value to mankind and, in fact, if man had not been given maladjustments to put right he would inevitably have been slow and characterless with ambitions no higher than that of an animal.

These considerations seem so straightforward that the question naturally arises as to why they have been all but obscured in recent times. The answer to this question is apparently to be found in the evolutionary philosophy which has swept over the modern world.

A century ago and upwards men saw their responsibilities even less than they do to-day, so that God was freely blamed by the sceptics for having created such an imperfect world. But at least the outlook of the time was still humble. The theologians held that man was a sinner and that in some way his sin was responsible for the suffering of the whole creation. True, no very concrete idea of how this result followed was put forward, but the existence of such a possibility held scepticism in check.

In the ordinary course of events, the opening up of the possibilities of scientific achievement would doubtless have been followed by a gigantic decline in scepticism. People would have been convinced as never before of the sinfulness of man. Throughout the civilised world they would have seen as in a flash the possibilities that have been missed. They would have seen at last a vision of that selfishness which makes people spend all their spare energies upon amusement and pleasure, wholly regardless of the "reign of terror, hunger, sickness, with oozing blood and quivering limbs, with gasping breath and eyes of innocence that

dimly close in deaths of cruel torture" (G. J. Romanes) which is to be seen on every hand.

Indeed, the light actually began to dawn in the minds of a few. We see clear glimmerings in the writings of Robert Chambers, while A. R. Wallace, the co-discoverer with Darwin of the theory of evolution, actually had a perfectly clear vision of the situation. "It is quite possible," he wrote, "that all the evil in the world is directly due to man, not to God. . . I myself feel confident that this is really the case and that such considerations, when followed out to their ultimate issues, afford a complete solution of the great problem of the ages—the problem of evil." (J. Marchant: *A. R. Wallace: Letters and Reminiscences*, vol. ii, p. 148.)

It is likely enough that in time every thinking man would have come to agree with Wallace. But just as the new truth began to dawn it was circumvented by the evolutionary philosophy which soon removed all hope of the awakening of a sense of responsibility. So long as men think that they are more highly developed than their ancestors, they will be satisfied. Instead of feeling deep shame that the human race has only now begun to study seriously the world in which it is placed, men are actually proud of the past. What is more, they are only too content with a slow rate of progress, only too content to do glaring wrong in the exigencies of our time and justify it with the vague hope that thousands of years hence man will be a little bit better than he is now.

Behind this smoke screen of philosophy the true nature of the mystery of evil is never discerned. As a result, sceptics urge it ever and ever more forcibly as a reason for disbelieving the Christian revelation of God. Evil, they say, can have no place in the Divine economy of the world: rather it is a positive disproof that God has the least concern for His creation, if indeed there happens to be a God at all. And Christians, their minds obscured like those of their enemies with the philosophy of evolution, often reply by saying that they have no explanation to offer or even that the mystery of evil is insoluble.

Yet, when once the subject is seen in its true light and freed from the new philosophy, everything is changed. The Christian will no longer feel that evil is a mystery of any magnitude. Rather, he will thank God unceasingly for His long-suffering patience with sinful man and for having brought even evil within the orbit of the Divine economy.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (REV. W. J. DOWNES) said: I have to thank Dr. Clark for a Paper which stimulates thought by its suggestiveness. It is an interesting contribution towards the solution of a problem which has baffled human minds through the centuries. The idea of "maladjustment" is not new, but Dr. Clark's treatment of it is fresh and helpful.

I offer the following criticisms in the hope that they may be useful:—

1. Dr. Clark states that "moral" evil, if we accept the view that the will is free, does not implicate the Creator. I believe that it does, in the sense that God must be indirectly responsible for it. He made man in such a fashion that it was possible for him to sin; He must therefore bear responsibility to that extent for what happened, and still happens. I believe, too, in this connection, that God is implicated by the fact that the innocent suffer so disproportionately for, or with, the guilty. There seems no limit to the tragedy that can befall the innocent, and often it is excruciating. The absence of this limit, the absence of the restraining hand of God, raises the question as to God's goodness and love in its acutest form. It is here that for the majority of people the crux of the problem lies. God is implicated—if there be a God at all!

2. This criticism is underlined if we ask the question, "If man *were* created in a situation offering him the really worth-while task of adjusting maladjustments, as Dr. Clark maintains, why should God allow, or need to allow, the possibility of moral *evil* in the sense of definite, positive harm-doing?" On Dr. Clark's view, it would seem sufficient for the development of human personality and character if man were free "upwards," *i.e.*, to work or not to work along the line of God's purpose, namely, that he should co-operate with his fellows in bringing to completion the unfinished creation. Choice, will, resolution, heroic facing of odds, and all else that is character-making, are provided by that alternative to work, or not to work, according to God's will. There seems to be no reason why man is free "downwards," *i.e.*, to do downright evil, to persecute, murder, steal, oppress, exploit. This freedom "downwards" means that man was made with the ability to create

still more maladjustment in the world ; and man has used that freedom with truly tragic results. Dr. Clark's theory does not seem to touch this feature of moral evil.

3. On page 121 the statement is made that all " physical " evil is of the nature of maladjustment. I have not been able to make clear to myself whether Dr. Clark means that physical evil is *equivalent* to maladjustment, or whether he means that physical evil is a *consequence* of maladjustment. In the paper these two quite different things seem to be confused, *e.g.*, an earthquake is a physical evil ; is an earthquake itself a maladjustment (as the statement on page 121 would seem to indicate) or is it a consequence of a maladjustment ? I imagine that Dr. Clark would reply that physical evil is both the original maladjustment *and* all the recurrent consequences of it. But it is difficult to see, in any case, how man, notwithstanding all his marvellous powers, could ever remove the cause or causes of earthquakes, whether as original maladjustments or as consequences of maladjustments. And the same difficulty applies in the case of all natural phenomena which are regarded as " evils." Here it cannot be true that " the Creator was most careful to create a being in His own image who could eliminate maladjustments continuously every time they threatened to appear."

4. There is obviously a difference between the two ideas :—

(a) That God left His work of creation *unfinished* so that man could complete it ; (b) that God made the world *maladjusted* so that man could put it right. There seems to be some confusion of these two ideas in the paper, and in either case there are difficulties.

(a) God's leaving His creation unfinished would not in any wise involve that He should make it *positively* maladjusted. If He left it merely unfinished, He would, one would suppose, leave it perfect so far as it went. The lines would be laid down, and all " set fair," upon which man could complete the unfinished work. But in that case it is difficult to see how human sin, however it be regarded, could have *caused* the maladjustments which have appeared, *e.g.*, earthquakes, cyclones, and all that in Nature which is summed up in the phrase " red in tooth and claw." An *unfinished* world does not account for the origin of these physical evils.

(b) The only alternative in the paper is that God deliberately

made the world with positive maladjustments which it is man's duty to put right. This seems to be the position which Dr. Clark actually accepts, as his question would show:—"Why has God left man to deal with maladjustment in all its forms? Why did not the Creator deal with all these imperfections Himself?" But if that be the case, then two alternatives are open to us, and both seem quite unacceptable. (a) Either man was created with the ready-made ability to "eliminate maladjustments continuously every time they threatened to appear"—i.e., to inhibit earthquakes, cyclones, the predatory instincts, etc., at once before they could come to pass; (b) or God must be directly responsible for all the suffering and tragedy intervening between the time of the Creation and the day when man, as a result of his striving, discovery and applied science, should have put all the original maladjustments right. It seems clear to me that man was not created with an original ability at once to prevent such things as earthquakes from ever happening. It also seems clear to me that God did not create the world in such a fashion that inevitably, whether he sinned or not, man for an indefinitely long period would have to endure tragic suffering and death.

5. As it stands, the outlook of the paper is quite Deistic. It maintains that God made the world, and has left man to get on with the task of finishing or completing it. I feel sure that Dr. Clark would agree without hesitation that that is not a true picture of the facts. The truth is that in this business of daily living God is with us, never leaving nor forsaking us; and that (be the philosophical difficulties here what they may!) God suffers along with all who suffer.

Rev. ARTHUR W. PAYNE thanked the writer of the paper and said he had read it and heard it with real interest and profit.

Referring to the problem of imperfection and the orbits of the stars mentioned in the first paragraph, he remembered how Kepler, the great astronomer, when he discovered that the stars move not in an ordinary circle but in an ellipse, exclaimed "I am thinking Thy thoughts after Thee, O God," and it seems that the key to the mystery of Evil is in the same category of two *foci*, the Cross and the Crown, the Atonement and the Advent of Jesus Christ, or the

triumph over sorrow and sin. It has been well said, "We must not quarrel with God's unfinished providences."

The Chairman spoke of the "job" of dealing with the maladjustment of "the Economy of things," the speaker thought the Book of Job was the key to the mystery. It was probably the oldest portion of Inspired Holy Scripture, and it was natural that the subject of evil should be treated so fully there. The first two chapters introduce Satan as the accuser and cause permissively of so much calamity, and the key to the whole problem, as has been pointed out, seems to be in the verse "God is greater than man" (chap. xxxiii, 12).

Dr. BARCROFT ANDERSON said: The Council, in presenting this paper to us, has completely identified itself with it, by making it a prize essay. Through this paper, the Council asserts that birds had not offended God. Whereas God stated that: "all flesh corrupted the way of themselves upon the earth," and: "end of all flesh has come before my gaze, for the earth, it is full of autocracy from their presence. And I behold their causing corruption of it the earth." Now birds are flesh. (Gen. vi, 12, 13.)

The Council asserts in this paper that "the lower animals were apparently created long before man." God states they were created on the same day as man, and aquatic life and birds, one day earlier.

The Council in this paper translates מִלֵּא—MLA in Genesis i, 28, as "replenish," which means "re-fill," thereby implying that the earth had been full before. The divine record shows that when God used this word "FILL," the solid matter of this planet had been but three nights above sea level.

The Council here identifies itself with the belief that God's creation was "unfinished," notwithstanding his words (Gen. i, 31) "God saw all which he made, and behold it was good exceeding."

In support of this view that creation was unfinished, it gives a mistranslation of Psalm viii, 5, 6, 7, "man was made but little lower than God and was created to have dominion." The word Enosh—ANUS—אָנוֹשׁ—which the Council translates as MAN. Was the name given to our ancestor, Adam's grandson? We next find it describing the mongrel cross between the sons of God and the daughters of the Adam. It is elsewhere used of God himself, of angels, and of human beings, but nowhere of the man Adam.

In verse 4, it is given as an alternative title to Ben Adam (or builder up of Adam), which is of necessity the highest earthly title, and so used by the Lord of Glory, before Caiaphas the High Priest (Matt. xxvi, 64). Consequently the claim that in this verse the word translated man, can, or even may, mean Adam, must be rejected.

The Council's use of the English word "made," in verse 6, is what, in my student days, would have been described as a "howler." It appears in the translations as part of a clumsy way of rendering the verb—**חָסַר**—HXR, which means to diminish, "Thou hast diminished him a little while from angels." If the Council translates Elohim as a singular in this verse, does it do the same in Psalm lxxxii, 6. Ex. xx, 3 and xxi-6?

But the Council in accepting, as it has done, this translation of this passage in Psalm viii, has consequently repudiated belief in the divine accuracy of the translation thereof found in Hebrews ii, 6, 7, 8.

[In awarding the essay prize to Dr. Clark, the Council did not endorse all his arguments, but desired to recognise a very scholarly and suggestive discussion of a perplexing subject.—EDITOR.]

Mr. GEORGE BREWER said: I think that it is generally agreed that all imperfections or maladjustments, moral or physical, in this world and probably in the Universe, are the results, directly or indirectly, of sin; that is the action of the creature contrary to the will, or independently, of the Creator.

The key may possibly be found in Rom. viii, 20: "The creature was made subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him, who hath subjected the same in hope." Hope, the natural desire to attain to, or achieve something, if exercised in simple dependence upon God and according to His will, results in blessing; while hope or trust in the creature becomes vanity.

This is strikingly apparent in the case of Satan, originally the most wonderful of God's created beings, who is addressed in Ezek. xxviii, 12-17, in the prophet's message to the King of Tyrus, "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth: thou wast perfect in thy ways until iniquity was found in thee. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy

brightness: I will cast thee down to the ground." Instead of reflecting the glory of his Creator, he was taken up with his own brilliance and wisdom, as in Isaiah xiv, 12-13: "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will be like the Most High." His fall from heaven, and a waste and empty earth mentioned in Gen. i, 2 being the result.

It was even so with our first parents; the desire for self-pleasing in independence of God and His revealed will resulted, not only in the moral degradation of the race, but in physical maladjustments, the ground being cursed for man's sake. This curse, however, necessitating strenuous toil, became in the wisdom of God a blessing to mankind.

Thus every apparent success of the adversary works eventually to the glory of God and for blessing to those who trust Him. Satan through the ages sought to destroy the line of the promised Seed, who was to bruise his head, and eventually succeeded in bringing about the crucifixion of God's anointed Messiah, thus providing a sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Col. T. C. SKINNER wrote: Dr. Clark has given us a thought-provoking paper and one that makes a real contribution to our knowledge of the outworkings of evil and of their remedy. Other contributors to this discussion have referred to important omissions which have the effect of weakening the thesis and must hence be regarded as serious, and I will not go over the ground again in detail, but will merely observe that there would appear to be a lack of sharpness of definition in the discrimination between moral and physical evil, while of appreciation of the real nature of sin which is at the bottom of it all, there would seem to be almost complete absence. The edges are too blurred for the thesis to go unchallenged. In explanation it may be said that the author's approach to the subject would seem to be directed rather from the standpoint of modern science, which aims at taking physical facts only as it

finds them, and not seldom in disregard of valid contributory sources of information.

But in saying this I do not for a moment wish to suggest that the thesis is vitiated by these defects. So far as it has gone or can go, the discussion is of real value, though without the contributory facts supplied freely by Divine revelation, a completely rounded interpretation must be looked for in vain; and in offering these comments I do so in hope that our author may be led to place us under yet greater obligation by embodying, perhaps in some larger work, a fuller and more all-round presentation of the subject.

Mr. L. J. MOSER wrote: Dr. Clark's paper does not seem to me to be in accord with Holy Scripture, otherwise I would not intervene in the discussion.

This world is Satan's kingdom (John xii, 31, xiv, 30, xvi, 11), and God did not place us here to readjust Satan's "maladjustments." That will be done when God makes a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter iii, 13). The question may then be asked why did God create the world and put man in it and give Satan the world as his Kingdom, knowing beforehand that Satan would seduce man from his allegiance to God. The whole Bible is an answer to this question—God is the source of all life, and Satan's sin was that he apostatized and claimed to have life in himself (Isaiah xiv, 12, 15). It seems as though God said to Satan: "If you have life in yourself then prove it by giving life to all these my creatures." We are here to demonstrate and witness to the angels, the good angels and the bad angels that God our Creator is the one and only source of life and that we have not life apart from God. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels," says the Apostle (1 Cor. vi, 3). Your time would fail me to make an adequate reply to Dr. Clark's paper, but consider that holy man Job and the "maladjustments" of Satan that he endured and think of the trust that God placed in him to withstand all Satan's efforts to cause him to apostatize. In the story we are taken behind the scenes, but poor Job could not make out why God had forsaken him, and moreover, God never told him.

It is the same with us. Let us then trust God, like Job, whatever "maladjustment" He permits Satan to put upon us.

MRS. M. W. LANGHORNE COOPER, L.Th., wrote: In this able and original essay Dr. Clark has expounded a theory of the mystery of evil which deserves careful consideration.

That man was originally put into the world to rule it and to subdue it is plainly in accordance with Scripture; also that he failed to do so. The Hebrew prophets depict nature as suffering with man, and the Land of Israel also mourning and withering in sympathy with the apostasy of God's people.

St. Paul declares this suffering and bondage to death to be temporary. It will vanish in the realisation of the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Rom. viii, 20, 21). The writer to the Hebrews shows that where man in Adam failed to rule over nature, man in Christ has triumphed (Heb. ii, 5-9). In verse 5 the R.V. marginal reading "the inhabited earth" is helpful and correctly translated *δὴν οἰκουμένην*.

That man should be placed in an immature world to subdue as well as to rule it would, as Dr. Clark points out, be a valuable moral and mental discipline; that he was endowed by the Creator with the powers needed to do this is being abundantly illustrated in our own day.

Rev. Principal H. S. CURR, M.A., B.D., B.Litt., wrote: There can only be one opinion with regard to the confident optimism which dominates Dr. Clark's very distinguished paper. Every man who believes in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ can only look forward with unquenchable hope. His faith assures him that the end of all things is exceeding gracious, and thus Christians are saved by hope, for their God is the God of hope. It is inspiring to find that Dr. Clark is so profoundly convinced that all things do indeed work together for good to them that love God, despite the existence of so many facts and factors which make such buoyant optimism decidedly difficult.

To my thinking, the paper fails to do full justice to the mystery of evil. It is irradiated by the conviction that evil must pass away for ever, but I am not sure that the tremendous nature of that victory receives full justice, the reason being that evil is a much more serious problem than this admirable paper might lead us to suppose. Was it not Coleridge who remarked that sin is the supreme

mystery whose solution would involve the unravelling of every other enigma of human experience. That is hardly the impression which Dr. Clark's discussion conveys. He does not seem to grapple with the sinfulness of sin as the New Testament does.

The mention of sin raises a point which calls for comment. The writer of the paper does not seem to me to distinguish clearly and boldly between moral evil and other kinds of evil, or, to use popular parlance, between sin and sorrow. One receives the impression that evil is nothing more serious than the fruits of maladjustment, comparable to the awkwardness of adolescence, or growing pains. There is a good deal of truth in that contention. Principal Denney has argued that the ultimate problem of living is just one of reconciliation with inward and outward conditions. Evil is thus the result of imperfect reconciliation.

If I am not doing an injustice to Dr. Clark, I fear that there are sentences in his paper which convey the idea that this imperfect reconciliation is involuntary, and that it will disappear in the light of fuller investigation and invention. Indeed, the history of invention may be described as the history of human reconciliation with its environment. But is that the end of the whole matter? The Bible teaches that these maladjustments and irreconcilabilities are voluntary, not involuntary. They are not inevitable. They are the result of perverted choice. The heart of man is at fault.

In these circumstances, the improvement of human life, of which Dr. Clark writes so attractively, can only be effected by drastic treatment. Indeed, the Bible holds out no hope for the extinction of evil apart from some catastrophic intervention by God that has already taken place, first in the Deluge, next in the Incarnation, and finally in the Parousia, or Second Advent of Christ. These are very radical remedies, and yet it is often possible to measure the gravity of the situation by the cure required. Surgical operations are not performed where ordinary medical treatment will produce the desired effect. It seems, then, to stand to reason that such remedies as those just enumerated indicate a very serious malady. The ordinary processes of history are insufficient for the purpose. They have had to be reinforced in an unmeasurable degree.

Indeed, it is striking that the ordinary processes of nature and history do not achieve the desired result apart from some super-

natural intervention like the Bible. In its train science emerges, and goes from strength to strength and from glory to glory. But where the Bible is unknown the human race languishes in spiritual and intellectual stagnation with all that these imply, or its efforts end in bankruptcy like those of ancient Greece or Rome. Only Christ can put away evil, interpreting the term in its broadest and deepest and largest sense. That is the teaching of Holy Scripture, endorsed by human history, if not always by human reasoning.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I am very grateful to all those who have entered into this discussion, especially to the Chairman and Col. Skinner for their thoughtful remarks.

As most speakers have pointed out, my paper contains a good many omissions. But I think the reason for this should be sufficiently plain. The Victoria Institute aims particularly at relating modern knowledge with revealed religion. Now I do not think that science has thrown very much light upon the devil (in any case that is a subject by itself), while it has probably thrown none at all upon the "real nature of sin," the moral sense of injustice and the power of Christ working in the heart of the Christian. But what modern knowledge does show is that were it not for man's stupidity and wickedness, the problem of evil would scarcely exist at all as a moral problem for the bulk of mankind. It is this fact which I have tried to stress in the limited space available to me.

I do not feel competent to answer all that the Chairman has said, but I should like to make a few remarks by way of explanation. With regard to his first two points, I think we can agree that the facts as we find them *might* mean that God is morally implicated; but surely there is no *evidence* that this *is* so. For myself I cannot imagine how a man could be free "upwards" but not "downwards" and I suspect that these metaphors tend to obscure the real situation. It is easy to suggest that man might be free to co-operate or not to co-operate with his fellows as he chooses, without being free to do positive evil. But has the Chairman ever considered by what means this could be brought about? If a man is free to inject morphine when it is medically desirable, he must surely be free to

inject it when that need does not exist ; if he is free to use his muscles to till the land, he must surely be free to smite his fellows. Could we, indeed, even imagine freedom and morality in the world if our consciences were linked by a physiological mechanism which produced paralysis whenever we started to do wrong ? Would not such a world consist of scarcely sane neurotics where fear reigned supreme ?

Be the answer what it may, one thing is clear. Unless we have definite *evidence* that freedom can exist in one direction but not in the other, we surely cannot have any good reason to implicate God.

I am sorry my use of the word "maladjustment" was not understood. Maladjustment is the failure of one phenomenon to be adjusted to another. There is no maladjustment in an earthquake as such, but only if it causes loss of life. Man may not be able to stop the earthquake, but he can prevent the earthquake from causing unnecessary suffering ; he can stop the maladjustment.

As for the situation among the lower creation before man came on the scene, I can see no satisfactory reply. But at best this is an academic problem. It could only trouble philosophers in a world where man was in harmony with the will of God.

I think these observations will suggest a line of reply to the Chairman's fourth objection. All was indeed "very good" when God made the world (I cannot understand why Dr. Barcroft Anderson should suppose that I denied this !) and maladjustments could not be said to exist at this early period. At a later stage man certainly had the power to control the world for good.

Rev. A. W. Payne complains that I have left the devil out of account. So I have ; but I have already commented as to the reason. But in any case, does the devil help us very much ? To invoke the devil *ad hoc* is to indulge in special pleading. Moreover, blaming evil on the devil may be a singularly dangerous proceeding, for :

Bad as he is, the devil may be abused,
Be falsely charged and causelessly accused,
When men, unwilling to be blamed alone,
Cast off on him those sins that are their own.

I am sorry that Dr. Barcroft Anderson should have criticised the Council so severely for awarding me the Langhorne-Orchard Prize,

but I am sure all will agree with me in repudiating the suggestion that therefore the Council necessarily endorses every word of my paper! If Dr. Anderson will be good enough to glance at the bottom of the table of contents in this volume, perhaps he, too, will be convinced.

I cannot attempt to answer Dr. Anderson's criticisms in detail, especially as I am no Hebrew scholar. Yet I could not restrain a smile at hearing his argument about the birds being corrupt before God because they are included in the expression "all flesh." On such a line of reasoning, we should surely have to include the fishes and the whales as well, though they probably quite enjoyed the flood!

I realise that Dr. Anderson holds to the view that the days of Genesis were of twenty-four hours each, but he surely realises that there are others who, like St. Augustine of old, take a different view and yet have as much respect for the Bible as he has. I am also sorry that he takes exception to the R.V. translation of Ps. viii, 5-7 (and blames the Council for it!). But as I never even suggested that the passage referred to Adam, but only to mankind generally (a meaning which he allows), I do not quite see the force of his argument. True, the words are applied to Christ in Hebrews ii, but that is no evidence that they were not intended to apply to mankind generally, as in fact we know they were (Gen. i, 26). Dr. Anderson surely overlooks the close resemblance between Ps. viii and Gen. i.

Carried to their logical conclusion, Mr. L. J. Maser's remarks would seem to require that we should rest content and make no attempt to undo the evil God allows. Or, as the *Freethinker* once put it, God said, Let there be measles: and there were measles. Therefore it must be the devil who prompts doctors to cure measles and so undo the work of God! Certainly we must trust God, but do not let us forget that God trusts us too!

I am sorry that Principal Curr should think my paper is endued with a spirit of confident optimism. I should not have described it like that. Indeed, it seems plain to me with the world as it is, that man will never fulfil his task—and I entirely agree with Principal Curr in thinking that God will intervene at the end. Modern anthropology is to-day revealing how that from the very beginning, every thought of man's mind has been only evil continually. Prof. A. J. Clark has recently reminded us of this remarkable fact in words

which are well worth quoting: "Mankind has shown a precocious ingenuity in finding injurious poisons and drugs of pleasure. For example, neolithic arrows have been found marked with grooves that probably were intended for poison. The bushmen who lack the mechanical skill to build a house use arrow poisons of exceptional potency. The precocious aptitude in the use of drugs for harmful purposes has not been paralleled by any similar aptitude in their employment in healing. Indeed, the contrast between the relative development in the science of poisoning and the science of healing is one of the most marked features in mediæval scientific history."— (*Perspectives in Biochemistry*, Ed. J. Needham & D. E. Green C.U.P., 1937, p. 337.)