

Wisdom & Justice

Philosophically, our problems start with what I wrote about in the December 2021 parish magazine. We instinctively expect the world to make sense. It is after all the creation of the all wise, all knowing, all powerful God Who is love. We can begin to make some sense of it, despite the infinite inferiority of our minds compared with His, because we are His children, made in His image. We are special. When God became incarnate, He became one of us.

The success of science and other academic disciplines strongly suggests that the world does make sense. Reason is a real thing. Our thought processes and concepts are more than behaviours – cultural memes if you like - which arose by chance in our evolutionary history and happened to be the ones which enabled Homo sapiens to survive and multiply.

The problem of evil is the most challenging to confront us as we strive to make sense of the world. We can accept and begin to understand what underlies science and mathematics, music and other art forms, but how can there be evil in a universe created and sustained by God Who is both infinitely good and all powerful?

A straightforward answer and maybe the one we finally have to come back to is that *God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform*. We simply can't understand His ways. We just have to have faith that He knows what He is doing and that His purposes are good. There must, we might say, be good reasons for what we perceive to be the evil in the world. And yet, most of us find that unsatisfactory. We are inquisitive people. We want to understand. Curiosity and reason are both God's gifts to us – gifts which underlie our human progress in every academic discipline and in the exploration and improvement of our environment.

What we are engaging in is Theodicy – defined (by Collins Dictionary) as *defending the attributes of God against the objections resulting from physical and moral evil*. That sounds rather presumptuous and looks as if it might be impossible. Never mind. Press on. They say that Theology is faith seeking understanding. Jesus is the Logos (Λογος) – logic, reason, word – and we are called to be logikoi (λογικοι), like Him. Logikos (λογικος) is defined as both spiritual & rational.

So we come on to the free will defence. God isn't to blame for the evil in the world. He has given human beings the very valuable gift of free will. We are free to choose whether or not to obey His Law of love, whether or not to act with the wisdom of God. Our foolish rebellion against God is the cause of all the evil in the world.

On a cosmic scale, Satan's foolish rebellion against God infects the universe with evil and sets up an all pervading conflict between good and bad. It is the death of Jesus on the cross which effects the final and complete victory in this conflict because Jesus does conform to God's Will for His life – the only human being who ever has and in complete contrast to Satan. Jesus is obedient even unto death. He is perfect love, which is the sacrifice of self. Thus evil is overcome with good. Death being the consequence of evil, is now swallowed up in victory.

There are some serious problems with the free will defence. For a start, there is the suffering caused by non-human agencies such as natural disasters. There is the fear and pain suffered by prey (animal or human) attacked by predators. There is disease. Some commentators have believed that there were no natural disasters, that there was no predation, that there was no disease before Adam and Eve consumed the forbidden fruit. The Garden of Eden, the whole pre-lapsarian cosmos, was actually as the prophet Isaiah (chapter 11) foresees that the coming Kingdom of God will be. It is very hard to believe that the world was ever like that historically speaking. Perhaps we can say that the universe is potentially perfect, but inevitably corrupted by human sin even before human beings came on the scene, God knowing eternally that His gift of freedom would certainly be abused at the first opportunity.

It has been pointed out that what we call natural disasters often have a creative function themselves. Volcanoes spew out minerals which give soil its fertility. Overflowing rivers inundate plains with nutrients capable of supporting abundant crops. Forest fires regenerate the forest.

Moreover, the consistency of nature is itself a gift of God. We can study the world and rely on its consistency because God doesn't interfere with nature. He doesn't briefly switch off gravity when a dropped brick is heading towards the cradle in which an infant is slumbering.

Some thinkers, therefore, hold that God does not intervene in the day to day running of the universe. He doesn't interfere. Either He can't interrupt natural processes or He respects the freedom of His Creation too much to do so. This is very close to Deism. Such a distant God is not the God of the Bible, the liturgy of the Church or popular devotion. The God of the Bible is very *hands on*. He controls everything that happens and does so in His Wisdom. There are reasons for what He does – sometimes disclosed to us, sometimes not. *He's got the whole world in His Hands... He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.* He listens to my prayers and answers them. He protects me and guides me. He judges me. He might punish me. He has a plan for my life. Paradoxically, I am free to choose what I do with my life, but inexorably His Will is done for you, for me, for the cosmos. This is the God of the Bible and of the Prayer Book, of my personal experience and the experience of millions of other Christians.

I believe that the C21 Church of England has fallen for some very woolly thinking on this. We want to have our cake and eat it. We want to be able to say that God is not responsible for COVID. He doesn't interfere in the affairs of this world. But we also want to pray for the recovery of people who have the disease, the success of medical and scientific interventions and wisdom for the politicians who have to manage our response to the pandemic. We want to have our cake and eat it too, to believe in a God Who is not responsible for what happens in the world but to Whom it is worth making intercession to alter things in such a way as they deviate from what would have happened without divine intervention.

Those who believe that God does not intervene in the day to day running of the world and is therefore not responsible for the evil which happens on earth sometimes stress the idea that in Christ God shares our pain. He is not to be seen, say those who think this way, as the Almighty Father Who lays bare His holy arm to smite the enemies of His people. He is more like a Mother Who stays with Her children, comforting them and suffering with them when the enemy breaches the gate and commences to kill, rape and pillage. I'd like to think that God is both – One Who can and sometimes does save us from our enemies and One Who comforts us in our afflictions when, in His infinite Wisdom, He chooses not to take them away from us. God can keep us safe and comfortable in the green pastures or He can lead us through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Either way, He is Sovereign and infinitely wise and His purposes for us are good. He does intervene in every second of our lives wherever we are whatever happens to us. Not a sparrow falls to the earth outside of His Providence and we are worth more than many sparrows. The very hairs of our head are numbered. He knows what we need before we ask Him.

I do struggle with this notion of a non-interventionist God Who shares our pain. For a start, how can a God Who doesn't intervene in the affairs of His Creation become incarnate? What does it mean to say that Jesus feels what we feel? If, with most of these non-interventionist theologians, we believe that Jesus of Nazareth did not know that He was the second person of the Trinity, how does Jesus experiencing hunger, thirst, pain, grief, etc. amount to God sharing our pain any more than the sufferings of any other human being made in the image of God are shared by the heavenly Father?

One aspect of the relevance of the agony of the cross is to be found here. Jesus does share our pain. On the cross He feels the full force of the consequences of the sin of the whole world. He bears the punishment of us all. He knows exactly what it is like to be human, every aspect of our human lives, from His own experience of being one of us. On the cross, He is both the victim of human sin (as we all are) and He suffers the punishment due to all human sinners (which we all also are). As an orthodox Christian believer, who holds that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine with all the attributes of humanity and divinity,

one Christ with both natures, I don't have too much conceptual difficulty in saying that God suffered with us and for us on the cross, although there are obvious dangers in taking that too literally. God is impassable. Jesus suffers. He and the Father are one. But we can't use human words literally when we talk about God because He is so infinitely beyond our comprehension.

Jesus knows our pain both as the omniscient Son of God and in His experience as a human being. Hebrews ⁸ *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.* We are the limits of our human understanding as we try to put these necessary truths into words.

Going back to our consideration of Eden (myth or history it makes no difference to the lesson we learn from it), if God knows that it is inevitable that human beings will rebel against Him, how can we say that we are free to choose between good and evil? Our nature is such that we all choose the evil. Whether historically (if you take the Eden story literally) or mythologically (if perhaps you don't), the reality is that we are all tainted by the sin of Adam. We all rebel against God. *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* Jesus is the only human being Who has ever lived Who has lived without sin.

One would have thought that it was only ethical to punish people who have freely chosen to do wrong. If we are effectively predestined to sin by our membership of the human race, how can it be fair to punish us? If, getting ahead of ourselves, a proportion of the human race are predestined to repent of their sins, to be forgiven and to amend their lives according to God's holy law, how can it be fair to punish those who are not chosen? It is not their fault, presumably. If, on the other hand, everybody is saved from the wrath to come no matter how they have behaved or in what or whom they have put their trust, where is the justice in that?

Such questions still arise without any reference to Theology or Philosophy. It is probable that our genetic makeup has a big influence on our character and therefore on our behaviour. Some people are naturally more violent, for example, than others. Is it fair to punish them for vices which they find it hard to overcome? Then there is the environment. There is powerful evidence that lead in petrol polluted the urban atmosphere resulting in lower levels of intelligence and a greater propensity to violence in those parts of the city in which people lived closest to busy roads. Too many children grow up in violent homes or are sexually abused or neglected, exposed to drugs even in the womb. Do they deserve to be punished for doing what a well brought up child from a good home would be much less likely to do? God punishes the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him. Is that fair – especially if people can only love God if He gives them the grace to overcome their humanity, their heritage from Adam, original sin?

There are 66 books in the Bible – some far more congenial to read than others. But there are no clear answers to these perplexing questions. They are perspectives. There are facets. As we read all 66 books of the Bible (and pray and contemplate and study other texts religious and otherwise) we glimpse these facets. We understand things a bit more by coming at them from other angles. That is why it is important not to set aside those parts of the Bible which we find difficult or uncongenial. They all form part of the picture and we mustn't close our minds to any of them. They all have something to say to us. God inspired them for a reason. God enabled the Church to recognise canonical Scripture for a reason – even though the different branches of the Church can't quite agree on which books should be included.

Another difficulty. The Church derives her authority from the Bible. The Bible derives its authority from the Church. One is the Word of God written. One is the Body of the Word of God made flesh, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Church and Bible derive their authority from God. This virtuous circle of authority confirms the faith of the believer but excludes the determined non-believer. Matthew 13¹²:

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.. The rational faculty, conscience, emotion, inspiration of the Holy Spirit all enable the individual to recognise, to respond to and to apply what God teaches us in the Church and in the pages of Holy Scripture. But there are logical loose ends here which are beyond me to clear up.

Having surveyed the foundations, we proceed to the building. In practice, as in life in general, we have to make the working hypothesis that human beings are free to choose how they act (even though it has to be acknowledged that some of us are offered a far better range of choices than others get) and are therefore responsible for their actions. It makes sense that the good are rewarded and the evil are punished – partly in order to encourage other people to behave well, partly in order to make us better people, but also simply because it is fair when people get what they deserve. Our lives are weighed in the balance. We owe it to God and to our fellow creatures to behave well. When we behave badly we incur a debt to society and to God. We should expect to pay for our sins so that the balance can be restored.

When I studied Theology, in one academic year we devoted a term each to the study of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement. Over the first few hundred years of the Church's existence, she came to some conclusions about the Trinity and the Incarnation. We wouldn't presume to explain or to define God. Silence in the face of the divine mystery is very much to be commended. However, there are things that we must not say about God. God is one. There are not three gods, but God is three persons. Each person of the Godhead partakes fully of the nature of God but relates distinctively to the other two divine persons. *Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.* This isn't an insoluble mathematical puzzle devised to perplex us. It's the least bad way for us very limited human beings to talk about Who God is. Similarly Jesus is fully human and fully divine. He is everything which it is to be God. He is everything which it is to be man – *Who although He be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ; ... One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person.*

These beliefs about the nature of God and His incarnation in Jesus Christ are proclaimed faithfully in the words of the Creeds, but the Church never came up with one set of words to set forth the truth of the Atonement. One view, popular in the Eastern (Orthodox) Church, is Christ's Victory over sin, the world and the devil. Another view is of the example He sets us and the all-conquering power of love. Atonement, sacrifice, passover lamb, manumission, redemption, propitiation, expiation – they are all valid but incomplete ways of looking at it. But one very popular approach in the Western Church – Roman Catholic and Protestant – is the notion of Christ paying our debts to the Father. We owe God big time for all the sins of the whole world throughout time. Only Jesus can pay that debt, which He does by offering Himself on the Cross. As with all the other theories of the Atonement, this one has its obvious difficulties, but, for all that, it has been a very powerful concept enabling millions of Christians to feel personally what Christ did for them at Calvary. He died for me. He suffered in my place. Another reason why the agony of the Cross is so useful in helping us to understand evil, its consequences and its remedy.

Coming back to human beings' freely chosen actions and their consequences, it makes sense that, as I often say, the world runs best when we follow the Maker's instructions. If we were to keep God's commandments (summarised in the command to love) the world would be a very much better place. A great deal of the evil in the world is accounted for by human wickedness and folly. Folly and sin are closely related concepts in the Bible. *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God... The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* The wise man who builds his house on the rock is the one who hears the words of Jesus and does them.

Generally speaking, people who live decent lives do prosper relative to those who don't. They don't waste their substance on riotous living. People trust them. They have good reputations. Those who treat other people well can very often expect that their kindness will be reciprocated. I Peter 3: ¹⁰ *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹ Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. ¹³ And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* This is the basic biblical message, but the Bible is also well aware that it doesn't always work out that way. The evil prosper. The good suffer – sometimes as martyrs for their very goodness. Peter goes on, *But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*

That hope is one possible answer to the problem of the wicked prospering in worldly terms while the righteous suffer. Maybe those who know God and seek to live in accordance with His Will are happier in this life than those who don't, even if they are poorer in material terms, suffer from ill health or are persecuted for their faith. Virtue is its own reward. In the end, material things can never satisfy (Isaiah 55). That is why people who seek happiness in possessions never find that they have enough. I'd hate to say however that all good people suffering unjustly experience all the time *that peace which the world cannot give*. That would be callous on my part and risk making their condition worse by implying that their unhappiness is a result of their lack of spiritual awareness.

Another answer is that justice is eventually done in this world. Those who live by the sword die by the sword. The adulterer loses his family. The liar isn't trusted even when he's telling the truth. The criminal eventually gets caught. Often this is the case, but by no means always.

Does God especially intervene to bless and protect the innocent and to punish the wicked in this world? I believe that He does, but not in any straightforward sense which we can recognise as universally valid. People often quote John 9³ and Luke 13 as evidence that Jesus did not link suffering with sin. If we read the texts carefully, however, He does not deny that there is a connection. He simply states that it is not a straightforward one. The case of the paralysed man lowered through the roof in Mark 2 is also relevant here. There is some connection between his sins and his paralysis, but it is not clear what that connection is.

Besides, we don't suffer only on account of our own sins. We suffer because of what other sinners do to us or because they omit to care for us when it is their duty to do so.

In the Bible, whole cities, whole nations are punished for their wickedness, but all the inhabitants cannot have been equally bad. Some of them surely deserved punishment less than others. In Genesis 18, God tells Abraham that He will destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham asks, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* We're all sunk if He doesn't! Abraham gets God to say that He won't destroy these wicked cities if there are ten just men to be found in them. Presumably there were not and so the Cities of the Plain were destroyed. Lot, Abraham's nephew, was warned to flee from Sodom, but read on; Lot was very far from a virtuous man.

This does raise the question of collective guilt. Are we all responsible for the ills in society? Does every citizen of a country engaging in an unjust war share the guilt? If not, how do we justify bombing campaigns which, even if civilians are not targeted, inevitably results in some of them dying as collateral damage? Do we all share the responsibility if the country of which we are citizens neglects the poor and the sick, exploits other nations and contributes more than its fair share towards global warming and environmental degradation? Does everyone in a street share some of the blame if they knew or suspected that a child was being abused and did nothing about it? Individuals owe a debt to society? Does society have obligations towards individuals? Is it our collective duty to supply and fund adequate social services and health care, effective policing and proper defence forces? Or is talk of collective guilt just a way for individuals to evade their own particular responsibilities? The Bible frequently speaks of the whole nation or individual cities as being totally corrupted by sin and therefore deserving of punishment. In contrast with the Sodom story, in Ezekiel 14¹⁴ God says that the city of Jerusalem is so wicked and so utterly deserving of punishment that *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job (three famously good men) were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness*. One of those uncongenial Scriptures which we may be tempted to ignore but which is actually a facet of the jewel which is the Word of God, completing the picture and helping in however small a way to illuminate the whole.

In Daniel 9, that notably good man confesses the sins of the whole people to God and asks for forgiveness and restoration. There is such a thing as corporate sin and it would appear that one member of the community may ask for God's mercy on behalf of all. Daniel does this because he has calculated that the seventy years of Exile (punishment for Israel's idolatry and consequent unethical behaviour towards God & to one another) is at an end and the time has come for the restoration prophesied all those years ago by the

prophet Jeremiah. God obviously knew all along how long the Exile would be and revealed His predetermined plan through His servants the prophets.

So finally we come to the thought that all the injustice on earth will be sorted out in eternity. The selfish uncaring rich man goes to hell whereas the poor man at his gate gets to heaven (Luke 16). The way we treat other people is equivalent to the way we treat Jesus. So those who care for others are the sheep who will dwell eternally in the fold of the Good Shepherd, the Kingdom of Heaven, while those who do not care about other people will go forever to hell (Matthew 25^{31 et seq}). In the end, we all get our just deserts.

It's still not simple, however. For one thing, Jesus sets a very high standard. We are to follow His example and obey His teaching. We are to be like Him. How else could we deserve to be eternally in the Presence of the thrice holy God?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us that conventional morality, ordinary considerations of fairness and justice are not good enough for the people of God.

Matthew 5: ²⁷ *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:* ²⁸ *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* ²⁹ *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.* ³⁰ *And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.* ³¹ *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:* ³² *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.* ³³ *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:* ³⁴ *But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: ³⁵ Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. ³⁸ Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: ³⁹ But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. ⁴¹ And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. ⁴² Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. ⁴³ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; ⁴⁵ That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? ⁴⁷ And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? ⁴⁸ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

In the Old Testament, as well as the New, the people of God are expected to know better how to behave than the people of the world, and to live holy lives, holy as God is holy, and are more culpable for their failures to do so than the nations who know not God. None of us deserves to enter into and to remain in the Presence of the thrice holy God and there is only one alternative.

On the other hand, we know from both the Old and New Testaments that *God desireth not the death of a sinner* (Ezekiel 18²³) and that *God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.* (I Timothy 2⁴).

We are all sinners. None us deserves to go to heaven. We have not even the virtue to return to God of our own free will. The initiative is entirely God's. He, of His own free will, freely forgives our sins. That

ferverently religious man S Paul, having totally failed to be the man he was sure God wanted him to be despite all his efforts, finally came to the realisation that it is all of God. God washes Paul clean of sin. He gives him a fresh start. Paul is a new creation – not because he deserves to be, but just because God loves him. God loves us as we are. He gives us the grace to turn to Him, to have faith, to repent of our sins. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* We are redeemed. We are set free. Our sins are forgiven. We are the children of God. God dwells in us and we in Him in all eternity. And it is all down to God. We are all utterly unworthy of God's love, but He loves us anyway. *Just as I am, without one plea but that thy Blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God I come.*

Both in the Old and New Testaments, God's chosen people are not chosen because of any merit on their own part. They are chosen by God because He loves us. Some like Cornelius in Acts 10 are already seeking God when He reveals Himself to them. Others like Paul in Acts 9 may be actively resisting the Gospel message. In the end God's ways are simply past our understanding. He does what He knows is best. In the end, we just have to trust Him, that He knows what He is doing. Why isn't everyone chosen? Why doesn't everyone have the opportunity to go to Heaven? Maybe, in the end, all are chosen. Perhaps that's the significance of the quotation from I Timothy above about God's Will being for everybody to be saved. If everybody is ultimately saved, what happens to our freedom to choose whether or not we accept God? In Matthew 7¹⁴ Jesus says, *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* Another facet of the jewel which is the Word of God. When one of His disciples asks Him (Luke 13²³) whether only a few shall be saved, Jesus doesn't answer. He just tells the disciples themselves to strive to enter through the strait gate. There comes a time when we just have to accept that we cannot know the answers to all our questions and just get on with living our Christian lives to the best of our ability assisted by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

If God just forgives us, why does it matter how we behave? If we're not punished for our sins or rewarded for our good deeds, why don't we just lead selfish sinful lives in the belief that we shall finally be forgiven everything? The answer is that, if we love God, we want to please Him. As born again Christians, we have made a fresh start. We have another chance. We are set free from sin and the fear of death. We walk after the Spirit, not after the flesh.

And finally, why did Jesus have to die on the Cross in order for God to forgive us our sins? Couldn't He just have forgiven us with a word. We say "Sorry"; God says, "That's all right, mate". If that were what happened, God wouldn't be taking sin very seriously. On one side of the balance there are all those wars, crimes, infidelities, acts of violence, lies, persecutions, greed, selfishness, indifference to the needs of other, etc., etc. Justice cries out to be done. All the victims of human wickedness deserve to be vindicated, that their oppressors should be punished. It would be outrageous if God were simply to act as if none of that immense amount of suffering mattered, if He swept it all under the carpet. Offering His life for the sins of the world is God showing how seriously He takes sin. Forgiveness is not cheap or even without value. It is priceless and Christ pays the price. The balance is restored by the offering of a life of infinite purity as a counterweight to the immense burden of human sin. Justice is done. Justice and mercy meet on the Cross. The sinned against are vindicated, the sinners forgiven. God is love and love really is like a magic penny. The more it is shared the more it grows. More than that, this coin has two sides. One side is justice; the other is mercy. Justice and mercy are indivisible and both are essential facets of Love. That is another reason why the agony of the Cross is the key to our coming to terms with what often appear to be the rival demands of justice and mercy.

Thinking about the problem of evil has led me personally to a re-examination of many aspects of our faith, challenged as it has been both by recent events in the world and by what have seemed to be the failures of the Church to meet the challenges of the twenty first century. This exercise has certainly been beneficial for me, as I hope that it has been for you.