

My first serious doubts about God - May 1994

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[This was written on 6 May 1994, when I still believed in (G)od.]

At the very bottom of my heart -- as deep down as I can fathom it -- there is confusion, mixed emotions and fear. That is where my doubts come from, my self-doubt foremost, and all the other doubts and fears that result from it. My fundamental doubts about God also come from an inability on my part to understand and accept certain realities in the world around me that appear to be permanent -- thus indicating that they originated from God, the Creator Himself. -- According to the Divine Principle, and the Bible, for that matter, God's nature and character are reflected in Creation. -- But, as I wondered even when I was something like 12 or 13 years old, why is it that there is so much wanton violence and cruelty in Nature? Why is there so much destruction? Why do the strong eat the weak, and why do they so often inflict unnecessary suffering -- killing slowly, etc.?? When the mouse is tortured by the cat or the antelope torn apart by the cheetah -- its bowels sometimes torn out while it is still alive -- the hunted undoubtedly suffer excruciating pain, and they fear.

Suffering is a major part of the experience of life in Nature. There are innumerable other examples of this sort in Nature that indicate that fear and/or at least violence and what we -- in human terms, of course -- can only describe as cruelty, are built in. We cannot even imagine how the world could exist without it. The ecological balance would be thrown out of kilter if the hunters and killers in Nature no longer hunted and killed the way they do. Now this, however, indicates that God must have designed it this way. Well, I really cannot accept the idea that this violence and cruelty come from a God who is supposed to be totally good. I cannot accept it; period. -- Perhaps I am the only person in the world who thinks this way -- at least, I have never known anyone who had the same feelings on this.

I have never seen or heard any indication that (Rev.) Moon thinks this cruelty in Nature is not from God. - - If you say that this is not cruelty because it is natural, then I must be an alien because I feel the way I do. In my mind, the cruelty and "inhumanity" in human society could theoretically be explained as simply an extension of the inherent cruelty of Nature to the only known intelligent being that it has produced. Of course, we say God created man. But He also created Nature. Or was the original man meant to change the whole character of Nature, or to co-create a different kind of Nature from the one in which we live now -- which is perhaps cruel as a result of the Fall? -- This does not make sense. The violence and cruelty are too pervasive in Nature to allow for this explanation.

What I -- even if I am alone -- perceive as cruelty (and thus evil) in Nature really seems to be inherent. Now, someone might question my (implied) description of violence and cruelty in Nature as evil. Why does it cause revulsion -- at least in me if not in others? Human acts of cruelty certainly cause revulsion in most people, and most people also have this feeling when confronted with animal cruelty to man -- which is, of course, much less common than the obverse. Thus, man's cruelty is generally considered evil. But then why would animal cruelty not be considered evil as well? Because it is natural and all-pervasive? As I suggested before, man's cruelty to man and animal or plant could simply be considered an extension of the cruelty in Nature -- built-in cruelty, which can only come from the Creator.

There I have a dilemma that I cannot resolve. It bothers me. I don't want to believe that God created a world that is both good and cruel. The Divine Principle does not explain this -- in fact it does not address this question at all, as far as I know. This is one of the big holes in the theory that I have come to accept -- and still accept -- as the most plausible and satisfying explanation of God that I know. I want to believe that God is all-good. And, based on my personal experience in life I have no reason to doubt that. But I see far too many other signs and indications, too many other people who have very different experiences from my own -- too much suffering and pain that is not explained by the theory of indemnity outlined in the Divine Principle as I know it. -- I am still looking for answers to these questions, and I have so far not found any in (Rev.) Moon's speeches or anywhere else.

The fundamental question is: Will that cruelty which I have mentioned continue to haunt the world even after it is supposedly restored, and will fear, and cruelty of animal to animal continue even after man's cruelty to man and Nature has ended? Or will even man continue to be cruel to man? It all depends on the true nature of God. I would very much like to believe He is all-good. But then all around me I see good mixed with bad -- within myself as well, of course -- and both good and bad seem to be inherent in the entire natural world in which we live. Why do we differentiate between good and bad the way we do? Or why do I do so? There is a dichotomy, a dilemma, and if I cannot resolve it I cannot follow God. -- I have thought about why suffering and pain are so much part of the experience of life in Nature alongside joy, and I have wondered whether perhaps joy is deepened through suffering.

Perhaps God needs both. Maybe He needs to experience excruciating pain one moment in order to feel all the more joy the next. Does God thrive on this roller coaster ride of extreme feelings? Cruelty is, in my understanding, when one person, animal or being makes another suffer -- especially when it is not necessary. Instead of killing the mouse quickly, for example, the cat enjoys playing with it, making it suffer and fear, then allowing it to escape for a moment only to pounce on it the next and to kill it in the

end, often without even eating all of it. The cat is, of course, a domesticated animal influenced by man. But there are plenty of similar examples of cruelty in "unspoiled" Nature as well.

Is God a sort of Sado-Masochist? Or am I a pervert or an alien for being disturbed by these things? We all have a dose of something akin to sado-masochism within us. But is this exclusively the result of the Fall and thus totally outside God's domain? If it is true that suffering would have been part of life experience in the original, ideal world, and that there will thus be suffering alongside joy forever, then I think God and "goodness" are quite different from what I, and perhaps most people, imagine them to be like. Perhaps, in God's heart, there can be no real deep joy without a recurring (complementary?) experience of deep suffering. -- But how do the two go together? And how can the evident, frequent occurrence of cruelty in Nature be explained? And, will we all have to suffer again and again forever, to be able to experience deeper and deeper joy?

End of original reflection. * These thoughts were added later when I copied the above in a letter to a friend:**

(Rev.) Moon has said in the past that animals and plants are eaten by higher animals or by man, and thus they become part of something higher than themselves. But if this is part of the design of Nature, why then do they run away from that rosy fate, evidently in fear? -- Is that fear unnatural? Also, many times the exact opposite happens in Nature -- perhaps even more often: animals and plants at an evidently lower level often eat or destroy those at what we would consider a higher level. Viruses and bacteria kill very many animals and plants, as well as human beings. Crocodiles, snakes, etc. kill mammals and human beings, and so do sharks and poisonous jelly-fish like the Portuguese man-of-war. There are innumerable other examples, of course. Certainly, that statement by (Rev.) Moon doesn't explain anything. The real question is, again: what does all that violence say about the heart of God??

The following is excerpted from a reflection I wrote in the Notes section at the back of my Divine Principle book a year later, in May or June 1995:

..... What kind of a heart designed such a thing? Obviously there is much evidence of joy in nature -- but the joy always has something like a shadow of suffering. Perhaps God needed the experience of suffering, for himself and all that he made, in order to grow his capacity to experience joy. Somehow this is a harrowing thought, something I find almost impossible to accept. But it is nonetheless a possibility that cannot be easily dismissed. If good and bad, as we see them, are thus (it doesn't follow automatically, of course) complementary after all in a larger scheme of things, then God's heart is very different from what I imagined it to be like, and all of history has to be understood in a different way; and this DP (Divine Principle) is all but meaningless.

I have to continue looking for another explanation -- and probably most religious people cling to such other explanations as they have found [or illusions] -- because the thought of a duality or "complementarity" of joy and suffering, and/or of good and evil, is too depressing. I cannot accept it, and I could never love such a God. Thus, anytime I see indications that God might be like that after all, as in the Bible or in True Father's {Rev. Moon's} statements, I shudder and reject them. But the questions remain!!! For example, it is suggested that whatever goes along with God's will is good -- even if it means that thousands of basically innocent people have to be massacred, etc. [see p. 479 {also p. 125, in the old DP book}] (This is in DP, where it says: "... when seen from the standpoint of not knowing God's providence, we must also regard as evil the Israelites' invasion of the land of Canaan, during which they destroyed {slaughtered} all the gentiles without reason.

However, this was also good when seen from the standpoint of the providence of restoration. Although there may have been among the Canaanites those who were more conscientious than the Israelites, the Canaanites at that time were uniformly on the Satanic side while the Israelites were uniformly on the Heavenly side." -- This is a justification for genocide -- what if that still applied today: Could it be, one of these days, when/if the Lord of the Second Advent {Moon} gains absolute power, that an entire nation would be massacred or otherwise wiped off the face of the earth, and that that would be "good" in God's eyes?) Why would that be necessary; and how much of the suffering and pain in human history was then "good" because it was caused by people following God's will? How are we to understand and accept this? There are many, many more such examples, including many in True Father's speeches ... Are we being misled in a monstrous way in our understanding of God's nature and heart? I hope not.

{End of excerpt.}

At that time I still blamed myself for not knowing God well enough, and not responding enough to his love, thinking that perhaps that was the reason I could not understand him. -- I came to a different conclusion over the next few years, which was inevitable....