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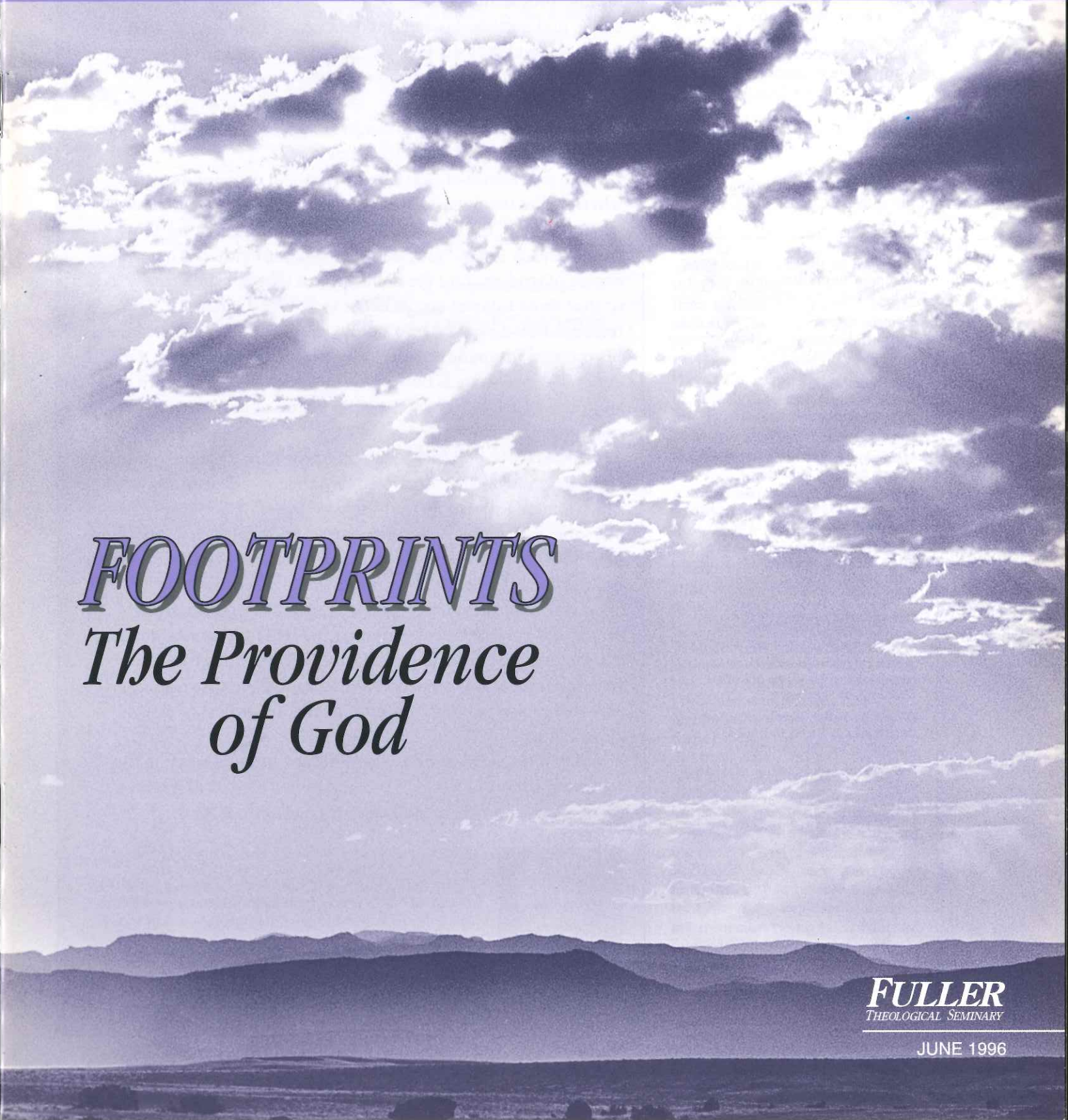
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THEOLOGY, NEWS AND NOTES

A dramatic landscape photograph of a cloudy sky over a mountain range. The sky is filled with large, dark, billowing clouds, with sunlight breaking through in several places, creating a bright, hazy glow. The mountains in the foreground are dark and silhouetted against the lighter sky. The overall mood is one of awe and grandeur.

FOOTPRINTS
The Providence
of God

FULLER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

JUNE 1996

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Introduction

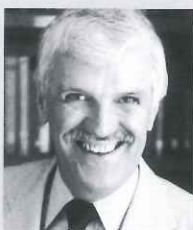
The journey of a lifetime leaves many footprints. And one's journey is influenced by many different events—some over which one seems to have some control, and others which come one's way unforeseen. I recall a lecture or two in seminary on the "providence of God." It all seemed awesome, ethereal, far away, and quite lacking in any practical concern. As more footprints are added to the journey, however, one begins to see that the providence of God is integral to life. It gives us direction. It gives us power for the journey. Awareness of God's providence adds luster and meaning to our lives. Providence might even keep us from dropping off a precipice one day.

The providence of God is seen mostly in occasional events when we are younger. Then we view it only in fragments. Some event happens, through which we see God's hand at work. We may even say it was "providential." But with maturity comes a degree of wisdom, and the ability to put together life's fragments, so that those isolated events begin to fit into a pattern. Given time, we reflect on how God's providence—his strength, his mercy, his nurture, his guidance, his love—was the warp and woof of our entire life. *Providence* is how we describe the events in which God was present, but it is also part of the entire pattern of living fully and graciously before God.

Upon comparing notes with others, we find that they too have seen the hand of God superintending their lives in unseen ways. Thus, one might assume that the providence of God is revealed in the same way for all. On closer examination, however, it becomes clear that God's revelation comes through his Spirit to each person quite differently, befitting each individual's experience.

As we read these observations of several Fuller Seminary senior and emeriti faculty members, we will find similarities in their experiences regarding God's providence. But we will also note the unique way in which God has guided each person and revealed himself to each one empirically, regardless of life's circumstances.

May our journeys of faith be enriched through reading the following witnesses to God's providence, as these distinguished theologians share from their faith for our faith. ■



JAMES H. MORRISON, chair of the Editorial Board of *Theology, News and Notes*, has been pastor of the Beverly Hills Presbyterian Church in Beverly Hills, California, since 1974. He earned a B.D. degree from Fuller Seminary in 1956 and a Th.M. degree from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1958.

Hindsight, Foresight, and Insight

BY ROBERT N. SCHAPER

I like clever lines, and I remember so well one that my elderly and respected pastor came up with. A rather pompous brother introduced him by commenting that he had spent all his life ministering in that particular community, hadn't he? "Not yet," was the response. I feel a bit the same. To be given this assignment is very close to being grouped with the dinosaurs, and I am inclined to demur, "Not yet." But, on the other hand, I have had hundreds of times to reflect on the evidences of the loving concern of my Heavenly Father, and I welcome the opportunity to give that awareness some kind of order and direction.

I am also impressed that this response is anticipated to be a *personal* witness. This does not mean it has no academic, theological integrity, but that it is more of a reflection on my *experience* of providence than an essay on what providence is or ought to be. I found it reassuring to review some standard theological works, and I delighted again in moving from recent thought to past mentors—Paul K. Jewett, Charles Hodge, A. H. Strong, G.C. Berkouwer, A.B. Bruce, C.S. Lewis. (The list could include others as well.)

I am pleasantly reminded that providence as a theological concept is the culmination of a process that begins with creation and proceeds to preservation. It was the good will of God that brought about the creation of all that is, and that good will created a good world. It follows that what is worth God's while to create is worth God's while to

care for. The *preservation* of the world is subject to the will of God, but all the processes of life as we know it seem marshaled to make possible the preservation and continuation of life. That commitment to preservation leads to an understanding of providence which is nothing less than God's control over all that is—the universe at large, our physical world (we still call things we cannot control "acts of God"), the animal creation, and the birth and lot in

What is worth God's while to create is worth God's while to care for.

life of humankind. That control extends to successes, failures, things accidental or insignificant, protection, provision and, especially, answers to prayer and the regulation of evil. There are scores of scripture passages that confirm all of these providential acts of God.

Providence is the exercise of divine foresight to implement God's will. Of course God is never the efficient *cause* of evil, but God's will is present as preventive, permissive, directive, or determinative in all evil. My concern is to review and reclaim what providence is in relation to our individual lives. I have found new confidence in defining providence as the gracious work of God in ordering the events of

my life for my good and God's glory.

The title for this article begins with "hindsight," and that is where one must begin. The evidence of the grace of God is not clearly perceived until enough distance has occurred to allow a broad vision of the events being considered. It is easy to misread any given situation and assume that the *what* of the matter is clear and that the *why* is therefore obvious. It is not quite so simple.

I perceived this in the rather frustrating (at that time) event in my ministry as a pastor. I had accepted a call to the church in Sierra Madre, California, where I was eventually to spend 14 years. At first, the prospects were uncertain and the dangers unknown. After a short time in the new charge, I received a call from a large, well-known congregation in the East. I felt I could not frustrate the congregation I had agreed to serve by such a short tenure, but I must confess I thought the timing was rather poorly arranged by a questionable providence. As it turned out, the move would have been the end to what eventually became a magnificent adventure. It took a while before I could clearly see that. And it takes almost a lifetime for us to discern the good hand of God in many of our experiences, even the more difficult ones.

Where does one begin to acknowledge the guiding and supervising work of God in our lives? My experience as pastor, preacher, and teacher has impressed me with increasing force how very much our lives are inexorably, magnificently, and mysteriously determined and directed at the moment of our conception. When I think of how many things were settled for me in that fateful second: my sex, body, brain, race, place, heritage. I must believe that all that has gone together to make me a human being was ordained by God and that, in some sense,

the possibilities, the potentials that both limit and extend me are pleasing to him. It is God who defines what I am and what I can be. This acts as a corrective to the cavalier dealings with self-esteem that are so prevalent. I cannot be whatever I want to be, but thanks be to God, I can be whatever God wants me to be.

The inventory for my human package included a sinful nature—which I also seem to note in my companions. This means I will not be fully content with how my life has been lived and how I have used all the amazing powers we humans are granted. However, this does not destroy my profound awareness that my very existence is the gift of God.

If I can regard my life as God's precious gift, then I am driven to acknowledge that my death is also ultimately in God's hands. And I very much want that to be so. I have preached often on Jesus' encounter with Peter by the Sea of Galilee after his resurrection. In John 21, Jesus predicts what death Peter will die to glorify God. This is in contrast to John, who will live long. Is this awareness only for the apostles? Of course not. It cannot be that the God who marks the sparrow's fall is indifferent to the death of any human, distinguished as we are to be part of the race that God chose to enter and redeem.

So to start, we can say that the biggest issues of all—my birth and my death—are in the hands of God. This does not mean that God wills in a causative sense the death of every human being. Death stalks the world in many guises that grieve the heart of God as they do us. Violence, disease, abuse, and crime cut short the lives of millions. God permits the processes of destruction that are part of the world we live in to grind on, seemingly unabated.

But nothing functions apart from God, especially in relation to human life. Peter should not have been crucified head downward in Rome. But Jesus did not forsake him in that moment, nor does he forsake us.

Problems begin to emerge at this point, and there are problems aplenty. There is such mystery in all of this. I guess one obstacle is sheer numbers, and that problem emerges with every corollary truth about providence. How can the life of every human

I cannot be whatever I want to be, but thanks be to God, I can be whatever God wants me to be.

being, past and present, be endowed with such significance and granted such meticulous attention by the God of the universe—all at the same time? They tell me that I have more cells in my brain than there are galaxies in the universe. I'm sure that should help me understand that the numbers in the macro and microcosm assure us that the God who created all of this is perfectly capable of managing it. But it's still a problem. I have to confess that I would not appreciate getting a busy signal when it's my prayer that's being lifted to God. But the point is that I don't get such a signal. My faintest cry is heard.

Another way to think about this is to realize that nothing can be so large or complex that the smallest details are not vital. We see this again and again in our daily lives. In fact, the more complex something may be, the more important the small details become. This problem of supposed smallness in the presence of the massive size of our uni-

verse is exacerbated by the fact that the smallness isn't the problem as long as everything is going along all right. We really don't mind being one small person in the drama of life until we are that one small person who is unhappy, or unwell, or unnoticed, or unfulfilled, or *un-something* that makes us dependent on some outside help.

If we have defined providence as the activity of God whereby God's will is accomplished in all things of the physical and moral universe, then there are two major areas in which our understanding of, and faith in, the providence of God are vitally involved. One is seeking the will of God in regard to our decisions. The other is seeking the will of God in our intercessions. One is seeking the blessing and guidance of God for our pathway, especially as this determines our future. The other is seeking the blessing and guidance of God for others. It seems to me that we spend most of our lives in those two endeavors.

We are decision-making beings, and the exercise of *will* is what makes us human and moral. Most of our decisions are matters of indifference. Literally thousands of our decisions have no real moral or spiritual significance, and they become problems only when we give them more weight than they deserve. Yet there are moral potentials lurking around almost every decision. We could order a ham or cheese sandwich and not be morally culpable, unless we defied our doctor's orders, or stole the money to buy the sandwich. But how well I remember the series of major decisions that I faced, and the deep concern that I would do what the Lord wanted me to do.

The list is familiar—starting with marriage. I never had the hubris to believe that I was the

only person in the world who could be a good husband for my wonderful wife. Should I have closed out her options at such a tender age? Then there were the big choices in the ministry pursuit, and they would be lifelong in their effect. There were family choices about size and timing. Each seemed to have its own scenario, and there were no clear-cut rules to check off on the way to certainty.

One decision was especially significant. The call came to me to join the faculty and administration of Fuller Theological Seminary. I had been 14 years in the pastorate and enjoyed a good ministry in a good church. The church board had called me to the task, so I told them of the opportunity and asked them to discern the will of God for me. We went on a retreat and prayed together. They did not want me to leave, but they advised me to take the post and gave me their blessing. They and I have never questioned the rightness of that decision.

I have often thought how close this process came to the procedure recommended by Henry Drummond scores of years ago for seeking the will of God. It has been replicated in essence by hundreds:

1. Pray.
2. Think.
3. Talk to wise people but do not regard their decision as final.
4. Beware of the bias of your own will, but do not be too much afraid of it.
5. Meantime, do the next thing.
6. When decision and action are necessary, go ahead.
7. Never reconsider the decision when it is finally acted on.
8. You will probably not find out until afterwards, perhaps long afterwards, that you have been led by God.

(I would concur, but number 7 gives me a problem. It is largely a matter of what the decision is

and the timing it includes. I think we can, in good faith, make poor decisions that can finally be reversed ethically and honorably. No one is infallible.)

I have taken renewed courage and joy from considering the relationship of father and child as a paradigm for my seeking the will of God. If I were asked by my child what I would like for him or her to do, I would probably give the question back and ask what he or she would like to do. Then I would ask why

We are decision-making beings, and the exercise of will is what makes us human and moral.

my child wanted to do that. And I would probably be happy to go along with the decision if I saw it to be mature, loving, and considerate. I find this a marvelous dynamic of providence, because I am convinced that God can accomplish his divine purpose by more than one scheme—but that the one chosen will open up the possibilities of grace effectively. All this is to say that God is always more interested in the *person* than the plan.

Another significant exercise affected by our concept of the providential will of God is intercession. I'm sure we all learn more and more how much more prayer is than intercession, and we have no problem with God's will in our prayers of praise, thanks, confession, adoration, and communion. But we do pray

for one another and for the church in the world *in faith* that we are asking in accord with the will of God.

I'm sure we know the "four D's" of answered prayer: direct, delayed, diverted, and denied. All are answers, though not what we usually mean by *answers to prayer*. We would be most surprised to hear testimony in a prayer meeting of praise to God that what someone asked for was denied. I think we also need two "H's" for our prayers of intercession: honesty and humility.

Loving *honesty* keeps us from playing games with God. We need not piously try to pay our respects to an unknown "will of God" when our hearts are breaking with love for someone who is in a desperate condition of body or spirit. How can a loving God find objection to a prayer that is love in its deepest expression? We pray for others, often not knowing what would be best for them.

Our *humility* should require that we do not dictate terms to God nor give instructions as to how something should be done—but that we are unashamed, in our weakness and ignorance, to pour out our soul in love for the needs of others. Such love is not misguided, because it will end in —Please turn to page 18.

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Life's New Beginnings

BY RALPH P. MARTIN

Occasionally, a sentence is spoken in our hearing which has limpet-like power. It fastens itself on the mind and memory and refuses to shake loose. From time to time it is recalled and, at each remembrance, it speaks with fresh appeal.

One such example, in my experience, is the dictum of the Scottish divine, Alexander Whyte: "Life is made up of new beginnings." This simple sentence has been a reminder that a new chapter in life's book is about to be written as we turn the page. One phase of life comes to a close, and a fresh start is about to be made. I have heard this word at significant turning points in life's course, as my face has been set in a different direction.

History, of course, is replete with notable illustrations. So I have felt to be in honorable company—even if these examples are of the illustrious and the brave: Caesar crosses the Rubicon; Dick Whittington hears the bells of London Town summoning him back; Washington crosses over the Delaware; Bonhoeffer will not stay in the security of American academia, but returns to Hitler's Germany; and, in our generation, Sheila Cassidy medically treats a wounded guerrilla in Chile. The list goes on. (We can supply our own favorite names.)

A THEME WITH VARIATIONS

The theme is God's providence, that is, God's wise, loving, and purposeful disposing of our ways as each part of life's pilgrim way unfolds before us. I recall learning this some 40 years ago as I picked up Roger Hazelton's book,¹ attracted by its striking title and racy style. What struck me about that treatment—then as now often neglected in theological writing—was its realism, with a bold grasping of

difficulties and no simple solutions proffered.

Instead, we are invited to consider the two great enemies, the formidable roadblocks in the way to a facile acceptance of this belief. Hazelton identifies these as *anxiety* and *ambiguity*. We are prone to worry when life's

We wish that our course were even and clearly laid out before us, and we could see the next steps with assured vision and certainty.

problems loom large, and we question whether God is good. We wish that our course were even and clearly laid out before us, and we could see the next steps with assured vision and certainty. But this is not the case. Often, as one door closes, we are kept waiting for a new opening to emerge. Then it is time to fret and fuss, as we grow forgetful of God's past dealings and become anxious.

The old commentator Bengel, in the early 1700s, of whom I was reminded only recently at the seminary, put it wisely and well: "Curare and orare mix less easily than oil and water" (he wrote in Latin). *Worry*

and *prayer* relate as problem and solution. The cynical remark, Why pray when you can worry? is turned on its head, as the Apostle Paul bids us in a letter to the Philippians (4:6) on which, in the same divine scheme, I seem to have devoted the bulk of my academic and literary life!

The variations that unpack how I see providence—in action in one human life—may now be rehearsed. Indeed, the invitation to put thoughts on paper takes me back almost exactly 30 years ago, when my wife, Lily, and I first came to visit Fuller Seminary and look around, in a two-week period. Pasadena in the spring looked so attractive! And we felt that there was a door about to open.

It was not until two years later, in 1969, that we were able to make the transition. I left my appointment in Manchester, England, after several happy years as a lecturer in the university, alongside F.F. Bruce. I pondered then, as I do now, how strangely life has fallen into ten-year segments for me. Before that, there had been ten years in pastoral ministry, in which we had served in two successive (and not unsuccessful, by British standards) pastorates. On the family front, we had grown to be four members, with the two girls ready for a change in their formative years. And so it came about that, with a little misgiving and some hesitation about what to expect, we sold our home, severed ties, said farewell to family and friends—and arrived in Pasadena. True to form, it was the start of another ten-year cycle, with faces headed in a new direction: Go West! Life was taking on a new beginning.

On most of these counts, fears were groundless and quickly allayed. The family settled in and my years at Fuller began to lengthen, with extra duties which were not burdensome. The joy of teaching is its own reward—with service to local churches, chiefly as adult Bible class teacher and interim

pastor, complementing the academic involvement.

Lily shared so much of this, with the faculty wives and student services and her teaching to women's groups in the Los Angeles area. The family had found a niche. And, eventually, each daughter married and grandchildren came along. Life was sweet, with some bonus blessings added.

Upon reflection, two significant opportunities enriched our lot. One was foreseen, the other unexpected—that is, until life took a turn that was almost unbelievable and certainly unimaginable. I refer first to the burgeoning of the graduate studies program. From its small but important beginnings, the provision of courses leading to a Ph.D. in Theology began to play an increasingly major part in my life, with a succession of applicants, candidates and, eventually, graduates in higher degrees. The quality of these men and women was an added satisfaction, matched by the way most of them received teaching posts throughout the world and, in some instances, by how they have distinguished themselves in their books and articles and teaching influences. It is just as gratifying today to see this program continue to expand and to provide teachers and scholars.

The unexpected opening came with a consultation involving President David Allan Hubbard and the Word Publishing Company in Dallas, Texas. With the valued input of Provost Glenn Barker, we sat round a table in President Hubbard's office to map out a strategy that would, in due course, bring to birth the Word Biblical Commentary. Little did any of us then realize the enormity of such an undertaking, and the eventual worldwide success of these volumes in contributing to the exegesis of Holy Scripture and

the consolidation of evangelical scholarship in the service of the church.

With the end of the illustrious series now in sight, by the year 2000 (our millennial dreams to be realized then), the editors look back with gratitude

How far do we continue to believe that God's wise, good, and beneficent purposes are being worked out in all of life?

for all that has been achieved and the place this series has carved for itself in academic circles around the world. Beginnings require endings—and the end (in the dual sense of *telos*) of WBC is in view!

LIFE'S SHADOWS—AND BEYOND

In the midst of this euphoric phase, a dark shadow with several faces and facets began to close in. Two family tragedies came in swift succession, with the drowning of a one-year-old grandchild, followed by a near-identical accident that almost claimed the life of a toddler on the other side of the family. These harrowing experiences left the grandparents with two bitter traumas: bereavement for one family, followed by the shared pain of seeing the surviving child rescued—only to be in a coma and in dependence upon life-support for feeding and mobility by the other family members.

The two life-events came with different reactions: a short, sharp shock of sudden death, and a long, drawn-out reliving of sorrow and disability over the

past ten years. And these life-trials took their inevitable toll.

To relive these events and their aftermath is painful, and the tragedies cast their long shadow into the future. Lily's mental health, as robust as anyone's, began to deteriorate. It is just ten years ago this summer that her decline set in, with the dreary, weary unfolding of doctors' exams, hospital tests and treatments, psychiatric evaluations and diagnoses, insurance battles and defeats—all leading to a decision almost as painful. This involved yet another upheaval and a move back to England, with the medical promise that this would be for Lily's good and stability.

Alas, it was not to be. Within three months, she was back in the hospital in England, with yet more signs and symptoms of decline and worsening condition. Now, Providence took a deeper meaning and faced us with some tough questions: Is God still in control? Does prayer work? How far do we continue to believe that God's wise, good, and beneficent purposes are being worked out in

—Please turn to page 19.

RALPH P. MARTIN, Ph.D., distinguished scholar in residence at Fuller Seminary, was professor of New Testament from 1969 to 1988 and director of Fuller's Graduate Studies Program for 12 years. Formerly, he was a professor in the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield in England from 1988 to 1995. Among his more than 20 books and numerous articles are his recent works *Jude, 1-2 Peter* (Cambridge, 1994); *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon* (John Knox, 1992); and *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology*, revised edition (Zondervan, 1991).



God's Daily Attention

BY ROBERT P. MEYE

About the time that I was set to write these reflections on the providence of God in my life, I was standing in church on a Sunday morning, listening to one of my favorite hymns, "Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty." This great hymn by the German Reform poet Joachim Neander has always thrilled my soul. As I embraced the words, I realized afresh that this was my own testimony to the providence of God. Notice some of these glorious words:

*The Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation! . . .
For he is thy health and salvation!
Who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth . . .
Shelters thee under his wings, yea,
so gently sustaineth!*

*The Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
Surely his goodness and mercy daily attend thee,
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
If with his love he befriend thee.*

"Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty" is a hymn of grateful praise to God who watches over us in life and in death. In the hymn we move back and forth from grateful reflection about *who* God is for us to *how* God is for us—daily!

At the outset of my reflections on the providence of God, I want to give my witness first and foremost to the ring of truth that I experience in the words of this hymn. This is *my* song, *my* hymn of praise. I delight in the words and the truth that God's goodness and mercy *daily attend me*.

But it would be a great mistake to view this recognition on my part as some kind of

praiseworthy achievement. No! I know these words to be true even as I recognize the vast distance that separates the Almighty from this poor, incomplete, but joyous and grateful pilgrim.

How do I write about the providence of God in my life? Literally, it has no beginning and no ending. I was dedicated to God in my mother's womb. And today, at the ripe young age

I still know the hand of God to be on my life daily.

of 66, in my disability retirement (having endured a total of some 25 hours of cancer surgery), I still know the hand of God to be on my life *daily*. In spite of the vastness of the subject, there are a few things that can be noted here:

Some time ago, a representative of one of the *Who's Who* publications—which was interested in listing my name—called and asked a question regarding my life: "To what, other than hard work, do you owe your success?" My initial answer was a half-truth: "I guess that I would think of being in the right place at the right time, and experiencing a first-class educational track." That answer was true, insofar as it went. What it did not say was *why* I was in the right place at the right time and *how* I happened to be in the right educational track and *who* put me there. Indeed, my life, apart from the providence of God, is an unlikely event.

I was born into a rural Oregon farm home, and into an

extended family from which no one had ever been to college—and some not even to high school. Ours was not *big* farming. This was *stoop-labor* farming, wresting a living out of the Oregon forest.

We never thought of ourselves as poor people. But both of my parents had to work long and hard for others, as well as on their own small farm, just to hold things together. Consequently, I spent a lot of time at home alone with a younger sister. Part of the time I was in a romance with the Oregon woods; some of the time I was in an emotional quandary. But I kept those things pretty much to myself.

I survived boyhood even though, in running farm machinery at a very young age, I endangered my life again and again. I am truly lucky just to be *alive* today. And I survived solitude which, as an adult, I now know how to live with and enjoy!

We didn't have many books around the house of interest to a growing youngster. But we had an old one-volume encyclopedia which I must have read through dozens of times. And I read the Bible and memorized lots of verses—even chapters. Early on, during a summer Bible memory competition, I memorized Romans 8. This chapter has always been central in my life and teaching and preaching.

While I lived in an immediate family, an extended family, and a church family, it was always clear to me that love for and obedience to God had the very highest priority in life—even when people sometimes fell far short of that high standard. Thus, the footprints of believers have been heavy upon my life from the very beginning. And, in retrospect, I see how much a young life is shaped by the lives of others, how much it wills and

thinks about God, and how devoted it can be to God.

I attended the very best high school imaginable, for one living such an isolated farm existence. Although it did not prepare me to be the star athlete that I would like to have been, evidently it prepared me to write. An English teacher sensed some writing skills in me, and things went from there. I became sports editor and associate editor of my high school newspaper which won All-America honors three years running. And I have enjoyed writing ever since. (Who would have guessed then that someday I would write and publish a doctoral dissertation on Jesus while studying in a world-class university in Switzerland? Or that I would write a major entry on "The Spirituality of Paul" for the recent InterVarsity Press *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*?)

I wrote in an earlier issue of *Theology, News and Notes* about the religious turmoil in my life (known only to me at the time), as the forces of revivalism, Pentecostalism, and my own immaturity in life and faith all clashed and mixed together. Thank God that when I arrived at Stanford University, there was a wonderful, mature Presbyterian minister who served the area as an InterVarsity staffer. His ministry to us students and his personal relationship to me helped to steady my life and faith. His counsel also hovered over my romance with my future wife, Mary, a romance that is alive and well some 46 years later.

His example and my InterVarsity training prepared me well for my Naval service, wherein I was in a constant relationship with needy, vulnerable people and served my ship and task unit as "acting chaplain." Midway in my period of military service during the Korean War, I decided to go to law school. But in the winter of 1954, I received an overpowering call to the ministry, beyond the

kind of ministry that I had been doing. This was interesting in itself, for my parents had always engaged in ministry without needing an educational track to make it happen, and so had I.

But as little as I knew about seminaries, my entry into the educational whirl and my observation of a seminary-trained minister persuaded me that I needed more training. So I

I never had a day without the sense that I was where God wanted me to be.

applied to Fuller Seminary. That part was easy. In my mind, I had but two choices: Princeton or Fuller. But my family and I—even after I left home—had always listened attentively to the "Old Fashioned Revival Hour" radio broadcasts of Charles E. Fuller. (Even now, I can still hear that wonderful radio voice!) So there was no real choice. Fuller was where I belonged.

By the time I reached seminary in the fall of 1954, our son Douglas (who now pastors in Las Vegas) was already old enough to delight his parents, and a second child was due to be born at Christmas. Our daughter, Marianne, was born on Christmas Eve (and is now associate professor of New Testament at Fuller). We had some savings and I had the financial assistance of the GI Bill, but I still had to work long and hard to support my family while at seminary. So, being an ex-farm boy, I took up gardening and soon had the very best landscaping in the area!

But after three years, overwork left me feeling that I was not yet prepared for the rigors of a pastoral ministry with a strong emphasis on preaching and

teaching. So I enrolled in Fuller's Th.M. in New Testament program, from which a long line of teachers and professors were to emerge. By fall of my second year, I felt a clear call to prepare for a ministry in theological education. For 30 years thereafter, I never had a day without the sense that I was where God wanted me to be.

I always held the Fuller faculty in the very highest regard. But to think that I would one day return and become dean of the seminary would have been a preposterous thought! When I completed my program at Fuller, I was accepted for doctoral studies by the faculty of the University of Basel in Switzerland. It just happened that David Wallace, filling in at Fuller for George Ladd while Ladd was on sabbatical, had just experienced the educational scene in Basel. He steered me there, in spite of the fact that I had planned to head toward Scotland. To study with the likes of Karl Barth, Oscar Cullmann, Walter Eichrod, and Bo Reicke—all at one time—not to mention Gerhard Ebeling and Eduard Schweizer at Zurich—was the experience of a lifetime! Together, they inspired in me a profound appreciation of theological study in depth in the service of the church and helped to develop that all-important "theological instinct" so vital in all theological service.

George Ladd came to Europe and stayed with Mary and me toward the end of our study in Basel. When he asked what I was going to do when I completed my doctoral thesis, I said that I planned to go back to the United States and "knock on doors." He mused aloud that he would write a few letters on my behalf. He did, and I was invited to teach at three theological schools.

I had become an American Baptist during my last year at Fuller, and I felt that if God had

led me in that decision, then I should say yes to the American Baptist seminary invitation, particularly one in such an important center of theological education as Chicago. So I went to Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, the school from which Fuller had drawn two of its four founding faculty members (Carl Henry and Harold Lindsell).

But Northern Baptist had been in a decline. Thus, in 1971, I had been invited to become dean of a moribund seminary. Then two important events happened, one large and one small. First, nationwide, thousands of young people (such as the "Jesus people") were coming alive to Christ in a new way. Meanwhile, at the seminary, the morning after my installation address, as some board members were reflecting on the challenges I gave in my address, one brash young board member asked what they were going to do about it. Something was done. A dramatic new period of growth began to take place at Northern Baptist. It was literally transformed from a dying seminary to a lively place of preparation for ministry.

In general, however, during that period the spiritual condition of seminaries in America was not good. Charles Whiston, a man of prayer, had carried out a kind of spiritual inventory of seminaries under the auspices of the Lilly Foundation. In his published summary, he did not provide a good report on their spiritual tone. Thereafter, with Lilly funding, he brought together a group of seminary professors on an annual basis. Together, we joined in a covenant of prayer for ourselves, for one another, for our seminary, and for other seminaries.

By the mid-seventies, the American Association of Theological Schools was registering

Whiston's concern. It issued a series of special grants to support inquiry into spiritual formation in the seminary setting. (Who could have believed in the seventies that some 20 years later, virtually every seminary in America would have a spiritual formation emphasis or program of some sort!)

In the winter and spring of 1976, I was on sabbatical leave in Europe, focusing on Christian spirituality. While in Rome I

*I can only be
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because God has
been so
wonderfully alive
to me.*

received a telephone call from Fuller Seminary. Provost Glenn Barker wanted to talk to me about becoming dean of Fuller's School of Theology. Me, a dean at Fuller? Not many years earlier I had been dean of one of America's small, struggling, seminaries. Now to be asked to consider similar service at one of the country's largest seminaries—this had not been in my plans!

I left behind my sabbatical leave to serve in a seminary whose tone in the seventies, according to its president, David Allen Hubbard, was set by Robert Boyd Munger, with his persistent and persuasive challenges to the spiritual life in Christ. Indeed, "Dr. Bob" had been my radio pastor during my college years at Stanford. Every Sunday in those days, I had been engaged with some InterVarsity colleagues in a mission to "bad boys" at a detention center in San Francisco. Through Dr. Bob's wonder-

fully warm voice, he would minister to us on the radio during the Sunday morning worship hour as we traveled to the center.

Then later, when I stopped off at Fuller en route to my 1976 European sabbatical inquiry, a faith renewal team led by Dr. Bob had laid hands on me, asking God's blessing on my project. I never imagined at the time that my project would one day find fulfillment at Fuller, with a growing emphasis on the spiritual life and spiritual formation!

Fuller was—and is—an exciting place to be. But, in the fall of 1989, the excitement for me was interrupted by a different form of excitement. I underwent major surgery for cancer in my oral cavity. Thank God that we did not know then that five years later, I would have to undergo a 15-hour surgery ordeal at the UCLA Medical Center with two goals in view: to remove the cancer in order to save my life and to save my "voice box."

Thank God, as of this writing, I am alive and well
—Please turn to page 19.

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Forgiving God

BY LEWIS B. SMEDES

Anybody who knows God at all knows that forgiving God makes no sense and is actually an outrageous idea. Forgiving always tucks blame in its lining and God never does anything he can be blamed for. Or even have to apologize for. Forgiving God would be tantamount to impeaching him, because a God who needs to be forgiven for doing bad things to people does not deserve to be God.

Yet I have known decent people who were assaulted by a sorrow so heavy and pains so unfair that they had cause to wonder. How could God sit up in heaven surrounded by his seraphim and cherubim and watch while three of his earthly children were slaughtered in one cruel moment by a drunken driver? God could have saved them with his little pinkie. But he didn't lift a finger. The Holy One had some explaining to do, they felt, and they wondered whether they could ever forgive him for letting them down so badly when they had trusted him so totally.

I have, I suppose, as much awe for the Maker of the universe as most people, but I do not believe that he would take it all that personally if my suffering friends got it into their heads to forgive him. Forgiving God, like getting married, is certainly not something to be done lightly, if at all, and it certainly never hurts to think about it before jumping in. I propose to share some thinking I have done about it.

I want to consider whether it might ever make sense to forgive God. To get an answer, I am going to consult two sources of

simple common sense—divine and human—about how God carries on when people are injured and wronged and what we should do about him when things go badly wrong with us.

First then, the voice of divine common sense.

I imagined once that before I was born here, I had lived forever, it seemed, as a happy angel up in heaven when God called me into his presence one day to make me a proposition. I could, if I chose, go on floating

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calls for.*

for endless years on cushions of air, never stub my toe, let alone catch a head cold or get cancer, running God's errands. But he thought I might want to consider a change.

"What I offer you is an opportunity to take up a new existence as a humanoid on our little earth planet. I would nestle you into a fragile organism called a body in which you would work and play and love with other body creatures like yourself."

"Sounds interesting. What would be the advantages for me?" I was a cheeky angel.

"Several. But just to mention a few, you could get hugs from people, and I think you might

like that. You could eat chicken salad, take pictures of sunsets and hear lovely symphonies on CDs. Maybe the best part is that you could make love to another humanoid and have a family."

"Sounds good. What's the down side?"

"The down side is that being a body makes you vulnerable to pain. Bodies can give you more pleasure in one night than you have had in an angel's lifetime, but they are delicate things, and complicated, so they break down now and then, which can be frightfully troublesome. Besides, when you bump into the hard things you find on earth, you tend to bruise badly. And the fun you have loving people with bodies invites a lot of mischief that you won't really understand until you try it. In any case, you cannot have the pleasures of body-life without the risks of pain.

"Well, as long as the odds are reasonable."

"There is one more risk, the chanciest part of the adventure. It is the freedom that comes with being human. Freedom will be what you need most, but if you misuse it, you can lose it. And that can cause a lot of mischief."

"Well, at least I know what I will be in for."

"No, you don't. Not yet. But I will promise you one thing: Whatever happens, I'll be on call. What do you say to my proposition?"

I did not think about it twice. Being human struck me as the chance of a lifetime. "Yes, I'll go."

I went, and have never seriously regretted the move, except now and then, when I have taken some lumps that hurt worse than being human made necessary. Sometimes I have felt as if God were at the business end of a baseball bat. And when

I have faulted him for it, he came with this unwelcome common sense.

"Your complaints have reached me. What is it? Do you want to go back to being an angel again?"

"No sir. Body-life suits me just fine. I want to stay here just as long as I can."

"Then why the whimpers? You were only too glad to accept the conditions for being human. You know you cannot have body-life without the risk of pain any more than you can have sun without shadows. Common sense, my son."

I felt like a rather complete ninny for blaming God when his common sense reminded me that pain comes with being a body the way skin comes with being a tomato.

Then my heart spoke. I know that some pain is the price of being human, but surely the price gets too high sometimes. A woman's husband and her three children get wiped out in a flash by a drunk driver. A child is raped by her father. And, in the shadows, never going away, the Holocaust. Are horrors like these really part of the deal?

As my heart complained, God came back with some more, this time, some *severe* common sense.

"Who are you to blame me?"

"Well, I'm your child, for one thing, and it just seems to me that some people suffer more pain than being human on a broken planet calls for. And when they do, you don't seem to respond. It seems to me that we have a right to expect a little more attention from you when bad things get out of control."

"Hold it right there, son. Put your hand over your mouth. You are talking to the one who laid the earth's foundation. Can a moth tell an eagle how to fly? Can a mole measure the Milky

Way? I am Wholly Other than you. How dare you tell me how to do my job!"

The Wholly Other had me. "I am a fool. You'll get no more complaints from me."

So I kept silence before him. I went even further. I began thinking positive thoughts about unfair pain. Since God is good and can do no ill, and since he allows his children to suffer a lot of horrible pain, it must be that pain is good for us, somehow. Otherwise, he would not let it happen.

Mind you I am talking about serious pain, the kind of pain good people suffer at the hands of bad people, pain that has no

How can we forgive God for letting us suffer when he suffers right along with us?

purpose and makes no sense. I am talking about the very kind of unfair wounds that we are told to forgive our fellow human beings for. Maybe, if we see it in the right light, even the worst kind of pain will turn out to be a blessing in disguise, God's gift, not something to forgive him for, but to thank him for instead.

Having been duly put in my place by God's good sense, I turned to some human common sense.

For instance, think of pain as God's way of getting us to listen to him. We get so distracted by our hankering after security and pleasure that we forget to keep tuned into God. We practically force him to use pain as a way of shouting to get our attention. I recall C.S. Lewis saying (in *The*

Problem of Pain) that pain was God's megaphone. He uses it to shake us up and make us listen.

This positive thought would be more convincing if I always knew what God was telling me through the megaphone. I am sure that he is saying something; but I am not at all sure what it is that he is saying. Besides, it sometimes seems that God is the one who is not paying attention. My pain is *my* megaphone to get through to *him*. The megaphone metaphor cuts two ways with me.

Another positive thought is that pain is God's hammer. He uses it to hammer out character. God is a sculptor, shaping us into the better persons he intends us to be, and we do not provide him with easy raw material. So when our pain gets unusually severe, we can be sure that it is God working on us, chisel in one hand, hammer in the other, chipping off our hardened vices, sculpting out the better person we were meant to be, and giving our patience some exercise in the bargain.

We get to be better persons for having felt the bad pain. If we have our values in order, we will recognize it as a good trade. Sometimes. Other times, the pain is so big and the improvement in character so small, by comparison, that it feels like a very bad trade. Someone told Nicholas Wolterstorff (who tells about it in *Lament for a Son*) that his son Eric fell off a mountain ledge and died because God had shaken the mountain. A woman once told me that she believed that her little girl was killed by a truck because God had taken over the wheel. Why would God shake a mountain or take over a steering wheel so that someone's child would die? Does God take the life of a child to improve her parents' character?

The thought is grotesque to me. It strikes me that what we say in defense of God is, in this case, an insult. I know that some people believe that God always

has a good purpose for letting unfair pain happen to us. And I know that my personal revulsion against this idea does not prove that they are wrong. It only means that I cannot stomach it; my deepest sense of who and what God is will not let me.

My third positive thought was that pain is to our lives what a bold, dark stroke is to a beautiful painting. The world is to be God's masterpiece—a luminous portrait that reflects the great Artist's glory. Once we look at the whole of it, we will see that the dark shadows make the painting more beautiful than it could have been without them. The worst of our pain shows off the best of God's world, and the two of them together make up the best possible world.

To all this, I pose one, just one, simple question: Will the abuse of one innocent child ever make God's creation a more beautiful place? My heart says *never*.

I find myself recoiling now at every common sense suggestion that, if we once see them from God's vantage point, we will know that the bad things that happen to us will turn out to be really good things in the long run. My heart—by which I mean my deepest moral feelings—will have none of my positive thoughts about unfair pain.

I must find another way to peace. A few months ago I was waiting on the front porch of a tidy cabin on a rugged mountainside a few miles west of Buena Vista, Colorado, for my friend Els Ungvary to come to the door. I had come for one more chance to visit with her husband Sandor before his ailing 86-year-old body finally surrendered to its noble mortality. These two

people could tell you about the horrible pain you can suffer when God lets you fall into the hands of evil men.

Els was Dutch; working in the underground during World War II, she was once tied face down on a cement prison floor while Nazi storm troopers kicked and stomped on her back with their big brown boots until they crushed her vertebrae. Sandor was Hungarian; while working in the underground, he was beaten

In the crunch ... hope becomes a kind of courage— courage to trust God with our hopes.

and poisoned by the Nazis and then, after the war, he was beaten again, imprisoned, and sentenced to be shot by the Communists. Talk about unfair pain! Yet, in all the years I have known these people, I have never heard them wonder whether they could forgive God for letting such horrible things happen to them on his watch.

While I waited for Els to come to the door, I noticed a little brass cross, a dove engraved on the cross piece, nailed to the lintel. And I thought that it told me something about how these two people lived their lives and why forgiving God had never entered their minds. The fact is that they lived their lives pretty much the way Jesus lived his, doing what God called them to do, even though they had to pay a horrendous price to do it. But

there is something else, I think, something deeper in their grasp of God.

When Jesus was crucified, the Maker of the universe suffered everything that he suffered, even though Jesus thought that God had abandoned him. The same God who suffered with Jesus suffers with all his children. He suffered with every child, every man and woman in the Nazi death camps. He suffers when any of his children suffer at the hands of adults. Or when adults suffer at the hands of children. How can we forgive God for letting us suffer when he suffers right along with us—suffers more than we do?

I was taught early on in my life that God was above suffering. I now believe that suffering is his most typical way of being God. Max De Pree, for years the CEO of a major corporation, says (in *Leadership Is an Art*) that it is the task of a CEO not to cause suffering, but to bear it. I think God must feel this way about himself.

At this point, common sense breaks in again, this time with doubts of its own. If God suffers when we suffer, he only compounds the suffering. To what end? Why would God choose to add his own pain to what is already a vast oversupply? If he is suffering so much with us, he has all the more reason to make an end of it. This being the case, why does he not stop it for both our sakes? I have no answer to the question. I do not even want an answer.

I am done with common sense when it comes to finding good reasons for not forgiving God. What I need more than a reasonable explanation of why we feel so much pain is simple courage to put out my hand and walk hand in hand through the suffering with my divine Fellow

Sufferer. The question is to what destination? The answer: to wherever he is leading us.

I have come to believe that the only workable response to unfair pain is hope. Hope for what? Hope for the time when pointless and unfair suffering no longer happens. In the crunch, when we see no clear evidence that this is where he is leading us, hope becomes a kind of courage—courage to trust God with our hopes.

At this point, I must tell you about Etty Hillesum. She had the kind of courage I am talking about. Etty was a passionate, gutsy Jewish woman, only 28 when she lived with a group of other young people in the Jewish section of Amsterdam in the bad days of 1942. Those were the days when the German army that was occupying the Netherlands began shipping Dutch Jews to the concentration camps. She and her friends had decided not to go into hiding while the Germans kept tightening the ring another notch each day. All she could do was wait for the night when the Gestapo would knock on her door.

She kept a journal until the end and gave it to a friend as she was being jammed into a packed cattle car, Auschwitz bound. (Her journal was lost and forgotten until more than 40 years later, when someone discovered it and persuaded a doubting publisher to put it out as a book in 1986 called *An Interrupted Life*. At some point, while waiting her turn to be taken away, she started reading the Bible, devoured it daily, discovered Jesus, and developed a feisty faith in God. She could not stop talking about him—or *with* him, for that matter. In fact, her journal became a running conversation with him. And she put out her hand for God to take it and walk her through the troubles ahead.

I will quote a few samples from her journal, enough to

show you why I was so mesmerized by her spiritual courage.

From all sides our destruction creeps up on us and soon the ring will be closed and no one at all will be able to come to our aid. But I don't feel that I am in anybody's clutches. I feel safe in God's arms. And whether I am sitting at my

What I need . . . is simple courage to put out my hand and walk hand in hand through the suffering with my divine Fellow Sufferer.

beloved old desk in the Jewish district or in a labor camp under SS guards, I shall feel safe in God's arms. For once you have begun to walk with God, you need only keep on walking with him, and all of life becomes one long stroll. Such a marvelous feeling!

Can life really be one long stroll while you wait for the Gestapo to haul you off to a death camp? When God does not lift a finger to stop them? Was Etty Hillesum having religious delusions? I do not think so. I choose to believe that she had gotten hold of God in the one way that matters, when things go horribly bad for us.

And I feel no embarrassment to admit that after poking around in the world of faith all these years, I find myself longing for the faith and the courage of a 28-year-old woman who hardly had time to get the hang of true

believing. It may be that God will give that kind of faith and courage to me too, when the bad troubles come. And when he does, I shall simply take his hand and keep on walking at his side through the thick of them. Then, maybe, life—the good and the bad of it together—will become a stroll.

Forgive God? If you feel that you need to forgive him, it may do you some good to do it and get it over with. Just tell him you have to do it because you do not want to let your pain get between the two of you. I am sure he will accept your forgiveness in good grace and go on being your Fellow Sufferer. For myself, I do not have the heart for it. In spite of everything wrong he lets happen in our world, I cannot get myself to forgive the one who gives me every breath I breathe, forgives me every wrong I do, and suffers with every unfair pain I feel. ■

The above article is excerpted from Lewis B. Smedes' newest book, The Art of Forgiving, published by Moorings, 1996.

LEWIS B. SMEDES, Ph.D., professor emeritus of theology and ethics, served Fuller Seminary for a quarter-century—20 years with the School of Theology as professor of theology and ethics and an additional five years with the School of Psychology as professor of theology and integration and chair of integrative studies. The Lewis B. Smedes Chair of Theology and Christian Ethics was established at Fuller in his honor. A prolific writer, Dr. Smedes' popular books include *Mere Morality*, *Sex for Christians*, *Choices*, *Forgive and Forget*, and *A Pretty Good Person*.



Mission with the Irregulars

BY ARTHUR F. GLASSER

Now, what are you?" This question was put to me in southern New Jersey at a student conference in 1932. Through my struggle for an answer, this brief encounter with the issue of faith shaped all that has followed in my life, especially on those occasions when fundamental decisions had to be made.

Up to that point, my life had been one of modest privilege. I was third in a family of four. Life in suburbia involved attendance at a nearby liberal Presbyterian church, largely because all my friends were members of the scout troop it sponsored. Although my brothers and I regularly enjoyed summers at scout camp, parental pressure focused on excelling at school. Despite the Depression, my father was able to provide all four of us with a college education.

But Jesus Christ meant nothing to me. Actually, I hardly thought about him. That is, until my brother started writing from Princeton that something had happened to him which he believed was also for me, and that I should go with him to a student conference that summer. Since I was slated to enter Cornell in the fall, he said, "Why not get used to college students a bit early?" This suggestion hardly alerted me to what lay ahead. "Something religious" was about all I knew of what was around the corner.

A DOUBLE CONVERSION

This conference marked my first contact with young people who unabashedly called themselves "Christians." I felt drawn to these students, yet I was aware of the distance that separated me from them. So, by habit, I sat on the

back row. (After all, I was a Presbyterian!) But I soon began moving forward, hungry to get closer—particularly to hear the Bible studies and the personal testimonies. All of it was intensely interesting because my life, although full of busyness, had been empty, pointless, and devoid of direction. I listened as Jesus was uplifted as our greatest Friend who had wonderful plans for our lives, who had a great cause that could involve all of us. There was no talk of becoming pastors or theologians. People

Our method was Jesus Christ, Scripture, and lots of prayer. We needed nothing else.

who chose these roles were the "regulars." This conference focused on God's call of "irregulars"—such as Bible translators, pioneer missionaries, student evangelists, church planters, and medical missionaries.

Soon, Donald Fullerton from Princeton, the man who had led my brother into faith, had me reading John 1:1-13. He asked me to explain what I thought it meant. (You can imagine my struggle.) Finally, when we

reached verses 11 to 13, he put the issue before me. I knew I must do something about Jesus Christ. Don then helped me receive the one who promised to provide a solution to my aimless life. He prayed. And I prayed. Then, after a lengthy silence, he asked, "Now, what are you?" Stumbling, and thrashing around in my ignorance, I answered, "I guess I must be a son of God." A sense of assurance grew over me. I knew that I now belonged to Jesus and that my life would be different from here, on.

Those moments were very determinative in my life because I had turned the control of my life over to the living Word of God. The Bible also gained new significance as the authoritative, written Word of God. I had experienced a sort of "double conversion." Not only had I entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I also had, in the Bible, a vehicle through which the Holy Spirit would address my mind and heart for the rest of my life.

ENGINEERED INTO SERVICE

Then followed four years of studying engineering at Cornell University. In those days, InterVarsity had yet to come to the United States by way of Canada. And Campus Crusade had yet to enter the vision of a Fuller alumnus. There was not even a Fuller Seminary in Pasadena! So my first task was to form a chapter of the League of Evangelical Students, a recruiting agency for Westminster Theological Seminary. In the following two years, while I worked with a contracting firm in Pittsburgh, patterns were strengthened for Christian living and service through a disciplined study of Scripture.

By this time, the world was drifting toward war. The life of a Christian engineer who taught Sunday school at the local

Presbyterian church seemed less and less attractive. I began to pray about my future. And, in the end, Scripture and the pressure of the Spirit brought me to a decision to resign. Following my resignation, I was summoned to the corporation president's office. He told me, "If you ever decide you made a mistake, come back." My father, too, was disappointed in my decision.

I knew I needed basic training, so I attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. But it didn't quite fulfill my need. Then I earned a degree from Faith Theological Seminary, but the exposure to the old Princeton model of the Reformed faith didn't quite satisfy either. It was designed to train *regulars* in the ministry.

It was my extracurricular education during weekends and summers that clarified my theology. Don Fullerton, who had become my spiritual mentor, secured a voluntary post for me to serve with the New York Bible Society. We made friends of the Jewish people in Manhattan's Lower East Side and distributed copies of the Gospel of Matthew to all those who were willing to read the story of Jesus, "written by a Jew who knew him." Interacting with Jewish people on Scripture and church history helped me become aware of issues not usually encountered in the study of traditional Protestant theology. The Jewish people also kept us up to date on what was happening to Jews in Hitler's Germany. We shared their sorrow and, on occasion, felt their anger.

PROVIDENTIAL GUIDANCE

In 1942 the country was at war. Within one week after graduating from seminary, I entered the U.S. Navy as a chaplain. After two months of orientation, I was assigned briefly to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Florida.

During that year, Alice and I were married. I had prayed for a wife who had my same commitment to Christ, to Scripture, and to missionary service. God was most gracious to me and far exceeded my wildest dreams!

But Alice and I were soon separated. I was sent with the First Marine Division to the South Pacific, while she served in child evangelism in New York City. My parish proved to be a

Missiologists' uniqueness lies in their commitment to the "cause"—the evangelization of the world.

regiment of engineers, plus the Nineteenth Naval Construction Battalion. I went to work proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Savior and teaching the Scriptures. And God's blessing was upon us, despite our military involvement in the war.

After returning to the States, I met Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators. He was producing Christians that "reproduced." I had been assigned to the Small Craft Training Center at Terminal Island in San Pedro, California. There, I entered the world, not only of the Navigators, but also of Charles E. Fuller. My vision for ministry was sharpened by rushing from Sunday morning services at the base to attend Fuller's nationwide afternoon broadcasts at the Long Beach Municipal Auditorium. We were challenged again and again by his unqualified commitment to Jesus Christ and to the Bible as God's Word. We talked to all the servicemen who went forward to receive the Lord

and then cultivated them, Navigator fashion, at the local CSO (Christian Servicemen's Organization) in Long Beach. This became the most fruitful evangelizing and discipling experience with which I have ever been associated. Our method was Jesus Christ, Scripture, and lots of prayer. We needed nothing else.

A FRONTLINE MISSION

When the war ended and I was demobilized, Alice and I remained in Long Beach. I was working for Daws, and he was working on me. Through God's providence, we applied to the China Inland Mission (CIM) for missionary service. Toward the end of 1946, one memory stands out. Just before we left for China, we heard Charles Fuller announce his dream of establishing a school that would train evangelists. (Little did we know then what God had for us in that dream.)

Our experience in China was most providential. We were assigned to the far southwest in Yunnan Province ("South of the Clouds"), and ended up teaching in a school for evangelists that drew students from nine separate CIM tribal churches. It was an ideal situation for Navigator-style training. I previously thought that nothing could have been more "front line" than serving with the U.S. Navy and Marines in World War II. But in 1949, while we were in China, Chairman Mao Tse-tung led the revolution during which the Communist regime established control over mainland China.

Although those two years were our busiest and most rewarding, they were years of growing anxiety—not for ourselves so much as for the Christian presence in China. For it had become apparent that the Chinese provincial Christians—particularly the leaders of their churches—were inadequately prepared to lead their people in

coping with the challenges of a totalitarian society. On the streets the slogan was: "We are making a new China." Young patriotically minded Christians left the churches in droves to follow the Communist crusade.

A new determination overtook Alice and me: We decided, "If we ever get out of this and return home, we are not going to be in such a hurry to go overseas to serve somewhere else. We must seek the Lord's interpretation of the experiences through which he has led us during the first nine years of our life together."

MISSION RECONCEPTUALIZED

Robert McQuilkin of Columbia Bible College learned of our uncertainty and invited us to join his faculty. During those two years of refreshing service, two significant things happened. George E. Ladd authored *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* in 1952, which influenced me greatly. We also received an appointment to teach at the Far Eastern Bible Institute and Seminary in the Philippines. But, after all the preparations had been made and I had even boarded the ship to check our baggage, God intervened. When the ship sailed the next morning, I was undergoing emergency surgery in a New Jersey hospital. Further overseas service seemed out of the question—especially when Alice soon followed with cancer surgery.

We returned to CBC for two years and eventually to the leadership of Overseas Missionary Fellowship in North America. This was a challenging ministry. But after those years of extensive recruiting activity, I became convinced that something was dreadfully wrong in the preparation being provided for missionary candidates. It troubled me that too many became frustrated or burned out, their dreams of service shattered.

A sabbatical in New York found me studying simulta-

neously at three separate schools: Columbia University and two seminaries (Union and Jewish). I invaded conciliar Christianity and then drew back, resolving to keep in touch. Christian words

The bright spot on the mission horizon was what God was seeking to accomplish at Fuller's School of World Mission.

had been present, but biblical norms were too freely reconceptualized. Mainline Protestantism seemed to be moving in a direction that would bring about its own decline and certainly not further the worldwide mission of the church.

A "FULLER" WORLD MISSION

Fortunately, the bright spot on the mission horizon was what God was seeking to accomplish at Fuller's School of World Mission under Donald A. McGavran and Alan R. Tippett and their growing team of missionary anthropologists. Here was a unique missionary community whose leaders were experienced field missionaries. Furthermore, they were Christ-centered and thoroughly biblical in the evangelical sense.

It was a bright day indeed when we were invited to join them. I had already resonated with the concerns of Fuller's other faculty members—such as Jim Morgan's exploration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the German church's struggle; George Ladd's insight into the Kingdom of God and the ways to

respond to such issues as war and revolution, social injustice, and totalitarianism; Geoffrey Bromiley's provision of broad access to Barthian literature; Paul Jewett's positive, biblical approach to the role of women in ministry; Lewis Smedes' concern for all aspects of personal and social ethics; and, finally, the many creative approaches to global mission being developed in Fuller's School of World Mission.

What drew us to Fuller most, however, was its freedom from the separatist mentality that was affecting the worldwide Christian movement. At Fuller, we were encouraged to receive all whom God had manifestly received, regardless of their ecclesiastical traditions, as long as Christ was confessed as both fully God and fully man. Together, we sought to express the unity of the people of God. Most important, though, was the fact that Fuller was committed to the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

To cite an example: I once asked Dr. Ladd whether he believed in the reality of the biblical portrayal of the spirit world, the personality and power of Satan and "the powers." He endorsed this without hesitation. Today, we in the School of World Mission rejoice that President Hubbard personally challenged the faculty to research this reality and publish all findings. My colleagues and I are particularly grateful for the biblical, scholastic response of C. Peter Wagner and Charles H. Kraft to this challenge. The result has been that evangelical missiologists come to Fuller from all over the world, desperate for assistance in coping with power issues they encounter in their ministries.

MISSIOLOGICAL COMMITMENT

Missiologists' uniqueness lies in their commitment to the "cause"—the evangelization of

the world. For instance, when they teach church history, their concerns range beyond the doctrinal and power struggles within the churches. They are more interested in those people whose vision served to extend the knowledge of the gospel beyond the frontiers of the Christian faith.

When missiologists teach ecclesiology, their focus is on the ways in which theology must promote the mission of the Church, something creedal formulations either tend to omit or treat without the biblical sense of "oughtness."

When missiologists grapple with leadership, their concern focuses on training the spiritually productive, without dismissing those without adequate cultural or academic qualifications. Missiologists tend to see things from a different perspective.

MESSIANIC MOMENTUM

Finally, a word about Fuller's role in today's Jewish Christian resurgence. Despite the biblical witness that Gentile Christians were grafted into "believing Israel" (Rom. 11:17,18), Eusebius, Constantine, and other leaders during the fourth century were largely responsible for what became an anti-Jewish bias in the church. From that century onward, the conviction grew that God was through with the Jewish people. Inevitably, a "Christian" anti-Semitism by many church theologians set the stage for much of the subsequent suffering of the Jewish people.

During the last 20 years, however, a movement has been gathering momentum throughout the world wherever there are Jewish communities. Not only has the old pattern continued of individual Jews coming to faith in Jesus and being assimilated into Gentile churches, but

something new is emerging—the resurgence of first-century-style Messianic Jewish congregations. Their members have a commitment to their Jewish heritage and a determination to worship in a characteristically Jewish style. Many see a startling significance in this Jewish Christian resurgence—especially after the nearly successful efforts of Hitler's German Nazi regime to destroy European Jewry, and the reestablishment of the Jewish state after 2000 years of

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diasporal scattering.

Does this portend the beginning of an End-Time movement of God among the Jewish people? Is there significance in Fuller Seminary's increased enrollment of Jewish Christian believers in recent years? We express our delight that the School of World Mission's program in Judaic Studies and Jewish Evangelism has already produced a number of Jewish graduates. President Richard Mouw is pleased about this new program in the School of World Mission—just as he is eager that Fuller graduates persevere in serving the church in China and in other formally

"closed" areas. Personally, I am enthusiastic about evangelistic efforts toward both groups that I have been privileged to serve—the Jewish people and the Chinese.

The vision to train *irregulars* is one of the reasons Fuller remains distinctly unique among evangelical seminaries in America today. It is on this basis that I continue to serve in the School of World Mission. Around Fuller, one never knows what new excitement is coming down the pike! ■

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Hindsight, Foresight, and Insight

—From page 5

trusting the Father who loves supremely.

The insight that I would like to impart is a full understanding of providence as *foresight*. There is the possibility of a play on the word in German. It is "fore" sight, meaning prior vision so that all can be ordered. And it is "for" sight, a vision that is formed on behalf of someone. How marvelous to know that God will indeed watch over us in all our ways. This does not

remove our responsibility or our sense of contingency. Life in Christ is a glorious adventure. We do not know what a day will bring forth. I realize, though, (as John Bunyon wrote in *Pilgrim's Progress*) that for some it is a pilgrimage of pain and a "slough of despond."

I know that I do not deserve the wonderful provision that God has made for me and my dear ones, and I have no pat answers for the great disparity between people and their experiences. I cannot see clearly, indeed hardly at all, the purpose of God in many catastrophic circumstances. But the Cross of Christ answers forever the question of how much God loves me. And the Cross is God's pledge that I will never be beyond his care. Someday we will join the song of Moses and the Lamb and confess that "he doeth all things well." ■

Life's New Beginnings

From page 7

all the contradictions and contrarities of life? Well-meaning family and friends—like Job's—suggested some quick-fix answers. Yet nothing came of any of this, as we went the rounds of prayer groups, healing services, and the invoking of James 5 (on which I had written something, driven by necessity, even as the events unfolded).

Yet the deeper lessons, however elusive, were slowly being learned. My earlier engagement with Second Corinthians (especially chapters 10 through 13) was preparing me to come to terms with the "God's wisdom and weakness in Christ's cross" motif, not as an academic or theological axiom, but in the existential realities of seeing a loved one slip away as part of the "long goodbye" of dementia.

And still questions and doubts linger. Perhaps the only

refuge we do have is in that reverent "agnosticism" that honestly admits to "not knowing." Perhaps Frank Tupper's recent exposition of the scandal of it all, reinforced by God's self-limiting providence, is partly the answer.²

So one more ten-year cycle comes to its appointed end. With a return to California to be near the family, and opening doors at Fuller and elsewhere, there is a ray of light which beckons us on.

Life is indeed made up of new beginnings, since life is always expressed, for the Christian, in terms of hope. What is life without hope? And what is hope without Christ? Any reflection on God's matching his design with the footprints of our pilgrim way is bound to confront us with the ultimate issues.

As a person enters upon the final chapters of life's story (and as I move into the eighth decade of living), the final ending is bound to raise its inescapable question, as old as Job's query: *If we die, shall we live again?* Bereavement and disappointment force this question on us. Providence provides the answer, not complete and all-embracing, but sufficient for our needs on life's journey.

*I shall not live
Till I see God;
And when I have seen him—
I shall never die.*

John Donne (1573-1631) ■

ENDNOTES

¹ Roger Hazelton, *God's Way with Man: Variations on the Theme of Providence* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956). My recollection is that the British title was simply *Providence*, with a corresponding subtitle, thereby presciently avoiding the sexist overtones!

² E. Frank Tupper, *A Scandalous Providence* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995). But there are several residual problems with this treatment, as my former neighbor Paul Helm, now at my *alma mater*, King's College of the University of London, cogently argues in favor of a "risk-free" understanding of God's providence. See his *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

God's Daily Attention

From page 10

some 16 months later! And, thank God, my voice box has been saved. Although at present I cannot swallow, eat, or drink, I am alive and well enough to enjoy each day very much! In fact, I am *more* than alive. I am alive to God. I told my son, Douglas, some time ago that I have never been more ready to die—and more ready to live—than I am now. But I can only be alive to God because God has been so wonderfully alive to me. Surely his goodness and mercy daily attend me.

The presence of God has been a constant strength during my hospitalization and during my recovery and rehabilitation. In the halls of the cancer recovery wing of Huntington Memorial Hospital in Pasadena, I walked "a hundred miles" toward recovery with this chant setting the cadence much of the time: "The love of God has been poured out in my heart through the Holy Spirit which has been given to me" (Romans 5:5).

Yes, the love of God has been poured out in this pilgrim's life from the beginning to the present hour. I am not all that I could be or should be. But, thank God, his providential care covers all those daily ups and downs in my faith, and unfaith. Neander had it right: *Surely his goodness and mercy daily attend thee.*

God's footprints are beside me, and behind me, and before me—and, hopefully, upon me. *Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!* ■

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