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CHAPTER

1

A Sick Planet without Meaning: A Fallen Race without God

*And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him,
Where art thou? (Genesis 3:9)*

ALTHOUGH THE HUMAN MIND stubbornly resists and resents the suggestion that it is a sick, fallen planet upon which we ride, everything within our consciousness, our innermost spirit, confirms that the voice of God is sounding in this world—the voice of God calling, seeking, beckoning to lost men and women!

At first thought, the human being wonders why it should be necessary for the divine voice of entreaty to be heard at all in the earth.

There is only one possible answer, it can only be because we are out of the way, lost and alienated from God. Even the very world we inhabit is a lost world.

There are many reasons to believe that the earth upon which we ride is a lost planet. Hints of this are found throughout the entire Bible, and through the anointed intellect such evidences may be found also in nature.

After the great failure of our first parents, God said this about our planet as He spoke to Adam and Eve:

Cursed is the ground for thy sake;..
Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to
thee . . .
till thou return unto the ground,
for out of it wast thou taken;
for dust thou art
and unto dust shalt thou return.
(Genesis 3:17-19)

Now, why were those words ever spoken?

I believe they were spoken to describe the planet which is our habitation. We have our clue here that it is a lost planet.

I would quote here also from the writings of a man of profound intellect, the Apostle Paul. I believe that it would be generally conceded in most circles that Paul possessed one of the most brilliant and profound minds that ever set a pen to paper. This is the passage from the eighth chapter of the book of Romans, the quotation taken from the British Williams translation:

This world of nature was condemned to be without meaning, not by its own will but by the will of him who condemned it, in the hope that not only mankind but this world of nature also might be set free from bondage to decay, to enter the glorious liberty of sons of God. For to this day, as you know, the whole world of nature cries out in pain like a woman in childbirth. (Rm. 8:20-22)

So, long before our time, this world of nature was condemned to exist without meaning, that is, "vanity." Perhaps it is not strange that the very words that the philosophers like to use are used here by the sacred writer—that nature is without meaning! And

yet there is a glorious promise here as well—giving hope that not only mankind but this world of nature is to be set free from bondage to decay.

But there is something worse than the fact that this is a sick, fallen planet and that is the truth that the inhabitants of this planet are also lost. We believe that God created us living souls and gave us bodies through which we can experience the world around us and communicate with one another. When man fell through sin, he began to think of himself as having a soul instead of being one. It makes a lot of difference whether a man believes that he is a body having a soul or a soul having a body!

For the moral “unlikeness” between man and God the Bible has a word—alienation—The Holy Spirit presents a frightful picture of this alienation as it works itself out in human character. Fallen human nature is precisely opposite to the nature of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Because there is no moral likeness there is no communion, hence the feeling that God is far away in space.

Lost, But Not Abandoned

Yet when we speak of men being far from God we speak truly. The Lord said of Israel, “[They] have removed their heart far from me” (Isaiah 29:13), and there we have the definition of “far” and “near” in our relation to God. The words refer not to physical distance, but to likeness.

Actually, men are lost but not abandoned. That is what the Holy Scriptures teach and that is what the Christian Church is commissioned to declare. For any who may doubt it, let me ask, just in the name of

reason: does it seem reasonable to you that unique human beings, made in God's image, should each be given just one little turn at bat?

I know also, of course, that there is a theology, or a color or complexion of theology, that squirms uneasily as soon as you say something good about mankind. Many are prepared to say that you are a liberal at the least, if you say something good about mankind.

It is my studied opinion that except for sin, it would be very difficult to overpraise human beings. Consider what we are and what we know and what we can do: our memories, imaginations, artistic abilities, sensibilities and potentialities.

When you thoughtfully consider it, you cannot justly and properly sell mankind short! Sin, God knows, is like a cancer in the heart of a man's being. It ruins the man and damns him at last!

But the man is not all sin, for man was made in the image of God. It is true that sin has ruined him and condemned him to death forever unless he is redeemed through the blood of Jesus. Yet man as a being is only one degree removed from the angels and in some ways is superior indeed to the angels.

Again I ask: does it seem reasonable to you that if this were not a lost world that such a being as man—a Shakespeare or a Churchill or an Edison or any of the great thinkers and writers, artists or engineers—should, like a little kid, be given his one little turn at bat and then be told to sit down while the ages roll on?

Does it seem reasonable to you that a being so Godlike as man should take all of this marvelous comprehension and ability only toward the grave?

Should he carry his memory gifts, his brilliant imagination, his artistic creative powers and all those gifted traits that make him a man only to the grave?

Would the Creator God waste His time on such a being as He has made man to be, only to say, "I was just fooling around with man. I just made this marvelous creature for a short day. I am just having some fun!"

That does not seem reasonable to me.

Why does man as we know him consistently live beneath his own ideals? Why is he everlastingly far below what he knows he ought to be? Why is a man doomed to go to the grave frustrated and disappointed at last, never having attained his highest ideals?

You cannot tell me that mankind does not continue to dream of a shining world beyond him. Every man secretly believes that shining world is somewhere there before him—yet nevertheless it is always lost to that man or he is lost to it.

Even those followers of Jesus in His day on earth confessed: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (John 14:5).

No truer words were ever uttered by any man on this earth! Sacred revelation declares plainly that the inhabitants of the earth are lost. They are lost by a mighty calamitous visitation of woe which came upon them somewhere in that distant past and is still upon them.

But it also reveals a glorious fact—hat this lost race has not been given up!

A Divine Voice Calls

There is a divine voice that continues to call. It is the voice of the Creator, God, and it is entreating them. Just as the shepherd went everywhere searching for his sheep, just as the woman in the parable went everywhere searching for her coin, so there is a divine search with many variations of the voice that entreats us, calling us back.

If we were not lost, there would be no Father's voice calling us to return, calling us back. So, I say again that we have not been given up. Think of the Genesis account: Adam fleeing from the face of God, hiding among the trees of the garden. It was then that the sound of God's gentle voice was heard, saying "[Adam,] where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9).

I would remind you that His seeking voice has never died out. The echo of that voice is sounding throughout the widening years. It has never ceased to echo and reecho from peak to peak, from generation to generation, from race to race, and continent to continent, and off to islands and back to the continent again. Throughout all of man's years, "Adam, where are you?" has been the faithful call.

There are many voices, but it is really only one voice.

When a child is lost in the swamp or in the woods, searching parties are organized immediately.

Who is back of that organized search? Is it not the throbbing, anguished heart concern of the mother and father? They have encouraged the officers and the volunteers to hover overhead with helicopters, to send out sound trucks, to organize soldiers, and Boy Scouts, and friendly neighbors—always calling, calling, calling.

There will be many voices calling. It may be the voice of a soldier, a deputy, a volunteer, a neighbor—but always it is in a true sense the father's voice. All of the voices are simply overtones of the same loving father's voice that organized the search and whose distraught heart is calling for his lost child. So it is with the voice of God! Actually, many voices call us. But it is all one voice.

Man may hear the voice of God's love or the voice of Jesus' blood or the voice of conscience; it may be the voice of the dead or the voice of the living or the voice of the lost or the voice of the saved. Whatever the voice, it is only another inflection of the voice of the One who calls.

It is the distraught heart of God seeking His lost race; calling men and women in any way that He can call them.

He may call from above or from below; He will likely call from around the bend or from down the road or beside the river or on the plateau.

Yes, it is the voice of God entreating us, searching us out and always calling us to return home!