

THE CRUEL GOD OF CALVINISM

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A main objection to Christianity is expressed in the familiar words, "If God is a god of love why did He allow this or that?" In that is implicit the concept that God causes or allows human suffering including war and famine.

The blaming of God for man's mistakes is inequitable. If a drunken motorist runs over and kills a child whose fault is it? If a smoker drops a lighted match and a fire ensues and people die, whose fault is that? The IRA planted a bomb in a car in Armagh in August 1998 and 29 people were killed and whose fault was that?

Does God smoke, drink, drive a car or make bombs? Is he a terrorist?

The fact is that every man and woman has a free will. The drunken driver chose to drink and drive; the smoker chose to light a match and smoke; the terrorists decided to make a bomb and kill indiscriminately.

Is this God's fault?

No.

But why didn't God stop it?

The answer is that we have a free will and we are not robots. We are not puppets on strings that God pulls.

We have freewill to choose what we do. Imagine your life where you could not choose anything that you wanted to say or do but that all this was governed for you.

But Luther and Calvin disagree. Some Calvinists insist that everything that happens is because it is God's Will. Therefore God is, or is responsible for the drunk driver, the smoker and the terrorist since He has allowed these things as some hyper-Calvinists state.

That is blasphemous.

Someone quoted the example of a Calvinist believer who fell down the stairs and hurt himself. He said of this accident, "I am glad that that is over but it was part of God's Will for me!"

The Vietnamese girl that I loved died in my arms in October 1967. Not a day goes by without my thinking of her. She was only 20.

Why did she die? Had God put the virus into the London swimming pool that killed her? No, of course not. Was God prosecuted through the Law Courts? No, the owners of that accursed swimming pool were.

There is another answer.

The Bible declares that there is an eternity for everyone following this earthly life. Those who are true Christians are saved to eternal life of blessedness.

The Calvinists believe that God elected and predestined who He was going to save before the foundation of the world and therefore who He was going to consign to a lost eternity. And it is asserted by Calvinists that this is all cut and dried and that no one has a say in it.

To be killed in a road traffic accident is one thing; to be in a lost eternity is another thing.

Let us put it another way. A baby dies. Obviously it does not understand Christianity no more than it understands nuclear power. Not all babies are in the elect say Calvinists so is God going to cast dead babies into damnation? Luther taught that all sick babies must be baptised so as to attain heaven or they are damned. So are all babies who die predestined to be saved if they are baptised in time?

Here is a primitive tribe who know nothing of the Gospel of Christ. No missionary or other Christian agency has reached them. Are they destined for a lost eternity? The fact that they do not know Christ is not their fault. Calvin would say that they are eternally damned and that would make God cruel.

A 15 year old girl came to me one day. She came from a family of active atheists and, in addition, she was abused at home both sexually and emotionally. She knew nothing of love let alone the love of God. Had she died in one of these terrible physical assaults would God have consigned her to a lost eternity?

Here is a man who reads the Bible and believes the Gospel; he repents and is baptised, meets with other Christians and preaches the Gospel faithfully. But he is not a Calvinist and does not agree with some of their teaching and so is told that he is not one of God's elect and, therefore, is not saved. The man dies. Is God going to annul his salvation?

Calvinists say yes although some may not say so. But if this is so, the God of Calvinism is cruel and not the God of love and forgiveness that I read about in the Bible.

God is not willing that any should perish but that ALL should come to repentance (2 Peter 3. 9)

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