

## THE BEGINNING

*In the beginning, GOD!*

*In the beginning GOD CREATED!*

*In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth. Well, that is the way the Bible people saw it. They must have come to that conclusion by the way of experience, intuition, instinct, and faith.*

*Whatever it was that caused them to perceive that GOD was involved in the incident of CREATION also caused them, the early people, to set standards of right and wrong. Some acts and attitudes were deemed good, and some were considered bad, evil. So righteousness and sin got into the perceived mix. GOD was perceived as being good, totally good. Anything opposite to, or opposed to, GOD was wrong, sin. And it was admitted that there was evil in the world. Some how evil got into the mix of CREATION! That fact has forever fermented great controversy!*

*Now, in our times, we hear much talk about "evolution" and "intelligent design". But some strongly objected to "intelligent design" saying that it was just another way of describing "creationism". Intelligent design advocates challenge evolution on the basis of science and not just biblical teachings. They do not believe that evolution alone explains biological life. The Universe is just too complex not to have some "intelligence" guiding its formation and function.*

*Scientists of all kinds are constantly studying the Universe and are discovering things that cause them, over and over to, discard previously held theories. But the real search that should claim our attention is that of the "spiritual nature" of human kind. Why*

*have so many people, over such a long period of time, believed in and felt the reality and claims of a being perceived as GOD?*

*I regularly receive Faculty Journals from four different Theological Seminaries. They are all "wordy", professional, erudite, thoughtful, and helpful. Recently I received a manual in which professors dealt with the subject of "theodicy". Now that isn't a word that you often hear from the pulpit or read about in the newspapers, but in reality, it is often talked about in such places. What is it? It is the basic defense of GOD'S goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of sin in our world. One professor, discussing theodicy, reflecting on a sonnet by a Scottish preacher, said: "Because I belong to Christ, nothing can remove me from God's protection...from this well-spring of living water... comes the question, 'What shall I do?' 'How shall I live?'. The answer: "Get to work!" In other words, "give praise to God, trust God and get on with the mission..." I realize that this is the strong answer of faith and a commitment to a God we can never fully understand. In a somewhat less somber context, it made me think of a second world war soldier's song: "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition..." There is, indeed, a real war going on in and around our lives, and we have to get on with it. Sure, it makes us want to know more about God and this Creation in which we live.*

*How do we commit to, and trust an omnipotent and just God who lets it rain on the just and unjust, who lets the sun shine on good and the evil? Who creates a world in which evil exists. That is "Theodicy's" major concern. As we look at our own times, we see and experience much that moves us to reflect*

*on how faith in the good and omnipotent God can be sustained in the terrible times the world is now experiencing. Already some in the earthquake torn parts of the world are saying that God is punishing people for their sins. In other places people are saying, "It is the signs of the 'second coming'". Again we are driven back to the question of 'beginnings', how God creates and how God rules.*

*John Calvin, in his doctrine of Predestination, had all the questions answered for all eternity. But the Church found that it had to make some adjustments in that doctrine. God did not appear to be a grand engineer who cranked up the Universe and sent it spinning according to specific fixed rules and laws.*

*But neither did the Universe seem to just 'evolve'. There were certain things that were dependable, that worked, that could be identified. Calvin had some of it right. Darwin also had some of it right. But when that bird grew a beak that made it possible for it to harvest the food it found on the Galapagos Islands and survive, well. That seemed like a bit of intelligent adaptation, or intelligent evolution, or some kind of intelligence in Creation. Scientist and theologians and philosophers are working on such ideas all the time, coming to conclusions and re-shaping conclusions. The world rolls on filled with goodness and misery.*

*When the Bible people said, "In the beginning God created...", no date was set. Actually we have no idea of when and how this Universe came into its beginning. Associating the "Big Bang" theory of creation with a peace loving and benevolent God requires some mental stretch. And there is the matter of time. But the New Testament*

*counsels us: "... be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day..." (2Peter 3:8) That does serve to put some perspective on eternal time.*

*Presbyterian beliefs are still tinctured with Calvinistic flavors. There still stands the belief in a benevolent and omnipotent God, a loving and punishing God, a forgiving and redeeming God, a just God. And the Church declares that Jesus is the Great Head of the Church, at one with God, and supreme revealer of God, and the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

*We know little about beginnings and endings. Fortunately, we are not called upon to justify the ways of God. Rather, we see ourselves as a people justified by the grace of God and charged with a life endeavor to make the world a wholesome place.*

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