

“Instruments in God’s Hands”: American Protestant Attitudes to Suffering, 1908-1955

by

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BA, University of Calgary, 1997
BA, University of Calgary, 1994

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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From 1908 to 1955, readers of conservative Protestant journals (Moody publications and *The Sunday School Times*) and more mainline journals (*Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald*), both asked questions about God's role in suffering. In turn, writers for each of the journals responded by asserting that even if suffering did not seem to make immediate sense that it would one day make sense. While both conservatives and more mainline journals described suffering as being ultimately beneficial, views of why humans suffered were relayed in the most punitive terms in conservative journals. However, with regard to how one was to suffer, it was mainline writers who appeared a great deal harsher. Further, mainline views of how one was to suffer were gendered and made men the model for suffering.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to the memories of my Mother and Maternal Grandmother.

Introduction

When I tell people that I am interested in studying evil, pain and suffering, I glimpse responses both curious and insightful. Often it is as though perception shifts slightly. For some time after, there is attentiveness to the presence of distress and apprehension in daily life. Every stumble, cough or embarrassment becomes the occasion for comment on the vast potential for inclusion within my study. Pushed further for clarification, I tell people that I am interested in understanding how people make sense of living in a world with evil, pain, and suffering. There are silences but more often there are stories that need to be told and understandings to share. “God never sends us more pain that we can bear.” “I think cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me...” These are everyday ways of negotiating and understanding the world within and around those who speak them. Often they are halting, sometimes profound, at times even punitive. Yet, they are always windows on my goal of understanding the ways in which people make sense of living in the world they find themselves in.

I will start at the beginning by explaining why I came to ask questions about how people make sense of the world they live in. The answer is woven in my history. My Grandmother, having spent the last seven years of her life in unremitting pain, used to ask why God wouldn't let her die? Confined to a chair, unable to move on her own, she asked, “What could He possibly have left for me to accomplish?” That is a question I have no answer for. Not least of all because I am not a believer. My Grandmother was a mainline Presbyterian adherent who was born in rural Pennsylvania but lived most of her life in Detroit. She died in 1989 of complications related to severe rheumatoid

arthritis. Her daughter, my Mother, was born in Detroit. For most of her life, she would have identified herself as a fundamentalist Christian. She would die of lupus, twenty-two years after her Mother's passing. It is clear that both my Grandmother and Mother knew and understood what it meant to suffer. Speaking of myself, I wanted a window in. I wanted to know what they believed or knew and maybe glimpse what they understood. Shaped by the historical period they lived within, I began by tracing the outline of how they were allowed to express their suffering within their respective traditions. What was the specific religious landscape that my Grandmother and Mother found and created themselves within? Though an explicitly personal goal, it has wider implications. During a lifetime, few escape without some measure of fear or disappointment, pain or heartache. The questions I ask are as follows - What are the rules of suffering? How are people allowed or instructed to suffer in time and place? And, what is the history of these rules and this suffering?

As a point from which to situate my questions, I began by looking at existing philosophical, sociological and anthropological works on pain and medicalization. Among the literature reviewed were Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain*¹, Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and Its Metaphors*², Arthur Kleinman's *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition*³ and Arthur Frank's *At the Will*

¹ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Though dealing with torture, Scarry's work remains essential because she also addresses the nature of pain itself.

² Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (Picador, 2001).

³ Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition* (Basic Books, 1989).

of the Body: Reflections on Illness.⁴ From my vantage point, as expressed in discussion of my own motivations, these works are directly relevant. However, recognizing the limitations of what I can successfully accomplish in the space allowed and aware of the complexities and importance of how physical pain is understood in the sources I am using, I am leaving the issue of physical pain largely untouched. However, and notably, each of the above works, and a great many others⁵, are important to the larger context of my work.

Returning to the questions I began with, my primary goal was to trace how American fundamentalist/evangelicals and more liberal leaning mainline⁶ Protestants in the first half of the twentieth century understood the religious purpose of suffering in their lives. Further, I sought to understand how they were directed to understand it. Did the liberalization of life and faith that the twentieth century ushered in impact this understanding? How did these changes shape mainline versus fundamentalist/evangelicals in particular? In more specific terms, did the changes in

⁴ Arthur W. Frank, *At the Will of the Body: Reflections on Illness* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991).

⁵ Among these, see also - Rita Charon and Martha Montello, eds. *Stories Matter: The Role of Narrative in Medical Ethics* (Southport: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2002); Alphonse Daudet, *In the Land of Pain*, ed., trans. Julian Barnes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002); Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Arthur W. Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Arthur W. Frank, *The Renewal of Generosity: Illness, Medicine, and How to Live* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Jean E. Jackson, *"Camp Pain": Talking with Chronic Pain Patients* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Marni Jackson, *Pain: the Science and Culture of Why We Hurt* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002); Arthur Kleinman, *Writing at the Margin: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1980); Harriet Martineau, *Life in the Sick-Room* (Peterborough: Broadview Literary Texts, 2003); David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Javier Moscoso, *Pain: A Cultural History* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Roselyne Rey, *The History of Pain*, trans. J. A. Cadden, S.W. Cadden, and Louise Elliott Wallace (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁶ As William R. Hutchinson in *Between the Times* and Elesha Coffman in "The Measure of a Magazine: Assessing the Influence of the Christian Century," have noted, "mainline" is a difficult term to pin down. Indeed, it has endured what Hutchinson calls a "persistent lack of clarity." As a result, I would like to be clear that when I use the term, I am specifically referring to the diverse group of readers of *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald* who were not as conservative as fundamentalists/evangelicals but were also not as liberal as readers for magazines like *Christian Century*.

faith that attended liberalism and fundamentalism/evangelicalism, have an impact on views of the role and purpose of suffering and, in turn, how people were to suffer? There is a dearth of research on these questions in any period. The current study explores the above questions, and thus, seeks to begin filling in this gap for fundamentalist, more mainline and, specifically, Methodist Protestants, in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century.

Because views of suffering engage a series of assumptions that are at the root of the Christian tradition, it seemed obvious to me that charting or tracking the history of these would reveal a great deal about how people understood themselves, their God and the universe they lived in in time and place. With this in mind, it was first important to familiarize myself with the theological and philosophical arguments that make up understandings of the purpose or reason for evil and suffering in a Christian context.

Notably, the question or problem of suffering has been a perennial one in Christianity. Pain. Evil. Suffering. The existence of each of these presents ongoing difficulties of understanding in the Christian tradition. In theology and philosophy, answers to these issues have been formally charted and elucidated. In the second-century, philosopher and theologian Irenaeus proposed that suffering was necessary for humans to develop as God wanted them to. In 1710, German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz first coined the term ‘theodicy’ to describe Christian explanations for the problems of evil and suffering. More recently⁷, philosopher John Hick continued in a

⁷ For further recent examples, see Stephen T. Davis, ed., *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. New Edition (Louisville, Kentucky : Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986); Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams, eds., *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); William Hasker, *The Triumph of God over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008).

similar line of thought arguing that humans must be faced with genuine moral choices in order to fully develop. Each of these, and many more, represent defenses of God in the face of suffering and evil. Why does God need a defense? For theists the problem that is encountered is the internal contradiction apparent in the propositions that Christian theists hold as matters of faith.

According to the most common form of theism, God is both all-good and all-powerful. The problem that arises is why would an all-good, all-powerful God create or sustain evil in the world? Theodicies entail attempts to ‘resolve’ this apparent contradiction, Hume’s well known trilemma. Notably, if theists were to entertain the possibilities of either a less than all-good or less than all-powerful God, the contradiction disappears and the problem becomes more manageable. In both, *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy* and *The Problem of Evil*, there are those who seriously explore these possibilities from **within** faith traditions. The issues of evil and suffering are fundamental to the Christian faith and are frequently referred to simply as the “problem of suffering.” Although suffering is hardly an exclusively elite experience, theological and philosophical understandings of suffering do not make reference to or even consider the possibility of non-elite understandings. Notably, social historians have paid sparse attention to how understandings of suffering have been shaped and re-shaped historically in time and place.

Having articulated my personal interest in the questions I am exploring, it is the case that a lack of existing studies of the histories of theodicies (from both a theological and a historical viewpoint) was one impetus behind my own study of American Protestant theodicies during the first half of the twentieth-century. How did American

Protestants, both church leaders and “ordinary Protestants” understand the suffering they experienced and witnessed? In this regard, I was particularly drawn to the period in American history when fundamentalism emerged. This was a time when apparent religious consensus was breaking down. It was this time period that saw the emergence of fundamentalism, as-well as not unrelated attempts by more mainline denominations to incorporate and make sense of liberalism.

The current study is situated in the United States, in the American Mid-West and East Coast, and runs from 1908 to 1955. This period marked the rise of fundamentalism and the initial tensions that were felt between fundamentalism/evangelicalism and the more liberal leaning mainline denominations. For that reason, it marks what I suspected would be interesting and important ground for understanding any differences in understandings of the meaning and purpose of suffering as well as prescriptions for how to suffer between these two groups.

In the interest of clarity, let me begin by briefly introducing some of the terms I use. Many of the terms will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter. Fundamentalism was a reaction to a shift towards liberal theology or modernism.⁸ Thus, fundamentalists reacted against any departure from what they viewed as Protestant orthodoxy. The desire to spread the message of Jesus Christ through proselytizing had been evident in the United States from the 1700s. However, fundamentalist believers insisted that there was a need to return to and emphasize this goal. As a result, in the 1940s, they used the term “evangelical” to describe themselves. Although still anti-modernist, this re-naming marked an attempt to move away from the strident and

⁸ Herein, the term “modern” or “modernism” is used to note an intellectual attempt to be “up-to-date” or “contemporary” regarding religious ideas and currents.

unmoving elements of fundamentalism which they felt limited their popularity. It was also true that this renaming was meant to give these conservative Protestant believers a route back into the Protestant mainstream. In contrast, in the face of broad changes to cultural homogeneity and attacks on certainty, more mainline believers felt compelled to accommodate broader cultural shifts towards relativism. Methodists were among these mainline believers. However, and importantly, those Protestants who embraced at least elements of modernism made up a broad and divergent contingent.

Because premillennialism (a belief that Jesus will return before the start of “end times”) is essential to understanding fundamentalism, I should also detail the pre and postmillennial (a belief that Jesus will only return to earth once humankind has brought about “end times”) debate⁹ that takes place before the period under review. As regards pre and post-millennialism, the work of James H. Moorhead was essential to my understanding of what it meant for believers when religious consensus regarding “end times” crumbled for post-millennialists.¹⁰ By 1908, the first year under review, postmillennialism has largely disappeared and is replaced by a general belief in progress that is not tied to Christ’s second coming. However, premillennialism takes on increased importance as an essential element of belief for the rising fundamentalist movement.

The historiography of fundamentalism/evangelicalism¹¹ and the liberalization of Christian faith makes clear the extent to which I am dealing with a vibrant, living history. Early academic understandings of fundamentalism and evangelicalism focused on it as

⁹ Please see Chapter 1 for definition and further discussion of the pre and postmillennial debate.

¹⁰ See James H. Moorhead, *World without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); “The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925,” in *American Church History: A Reader*, ed. Henry Warner Bowden and P.C. Kemeny (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

¹¹ To distinguish an earlier form of evangelicalism from the form that arose in the 1940s, this later form is sometimes referred to as “neo-evangelicalism.”

purely a product of a culture in decline and of anti-intellectualism. It was not until the 1960s that some scholars began to produce works which viewed this history more sympathetically, while by the 1970s, a new wave of historians began to add to the history of fundamentalism and evangelicalism.¹² Nonetheless, in 1982, Martin E. Marty complained of the “paucity of good research” on fundamentalism, evangelicalism and Pentecostalism.¹³ In the 1980s and 1990s, George M. Marsden published a series of books on fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Marsden has been referred to as “the closest thing one can imagine to a pontiff of evangelical history,”¹⁴ and is widely acknowledged as the preeminent historian of both fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Other historians have also taken up this interest, particularly in evangelicalism. So much so that by 1992, Jon Butler would grumble of a flood of recent scholarship on evangelicalism and its influence on US culture.¹⁵ It is undoubtedly the case that this burgeoning interest was a by-product of growing involvement of the Christian Right in electoral politics. As D.G. Hart phrases it,

Had the Jerry Falwells and Pat Robertsons not emerged throughout the 1980s and 1990s as politically powerful, most non-evangelical academics would have had few reasons to care about the development and legacy of revivals, biblical inerrancy, the second coming of Christ, or the events of the first chapter of Genesis.¹⁶

However, it certainly was not only non-evangelical academics that furthered research in this area. To the contrary, many of those involved in producing histories of

¹² Robert Moats Miller, “A Complete (Almost) Guide Through the Forest of Fundamentalism,” *Reviews in American History* 9, no. 3 (Sep. 1981): 393.

¹³ Martin E. Marty, “The Editor’s Bookshelf: American Religious History,” *Journal of Religion* 62 (1982): 102.

¹⁴ Leonard I. Sweet, “Wise as Serpents, Innocent as Doves: The New Evangelical Historiography,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 398.

¹⁵ Jon Butler, “Born-Again America? A Critique of the ‘New Evangelical’ in Recent American Historiography,” paper delivered at the December 1992 meeting of the American Society of Church History, Washington, D.C., 1-2. In D.G. Hart, “Conservatism, the Protestant Right, and the Failure of Religious History,” *The Journal of the Historical Society* IV, no.4 (December 2004): 447-448.

¹⁶ D.G. Hart, “Conservatism, the Protestant Right, and the Failure of Religious History,” *The Journal of the Historical Society* IV, no.4 (December 2004): 449

fundamentalism and evangelicalism are themselves evangelical Christians and they have benefitted from this wider interest in their chosen topic of study. They represent what Leonard I. Sweet refers to as a powerful example of “observer-participant” history. As described by Sweet, this has

resulted in one of the most arresting phenomena in American religious scholarship today: the emergence in academe of a group of evangelical historians to a position of dominance in fundamentalist /evangelical historiography and to a front-rank position within scholarship on American religious history generally.¹⁷

In engaging and criticizing their own religious tradition, Sweet further notes that these evangelicals are setting the scholarly agenda for the future. As is relevant to my own research, this group includes George Marsden, Mark Noll, Joel Carpenter, D.G. Hart, Timothy Smith, Donald Dayton and Leonard Sweet.

Marsden, Noll and others have been criticized for a top down approach and for failing to recognize that “many of evangelicalism’s nineteenth-century roots were perfectionistic and holiness¹⁸” and for not being surefooted in dealing with Wesleyan theology.¹⁹ Thus, Timothy Smith, Donald Dayton and Leonard Sweet argue for an alternative reading of these issues. As Douglas A. Sweeney explains, “Rather than looking at the upper echelons of evangelicalism,” they seek to understand the evangelical movement from the bottom up or at the grass roots level.”²⁰ They wish to shift the focus away from “evangelicals” on top “as the elite who offer the interpretations and history by

¹⁷ Sweet, “Wise as Serpents, Innocent as Doves,” 397.

¹⁸ In the period under review, “perfectionistic and holiness” believers are also known as Charismatics and Pentecostals. They believe in the possibility of human perfection in this life through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹ Douglas A. Sweeney, “Fundamentalism and the Neo-Evangelicals,” *Fides Et Historia* 24, no.1 (1992): 81.

²⁰ Douglas A. Sweeney, “The Essential Evangelicalism Dialectic: The Historiography of the Early Neo-Evangelical Movement and the Observer-Participant Dilemma,” *Church History* 60, no.1 (March 1991): 73.

which the whole is understood.”²¹ Their main complaint is that Marsden, Noll and others do not take the nineteenth-century roots of evangelicalism seriously. However, in Sweeney’s estimation the two groups have approaches that can be reconciled and complement the other. Joel A. Carpenter, in *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* provides an example of what just such a reconciled approach would look like. As regards the current study, the dangers of a top down approach have been recognized. Those studied here, both regular people and somewhat elite voices, do not fit that neatly into the descriptions provided by Marsden of early fundamentalism. In other words, they were not academics or theologians. However, they also were not the kind of non-elite voices that the Smith, Dayton and Sweet have highlighted. They were not Holiness, Pentecostal or Charismatic believers, but included those expressing conservative fundamentalist leanings before the rise of evangelicalism. Thus, I am arguing that non-elite but conservative voices were present in the fundamentalist movement before the years highlighted by either group of historians mentioned above. These non-elite individuals took in, wrestled with and ultimately accepted what fundamentalism had to offer. By noting the unrecognized existence of regular people in early fundamentalist history, my thesis adds another layer to the complicated history of fundamentalism.

In 1994, Nathan O. Hatch puzzled at the lack of scholarship concerning American Methodism.²² Though not approaching the flooded landscape of work on American Evangelicalism, Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt have led

²¹ Donald W. Dayton, “The Four-Fold Gospel: Meeting Ground for Holiness, Keswick and Pentecostal Theologies (Paper delivered at the Wesleyan/Holiness Study Project First Study Conference, Asbury Theological Seminary, 10-11 June 1988) quoted in Douglas A. Sweeney, “The Essential Evangelicalism Dialectic: The Historiography of the Early Neo-Evangelical Movement and the Observer-Participant Dilemma,” *Church History* 60, no. 1 (March 1991): 74.

²² Nathan O. Hatch, “The Puzzle of American Methodism,” *Church History* 63, no. 2 (1994): 175-189.

the way in filling in this gap. In 1993, they edited *Perspectives on American Methodism: Interpretive Essays*. Further, in 2010, a comprehensive work, *The Methodist Experience in America: A History* by the authors noted above, was released. Richey, Rowe and Schmidt emphasize the degree to which Methodists held diverse views.²³ This in many ways helps to explain how Methodist voices were rarely synonymous with the elite liberal voices noted in the following chapter. So, while there were alterations in Methodist faith in the 1900s, there were also a great many points of agreement between Methodist and fundamentalist/evangelical voices. This study helps to clarify who Methodists, particularly of the east coast, were during the first half of the 1900s. Ultimately, how did Methodist and fundamentalist/evangelical views of suffering differ? And, on what grounds? Further, how did this understanding impact how individuals were directed and understood to suffer?

Having noted the dearth of historical research on views of suffering, there are, nonetheless, several notable exceptions. Two of these focus on the African-American experience. As regards theological understandings of the “problem of evil,” editor Anthony B. Pinn, in *Moral Evil and Redemptive Suffering: A History of Theodicy in African-American Religious Thought*, travels this ground and traces a history of theodicies in African-American thought in the nineteenth and twentieth-century. Although the book is primarily a compilation of speeches, sermons and writings of historically important African-Americans of the period, Pinn begins the collection with his own critiques. Here he traces the forms of theodicies that were present in African-American communities during the period under review. Further, Pinn argues that,

²³ Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America, Volume I, A History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 327.

“redemptive suffering responses to moral evil...pose a serious challenge to the sustaining of social transformation.”²⁴ This is the case because it is difficult if not impossible to maintain a commitment to fighting oppression if that oppression is also understood or argued to bring with it religious benefits. At this juncture, Pinn veers from a historical and/or textual analysis to one that is more clearly personal and political. In essence, he argues that providing a defense for God in the face of African-American suffering has harmed his community.

In “‘Terrible Laughing God’: Challenging Divine Justice in African American Antilynching Plays, 1916-1945,” Craig Prentiss looks at the “paradox confronting the African diaspora in the United States: the felt need to appeal to a God who did not seem to be listening.”²⁵ To this end, he explores antilynching plays written by African Americans for this period. In the context of a mythology in which it was argued that African Americans were a “new chosen people liberated from slavery by the will of God,”²⁶ the plays themselves, called into question not only God’s goodness but His very existence. Further, in several instances, the characters question the utility of the Christian church for African Americans. Indeed, echoing the work of Pinn, characters questioned the extent to which this belief distracted from real action against white oppression.²⁷ In both “‘Terrible Laughing God’” and *Moral Evil and Redemptive Suffering* sustained analysis of suffering takes place within the context of a community facing communal and historical suffering. In both cases, the issue of political action against white oppression is

²⁴ Anthony B. Pinn, ed., *Moral Evil and Redemptive Suffering: A History of Theodicy in African-American Religious Thought* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2002), 16.

²⁵ Craig Prentiss, “‘Terrible Laughing God’: Challenging Divine Justice in African American Antilynching Plays, 1916-1945,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 18, Issue 2, (Summer 2008): 177.

²⁶ Prentiss, “‘Terrible Laughing God’”, 179.

²⁷ Prentiss, “‘Terrible Laughing God’”, 188.

central. This is not the case in the following studies where suffering is largely an individual experience - one that is common but not communal.

Robert Orsi in *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*, provides a clear parallel to my own study. He traces the rise of St. Jude from obscurity to national importance in U.S. beginning in the first half of the twentieth-century. As regards the form(s) of theodicies that St. Jude's devout were expected to accept, he argues that "American Catholic religious teachers practiced an antitheodicy in which a cheerful, compliant silence was deemed the only appropriate response to human sorrow."²⁸ In other words, the devout were schooled not to even ask questions regarding their own or other's suffering. They believed that it was this that set them "apart and above others in such an elitism of pain, rebelling against illness, whining and complaining were seen as characteristically Protestant responses, while Catholics were stronger, better able to endure, better prepared to suffer."²⁹

Importantly, whether or not Catholics during the period felt that they could pose the questions raised in theodicies, answers or solutions to the problem were provided in the Catholic press and by Catholic leaders. In essence, the answer to the unexpressed question was that pain and suffering were always present for a purpose.³⁰ Writers were willing to acknowledge that God's purpose was not always obvious but that there was a plan. What follows from this insistence that God's world makes sense are prescriptive understandings of how to suffer. Those suffering were expected to be "bright, upbeat,

²⁸ Robert Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 158.

²⁹ Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 158.

³⁰ Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 157.

uncomplaining, submissive.”³¹ Importantly, on the question of how to suffer, Orsi found an understanding that was gendered and required women to be cheerful, silent and submissive.³² Regardless of prescriptions regarding how women were to suffer, Orsi makes it clear that women, in practice, did not necessarily follow these guidelines. Instead, he details the ways in which women used St. Jude to establish their own agency in difficult circumstances.

In “Female Suffering and Religious Devotion in American Pentecostalism”, R. Marie Griffith discusses Pentecostal devotionism in the U.S. during the 1930s and 1940s. In *God’s Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*, R. Marie Griffith details her study of Charismatic Protestant women during the last decade of the twentieth century. Though neither work is exclusively or even primarily focused on how suffering is understood among believers, she does, in each case, address the issue. In her research, unlike the Catholic women that Orsi describes, she found women who spoke and wrote about their doubts and confusion over God’s failure to meet their prayers³³ in this “world of gloom and woe.”³⁴ Notably, this questioning is silenced by the last decades of the twentieth-century.³⁵ Nonetheless, when it was allowed, the same suffering and confusion is ultimately understood as, “opportunities for spiritual growth, gifts of serenity bestowed by a loving, omnipotent God to replace the heavy burdens of grief and remorse.”³⁶ Thus, suffering is to be understood as a blessing bringing with it redemptive

³¹ Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 154.

³² Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 165.

³³ R. Marie Griffith, “Female Suffering and Religious Devotion in American Pentecostalism,” in *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, ed. Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 190; R. Marie Griffith, *God’s Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 89.

³⁴ Griffith, “Female Suffering,” 191.

³⁵ Griffith, “Female Suffering,” 204.

³⁶ Griffith, *God’s Daughters*, 89. (See also Griffith, “Female Suffering,” 190.)

power.³⁷ Interestingly, in “Female Suffering and Religious Devotion in American Pentecostalism,” Griffith suggests that by the last decades of the twentieth-century, expressions of unhappiness or doubt are only allowed as statements of the past. Thus, adherents are no longer allowed to voice concerns. Instead, their faith and healings must be expressed in wholly positive and “cheerful” terms.³⁸

Both Orsi and Griffith engage with a subject that has not previously garnered attention. In this regard, both scholars provide a unique and valuable view of how believers actually took in prescriptive Christian views and then rejected, altered or practiced these. A real strength of both works is their inclusion of both elite dictates and non-elite understandings. Because it is the focus of his work, Orsi provides a more complete analysis of views and practices related to suffering than Griffith. Nothing with equal depth has been undertaken for Protestants. The following study begins the process of filling in this gap by providing an analysis of fundamentalist/evangelical, Methodist and some mainline views and practices regarding suffering during the first half of the 1900s. My study is best understood as a preliminary and exploratory glimpse of American Protestant views of suffering. Although ministers are not best understood as purely elite voices (more about this in a moment), it is nonetheless the case that my study primarily concerns somewhat elite views. At the same time, “regular” people are explicitly included in the study, confirming that regular Protestants asked questions about the purpose or need for suffering.

The sources I use differ in focus from those used by Pin, Prentiss, Orsi or Griffith. In all of these cases, suffering itself was a focus. In other words, either individually or

³⁷ Griffith, *God's Daughters*, 89-91.

³⁸ Griffith, “Female Suffering,” 200-204.

communally, anti-lynching plays, African-American theodicies, petitions to and prescriptive literature regarding the patron Saint of Lost Causes, as well as the thoughts of Women's Aglow membership were focused on human hardship and/or suffering. In contrast, the sources I use are first and foremost journals detailing the workings of and evangelistic efforts of various Protestant churches. Since suffering is not the only or even primary focus in the journals, searching out discussions of how suffering was understood and how people were expected to suffer, was a challenge. However, what was at once difficult also proved an opportunity. In practical terms, it meant that what I was looking for was not common enough (in the sources I used, or the communities I looked at) to be entirely agreed upon or certain. As a result, there are differences in perspectives regarding suffering even within the same journals, demonstrating a range of possible "official" perspectives open to those suffering. The identification of the complex and even contradictory nature of evangelical/fundamentalist and Methodist perspectives on suffering is a strength of the current study.

My main sources are four conservative and mainline Protestant journals. Because I was interested in whether or how emerging fundamentalism and liberal thought impacted understandings of suffering, I reviewed a relatively long period of time (1908 to 1955) in order to chart any changes. However, given the length of time involved, I chose to review only certain years. Specific years were chosen because they represented years in which examples of everyday theodicies seemed likely or because they represented times when people might be particularly likely to discuss issues related to suffering. In particular, WWI, the Depression, and WWII brought with them enormous upheaval and

suffering. Given the focus on particular years, this study is best understood as a series of snapshots.

These snapshots provide something unique to the historiography of suffering. In the following study, I unpack the elements that make up theodicies in less elite contexts. In other words, I explore how both these fundamentalist/evangelical and mainline ministers and believers comprehend who God is, the nature of the world and how humankind is understood. This unpacking is essential to understanding differences in views of the purpose of both sin and suffering. Although the elements of theodicies are widely recognized in religious and religious studies circles, they are not obvious to the uninitiated and thus, deserve to be clearly explained. Further, there are sometimes subtle and sometimes profound differences between fundamentalist/evangelical and more liberal understandings of these elements during this period. These differences impact understandings of suffering as well as prescriptive views of how one ultimately was expected to suffer.

Orsi and Griffith explicitly chart views of suffering among Christian women. While it is likely that my research also implicitly deals primarily with women, my evidence in most cases does not allow me to make claims about the gendered nature of attitudes to suffering. When it is clear that women are either the target audience or the subject, this is noted. Yet, because many of the writers in these journals are male and because in the case particularly of Moody publications, the readership was made up of current or prior students, who would also have been primarily male, it is not obvious that

the audience was wholly or mostly female.³⁹ However, issues of gender are important to the conclusions I come to in Chapter 3.

Chapter 1 includes a brief history of time and place, as well as a review of the primary sources used. By exploring the breakdown of Protestant religious consensus by the early 1900s and the subsequent rise of fundamentalism, I am explicitly interested in the point where the ideas that are taken for granted are no longer obvious. Where they suddenly, or not so suddenly, depending on perspective, need defense. To this end, in Chapter 1, I begin by reviewing a brief history of fundamentalism/evangelicalism and Methodism. Four journals were then used to explore the views of suffering from 1908 through 1955. These include two conservative Protestant (eventually fundamentalist/evangelical) journals, one Methodist journal, and one popular Protestant journal of no particular denomination.

In Chapter 2, I examine whether the Protestant readers I looked at did in fact ask questions about suffering. If so, what questions did they ask? Having identified questions posed by readers, responses of writers for each of the journals were also charted. These writers did not speak in a single or unified voice, but offered a number of possible explanations regarding the purpose of suffering. However, in all cases, suffering was understood as an importance piece in shaping human behavior to God's will. Views regarding the shape of the world, the issue of who God was and the nature of humans, underpinned understandings of the purpose of suffering. The terms of these understanding were expressed in diverse and significant ways.

³⁹ The total gender breakdown for the *Christian Herald*, *Moody publications*, *Sunday School Times* and *Zion's Herald* articles used in this study are as follows: 50 male, 11 female and in 39 cases it was impossible to establish the gender of the writer. This was the case because no name was provided, or because the name that was provided did not indicate whether the writer was male or female. In particular, initials were commonly used instead of full first names.

Completing my analysis, Chapter 3 explores how suffering was to be understood in practice. First, suffering was argued to bring a series of benefits which were reason enough to welcome it. In addition to appreciating the gifts of suffering, believers, both mainline and more conservative, were expected to respond in specific ways. These differences were the result of how mainline and conservatives differentially understood the nature of humankind. In essence, they hinge upon the question of what degree of control humans have over their emotions and subsequent behaviour. Further, the degree of control that humans are understood to possess involves the question of whether there is anyone else who can be held responsible or blamed. In other words, how human agency is understood, involves the extent to which the Devil remains active in human life. In some mainline understandings, the view presented of ideal responses to suffering, is not only harsher but it is also gendered. Thus, it is girls who were schooled to be cheerful and primarily women who were criticized for not being cheerful enough.

The following study is shaped by a series of questions. What did believers ask of God and journal writers in order to understand the suffering they felt or saw around them? What answers did journal writers provide? Further, regarding both reader questions and writer answers, how was God, the world and humanity constituted? And, how were these different between mainline and conservative journals? Moreover, what were the consequences of these different understandings for those who suffered or those who lived next door to suffering? With the hope of answering these questions, the following chapters explore how American Protestant believers and their ministers/preachers understood suffering

Chapter One: Religious Context and Primary Sources

Religious Context

Before providing a brief history of fundamentalism/evangelicalism and Methodism as well as a review of the primary sources used in my own study, it is necessary to first orient the reader with a sketch of the broader historical context. When the United States was first established, it was shaped by Protestantism. Numerous Protestant denominations made up the religious landscape and there was considerable religious consensus. However, this consensus would be tried by changes to the physical, cultural and intellectual environments. As a result of waves of non-Protestant immigrants, growing cities and changing labour requirements, by the early decades of the 1900s, many Protestants feared the loss of their cultural and religious hegemony. Alongside these social and economic shifts, there were changes to the intellectual landscape. As a result, Protestants from the late 1800s through the early decades of the 1900s, grappled with important cultural, intellectual and religious questions. At heart, the questions revolved around the issue of whether they would alter their own religious beliefs or stand in opposition to the intellectual changes they saw around them. While Protestant liberals altered their beliefs in order to remain central to the discussion, Protestant conservatives refused to be altered. WWI ramped up the divide between religious liberals and conservatives. Ultimately, this resulted in a separation between self-termed fundamentalists and more liberal leaning churches. By the end of the period under review some of these voices found a degree of conciliation. But, as Martin Marty contends, “All the while they were splitting up what was left of a Protestant

establishment, leaving it ever less prepared to hold its place of dominance in American culture in the decades to come.”¹

In the United States, from its inception in 1776 until the mid-nineteenth century Protestantism played a central role in shaping American culture.² In the nineteenth century, evangelism, or the desire to spread the message of Jesus Christ, touched nearly every Protestant denomination of the day. These denominations included Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Disciples of Christ. Major reform movements, including anti-slavery and temperance, had strong roots in this same desire to win souls for Christ. So too did American education. To the extent that a nineteenth century Protestant consensus existed, it consisted of beliefs in

(1) The Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible, (2) the real historical character of God’s saving work recorded in Scripture, (3) salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and missions, and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.³

It is not hard to understand why, in a time of religious consensus, marked by revivals and reforms, many Americans in the mid-1800s believed that they were on the cusp of a Christian millennium. Of these believers, postmillennialists⁴ embraced a narrative of progress and believed in the possibility of perfecting humanity. This was made possible because among mainline Northern Protestantism there was a growing

¹ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, vol. 2, The Noise of Conflict, 1919-1941* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 214.

² For information regarding fundamentalism, I am indebted to George M. Marsden’s, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of the Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991).

³ George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 4-5; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of the Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 86-87, 90.

⁴ Both pre and postmillennialism were elite positions that were largely of interest to Northern academics.

move away from Calvinism.⁵ Calvinism emphasized an absolute human dependence on an all-powerful God. Though none deserved it, humans were saved entirely through the grace of God. In an era of great optimism, this was an uncomfortable position for many Protestants. Instead, a more optimistic view of human agency was proffered.⁶ Humans were not naturally sinful or unworthy. Further, they had the potential for tremendous good. As one result, these Protestants displayed a growing hope of Christianizing the social order. Proponents were optimistic about human nature and the world they lived in. In their view, the new millennium would be brought about, not by the supernatural return of Christ, but through human efforts.⁷ Thus, postmillennialists tied the progress of humankind to the progress of the kingdom of God. Jesus would only return once humans had brought about a new age. As James H. Moorhead explains,

During its heyday in the mid-nineteenth century, postmillennialism represented a compromise between an apocalyptic and evolutionary view of time, between a history characterized by dramatic upheavals and supernatural events and one governed by natural laws of organic development.⁸

In this narrative, redemption comes through human hands. However, to believe that human redemption is possible, to believe that the millennium will dawn by human hands, humans themselves could not be inherently base. Rather, they must have power and the capacity for tremendous good. Notably, by 1900, the appeal of post-postmillennialism was limited among even liberal Christians,⁹ both because it retained an emphasis on the

⁵ George M. Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 2nd edition. (Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001), 63.

⁶ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 49.

⁷ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 63.

James H. Moorhead, *World without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 1.

⁸ Moorhead, *World without End*, xii.

⁹ James H. Moorhead, "The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925," in *American Church History: A Reader*, ed. Henry Warner Bowden and P.C. Kemeny (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 293.

supernatural and also because as time passed it seemed increasingly implausible. After all, no clear pattern of human improvement was apparent in North America.¹⁰ As described by Moorhead, “In the eyes of the militant conservatives, it appeared to concede too much to the modern temper; and from the liberal vantage point, it retained too much precritical Biblicism and antiquated supernaturalism.”¹¹ Particularly among moderate to liberal Protestants, postmillennialism was not rejected so much as it was replaced by a hope for continual progress.¹²

In contrast, premillennialists¹³ were those who believed that only Jesus’ return would usher in a new millennium. This belief was based on an older understanding popular among holiness¹⁴, Pentecostal and others in the mid-19th century.¹⁵ It differed from its predecessors primarily in the belief that the new millennium would not be achieved until the Second Coming of Christ.¹⁶ Many premillennialists were also dispensationalists. In this understanding of human history, temporal periods were divided into distinct historical periods known as dispensations. Each dispensation was understood as the unfolding of a battle between God and Satan.¹⁷ This view of history negated the possibility of human agency. Further, premillennialists displayed a clear rejection of any notion of progress.¹⁸ They did not accept that human beings had the

¹⁰ Moorhead, “The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925,” 299-300. Moorhead, *World without End*, xv.

¹¹ Moorhead, “The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925,” 300.

¹² Moorhead, *World without End*, xii.

¹³ Premillennialism was also an elite position that was largely of interest to Northern academics.

¹⁴ Holiness movements believed in entire sanctification and strove for Christian perfection.

¹⁵ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 71, 168.

¹⁶ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 51.

¹⁷ David Harrington Watt, “The Private Hopes of American Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, 1925-1975,” *Religion and American Culture* 1, no.2 (Summer 1991): 156-7; Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, vol. 1, The Irony of It All, 1893-1919* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 223-5.

¹⁸ Watt, “The Private Hopes of American Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, 1925-1975,” 158.

power to bring about a new era.¹⁹ In their estimation, change would come only through divine intervention. Premillennial dispensationalists believed that the world was de-evolving, sinking further and deeper into sin. The only hope for humanity lay in the second-coming of Christ. This early divide between pre and post-millennialists was a precursor of what was to come in liberal versus fundamentalist debates. While postmillennialism had largely dissipated by 1900, premillennialism continued to be an important element of what would become known as ‘fundamentalism.’

Concurrent with early pre and post-millennial debates, through the last half of the 1800s, the evangelical establishment faced a myriad of religious, intellectual and material challenges. By the 1920s the majority of the population were urban dwellers, due in no small part to large scale immigration. As a result, the population became much less religiously homogenous. From 1860 to 1900, Protestant church membership tripled while Catholic membership in the same period quadrupled.²⁰ Protestant churches were left to wrestle with the fact that not all immigrants converted to Protestantism upon emigrating.²¹ Religious pluralism became a reality of American life. At the same time, problems with housing and employment in these burgeoning cities created seemingly insurmountable social problems and chronic unrest.

In the midst of these profound material and cultural changes a parallel intellectual revolution was taking hold. Just at the time that Americans were facing great change to the human landscape, the intellectual emphasis moved away from fixed absolutes.

Within Protestantism, these intellectual developments resulted in a divide between those

¹⁹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 48-62.

²⁰ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 14.

²¹ Edwin S. Gaustad, “The Pulpit and the Pews” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37.

who embraced, or at least accommodated, religious change and those who did not. Increasingly, this resulted in a divide between conservative Protestants who stood against any religious alteration and liberal Protestants who favoured accommodation. This growing divide would impact the face of Protestantism throughout the period under review.

In 1859, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* was published. Another key intellectual shift was higher criticism, which emerged in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century and was imported to the US in the second half of the century.²² Proponents focused on purely naturalistic explanations for religious phenomena. Supernatural explanations, the basis for traditional understandings of the Bible, were considered unknowable and therefore not appropriate for study. The Bible became simply a record of the religious life of the Hebrew people and early Christians and Christianity became only one religion among many.

Thus vast and fundamental challenges to belief confronted Protestants in the period. As explained by George M. Marsden,

It would be difficult to overstate the crucial importance of the absolute integrity of the Bible to the nineteenth-century American evangelical's whole way of thinking. When this cornerstone began to be shaken, major adjustments in the evangelical edifice had to be made from top to bottom.²³

One sign of this shift was that in 1850 the vast majority of American college presidents were members of the evangelical clergy and American science was also dominated by evangelical Christians. By the end of the century, no self-respecting scientist would defend their belief based on Biblical evidence. As stated by one historian, regarding the application of Darwin's theory of evolution to all areas of life including theology,

²² Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 37.

²³ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 13.

Applied to theology, the evolutionary model essentially meant that Christianity, like everything else, evolved over time. This meant that the form of faith found in scripture was a rudimentary and basic form of Christianity that had evolved over nineteen centuries into a more fully developed religion.²⁴

This was in direct contrast to conservatives' views which held that the Bible was the unchanging authority in all matters.²⁵

At the heart of the debate were cultural questions of accommodation versus resistance. At a time when some were downplaying the supernatural, premillennialists re-emphasized the supernatural and a renewed interest and emphasis on the Holy Spirit swept through conservative circles. In 1899, as C.I. Scofield noted, "We are in the midst of a marked revival of interest in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit."²⁶

Regardless of different reactions to cultural change, there remained points of connection and agreement between liberal and conservative Protestants. Through the first decades of the twentieth century, "progressive" causes and politics gained tremendous sway and by the 1916 election, every candidate considered himself a "progressive." The Progressive movement was not directed towards a single reform. Rather, progressives agreed on the need to enact reforms to address the social problems caused by significant immigration, industrialization and urbanization.

Optimistic about human nature and the possibility of progress, progressives believed that the world could be perfected through the application of religious tenets to society.²⁷ The Social Gospel was the distinctly Protestant expression of progressivism.²⁸ In the early 1900s, Methodist Frank Mason North had a hand in crafting the Social Creed.

²⁴ Barry Hankins, *American Evangelicals: A Contemporary History of a Mainstream Religious Movement* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 23-24.

²⁵ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 15.

²⁶ John Fea, "Power From on High in an Age of Ecclesiastical Impotence: The 'Enduement of the Holy Spirit' in American Fundamentalist Thought, 1880-1936," *Fides et Historia* 26, no.2 (1994): 28.

²⁷ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 139.

²⁸ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 128.

Created by the Methodist Federation for Social Service, the Creed was first adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church.²⁹ In 1908, delegates of the Federal Council for Churches unanimously adopted the Social Creed of the Churches.³⁰ This set forth the Council's support of labour unions, a belief in the right of all to leisure, as well as support for protective legislation.³¹ A significant proportion of American Protestant churches were members of this council and thus acceptance of the Social Creed marked a significant shift in church teachings from the individualism of the Victorian era to a broader commitment to social reform. In this understanding, political corruption, labour conditions, prostitution and safe housing became explicitly religious issues. Although interest in social justice has been recognized as a significant element of liberal Protestantism of the early twentieth-century, conservative Protestants were also involved. Ferenc Morton Szasz concludes of the period between 1901 and 1917, "Historians' traditional separation of the clergy between those concerned with the social gospel and those concerned only with individual salvation is not accurate for this period."³² Rather, a belief in a responsibility to work for some version of social justice was a thoroughly accepted tenet of the period³³ and practiced by conservatives as much, if not more, than by liberals.³⁴

²⁹ Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe and Jean Miller Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America: A History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 387.

³⁰ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 131; Robert A. Schneider, "Voice of Many Waters: Church Federation in the Twentieth Century," In *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 95.

³¹ Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 17.

³² Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1982), 56.

³³ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 85-93.

³⁴ Marty, *Modern American Religion*, vol. 1, *The Irony of It All, 1893-1919*, 283.

Thus, the willingness of some Protestants to incorporate and even embrace the changes that were taking place culturally and intellectually did not immediately cause a crisis in Protestantism. Instead, there were continuing and essential points of connection. As George M. Marsden points out, this was true in part because the essential unit in Protestantism in the US was the individual.³⁵ Many American Protestants had a deep distrust of theology. They defined what it was to be Protestant as an individual matter of belief and action.

By the first decades of the twentieth-century, liberalism (modernism as it was coming to be known) was entrenched in all the leading theological seminaries. Further, by at least one estimate, more than half of all Protestant publications leaned towards modernism and nearly one-third of the Protestant pulpits leaned the same way.³⁶ Liberal Protestants largely accommodated cultural and intellectual changes in order to remain relevant and culturally central. Given the considerable intellectual changes and reality of shrinking cultural dominance of Christianity, liberals found it necessary to alter their own beliefs in order to accommodate these changes. While conservatives (not called “fundamentalists” until the 1920s) believed that Truth was timeless, modernists argued that what was taken as truth was culturally and historically contingent.³⁷ This paved the way for modernists to shift their beliefs and practices.³⁸ Conservatives (anti-modernists) on the other hand viewed changing beliefs and practices as necessarily a move away from a solid, established and timeless Truth that was the foundation of their faith.

³⁵ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 71.

³⁶ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 33.

³⁷ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 133.

³⁸ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 133-138.

Thus, as a response to intellectual shifts, those Protestants who would come to be known as modernists emphasized the need to harmonize Christian beliefs with new scientific explanations. To retain the relevance of Christianity in light of higher criticism, some in the elite began to argue that the Bible was not as essential to Christianity as once imagined.³⁹ In this telling, the Bible became a story of the origins of the Christian faith. The test of Christianity shifted from the teachings of Christian tradition to an emphasis on behaviour.⁴⁰ While Calvinism had stressed the judicial nature of faith, modernists put forward the claim that Jesus had instead stressed the brotherhood of humankind and the fatherhood of God. Ultimately, they argued that it was religious feelings that were at the heart of Christianity. Religious experience could transcend the Bible.⁴¹ Like the experiences of the Hebrew peoples, and the ethics of Jesus, religious feelings would survive current day challenges and threats.⁴²

Conservatives saw these alterations as a capitulation⁴³. As a result of modernist willingness to accommodate intellectual shifts, conservatives faced not only the upheaval of shifting cultural values, but the reality of accommodation within their own churches. Their response to these changes in all areas of life was one of resistance. Indeed, their positions became further entrenched the more they were pressed. They stood against an intellectual insistence on natural rather than supernatural explanations, resisting changes in belief and practice which they held to be a part of the ‘True Christianity.’ As one evangelical Christian historian stated, they “maintained the supernaturalism of the

³⁹ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 138-139.

⁴⁰ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 34.

⁴¹ Hankins, *American Evangelicals*, 24.

⁴² Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 33-36; Hankins, *American Evangelicals*, 23.

⁴³ Notably, early fundamentalist battles are centred almost entirely in the North because it is there where liberalism has gained a position of power. See Paul K. Conkin, *When All The Gods Trembled: Darwinism, Scopes, and American Intellectuals* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), 74.

past....Their world view still had room for angels, demons, lakes of fire which burned forever, and a personal Son of Man who was coming soon on the clouds of heaven.”⁴⁴

Methodist theology of the period did not remain within the fundamentalist camp but “evolved over the course of the nineteenth century in interaction with the intellectual currents of the day, shifts so gradual as to escape much reaction from the pulpit or the pew.”⁴⁵ However, this is not to suggest that there were not controversies to manage and consequences that were felt. As articulated by John G. McEllhenney, Frederick E. Maser, Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., and Kenneth Rowe,

There were clear signs in the 1890s that a theological shift was in the wind. “Liberal” Protestantism, a movement to modernize theology that had been developing for decades, caught up with Evangelicals and United Brethren as well as Methodists. But until 1930, the older patterns of evangelical theology inherited from the previous century were still dominant.⁴⁶

One factor that had an impact on both the speed of change and the upheavals faced by the church membership, was the diverse nature of the membership. And here, it is important to note that Methodists could be found at each end of the political and religious spectrums, from ultra-conservatives to radically liberal. However, Methodism as a whole remained centrist and “would for the duration of the twentieth century.”⁴⁷

The diverse nature of the membership meant that conservative causes were represented by some in the Methodist membership. While liberalism was dominant in Methodist churches by the mid-twentieth century, the rise of conservative forces in Methodist churches was the impetus behind two Boston professors facing heresy charges

⁴⁴ Timothy Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism (1875-1925)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 40, quoted in James H. Moorhead, “The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925,” in *American Church History: A Reader*, ed. Henry Warner Bowden and P.C. Kemeny (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) 299.

⁴⁵ Richey, Rowe and Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America*, 301.

⁴⁶ John G. McEllhenney, ed. *United Methodism in America: A Compact History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 112.

⁴⁷ Richey, Rowe and Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America*, 327.

over, among other things, expressed beliefs in multiple biblical authorship, as-well as disbelief in the Trinity, divinity of Christ and the Atonement.⁴⁸ Both were acquitted by a centrist church and the decision marked a vindication of progressive politics.

In the broader Protestant context between 1910 and 1915 twelve anti-modernists volumes were published as a defense of the faith. The authors of these were made up of a broad contingent of American and English evangelical Protestants. The volumes supported a belief in the authority of the Bible over the authority of modern science. They were written and edited by Bible teachers, evangelical preachers and scholars from across Protestant denominational boundaries. “The Fundamentals,”⁴⁹ was widely distributed at no cost to pastors, missionaries, theology students and others in the English-speaking world. In the end, approximately three million volumes were delivered.⁵⁰ While those who contributed to the volumes were often dispensationalists themselves, importantly, “The Fundamentals,” in an attempt to bolster an inclusive movement against modernism, eschewed these controversial elements.⁵¹ The battle lines were not yet clearly drawn between modernists and anti-modernists and the volumes contained inclusive and moderate positions, which would become unacceptable to fundamentalists in coming years.

Returning to the larger American landscape, the US entered WWI with enthusiasm in 1917. This war has the effect of politicizing the modern/anti-modern divide. During the war, each side managed to both radicalize and entrench positions that were far more fluid before the war. In the war-invoked sense of crisis, each side

⁴⁸ Richey, Rowe and Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America*, 301.

⁴⁹ Before long, some conservative church goers will define themselves as and take the label “fundamentalists.”

⁵⁰ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 119.

⁵¹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 119.

launched attacks blaming the other for the war. Liberals questioned the patriotism of conservatives by suggesting that premillennialism was dangerous and unpatriotic because the belief that existence is largely outside of human control is taught.⁵² Further, they suggested that this may be the work of German powers.⁵³ For their part, conservatives responded by referring to German higher criticism and pointing out that it is actually liberals who are under the sway of foreign powers.⁵⁴

November of 1918, World War I ended abruptly and with it the idealism of the Progressive Era. American losses reached over 100 000 dead and twice as many wounded. In the same year over 500 000 Americans were killed by a worldwide flu epidemic. Rising inflation resulted in cost of living more than doubling compared to the years before the war. Labour disputes erupted in 1919. In the same year, racial tensions resulted in a series of race riots. Near hysterical fear of Communists also marked the early post-war era. In addition to foreign Communists, Americans feared an influx of southern and eastern European immigrants. These immigrants were argued to be both subversive and dangerous. Nonetheless the optimism of the Progressive Era remained alive in mainline Protestant denominations, although the interests of reformers had shifted as a result of the war. The war had given liberal Protestants common interests and goals, including plans to unite all major American Protestant denominations. In order to coordinate worldwide Protestant benevolent and mission efforts, the Interchurch World Movement was launched in 1919.⁵⁵ The organization was conceived as a Protestant

⁵² Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 145-149.

⁵³ Marty, *Modern American Religion*, vol. 1, *The Irony of It All, 1893-1919*, 225-226; Moorhead, *World without End*, 174-175.

⁵⁴ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 141-53; Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 39; Moorhead, *World without End*, 174-5; Schneider, "Voice of Many Waters: Church Federation in the Twentieth Century," 95.

⁵⁵ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 180.

equivalent to the League of Nations. Yet, both the Interchurch Movement and attempts to unite Protestants would soon dissolve. Tensions between liberal Protestants and conservative as well as revivalist Protestants would move to the fore and become intractable.

While liberals would become more aggressive in organizing for unity among Protestant denominations, they also ramped up their attacks on conservatives. For their part, in 1919, conservatives founded the World's Christian Fundamentals Association. Organized to combat modernism, dispensational-premillennialists made up the membership.⁵⁶ By this time, the controversy with modernists trumped all other concerns for conservatives. And conservatives themselves began to close ranks. Fundamentalism had until this point been a largely elite, primarily urban, northern phenomena, but around this time, southerners were drawn into this dialogue in no small part due to a deep interest in conservative attacks on evolution. Although hardly mentioned in "The Fundamentals," by the 1920s, evolution became a test of fundamentalist faith.⁵⁷

Until the 1920s, American Protestantism had yet to separate into two distinct camps. There were differences, debates and matters of contention. What was new to this period was a clear distinction between liberal Protestants and what would become known as fundamentalist Protestants.⁵⁸ Indeed, until this period most members of the largest Protestant churches considered themselves evangelical. They were evangelical, in the sense that they affirmed that Christ was God, that the Bible was an authoritative text, that

⁵⁶ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 57.

⁵⁷ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 147-49.

⁵⁸ The term "fundamentalist" originates from the conservative editor of the Baptist paper *The Watchman-Examiner*. He used it to describe people of the Protestant faith ready to do battle for the "fundamentals." Before long, the term was used to describe American Protestants who were willing to fight ecclesiastical and theological war against modernism in theology. (Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 57.)

conversion was necessary, and that the Christian had a responsibility to live a holy life.⁵⁹

In the 1920s a break that had been in the making since the late 1880s came to a head.

Conservative Protestants had long voiced concerns over the one-sided focus of the social gospel.⁶⁰ They feared that emphasis on social salvation drew attention away from the need for individual repentance and salvation. By this time, “fundamentalism” included,

...an intense focus on evangelism as the church’s overwhelming priority, the need for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit after conversion in order to live a holy and effective Christian life, the imminent, premillennial second coming of Christ, and the divine inspiration and absolute authority of the Bible, whose very words were free from errors.⁶¹

In what is often referred to as the “Great Reversal,” by the 1920s, as ties between liberal Christianity and progressive politics emerged, conservative evangelicals increasingly divorced themselves from these social campaigns.⁶² It was not the case that conservative evangelicals stood against participating in social issues. Rather, they believed that advocates of the social gospel gave the impression that social issues now constituted Christianity. The importance of repentance and surrender to the will of God was not a part of this equation. Further, a conservative theological stance was one that valued good works as the product of repentance and surrender to God in all things.⁶³ However, proponents of the liberal gospel emphasized good works without reference to repenting sin or dependence on God. This reformulation created unease among conservatives. As conservative evangelicals mounted resistance to this position they

⁵⁹ Darryl G. Hart, *That Old-Time Religion in Modern America: Evangelical Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 19.

⁶⁰ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 92; Schneider, “Voice of Many Waters: Church Federation in the Twentieth Century,” 95.

⁶¹ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 6.

⁶² Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 91; Richey, Rowe and Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America*, 328.

⁶³ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 91-92.

increasingly found it untenable to support programs or beliefs associated with progressive Christianity.⁶⁴

For a period after WWI, as a result of the war and accompanying sense of cultural crisis, popular support for fundamentalism grew stronger. Broad support for fundamentalism was short-lived, however. As trends and fashions changed, this sentiment quickly faded and early attempts to push liberals out of denominations failed.⁶⁵ By 1925, those who rejected naturalistic explanations for life and religion had been pushed out of higher education.⁶⁶ Speaking of conservative Protestants, George Marsden states, “Their worldview, which until recently had been generally considered both sacred and academically impeccable, was now becoming a laughingstock. This was a key part of fundamentalist experience of social displacement.”⁶⁷

This failure to push liberals out of the Protestant church led to a further radicalization of fundamentalism. Denominations split apart and significant numbers of congregants left to join churches that were explicitly fundamentalist.⁶⁸ As one historian notes, “Over the next two decades, the surviving fundamentalist movement would tend its own affairs, nurse its grudges, and prophesy God’s impending wrath, yet still hope for revival.”⁶⁹ The most militant among fundamentalists advocated not only total separation from modernist Protestants, but that this separation be a test of orthodoxy.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 92.

⁶⁵ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 164.

⁶⁶ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 215.

⁶⁷ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 218.

⁶⁸ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 119; Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 197.

⁶⁹ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 8.

⁷⁰ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 67-68.

However, many other fundamentalists were less convinced of the need for separation. They recognized that in order to win America and the world for Christ, it was useful to retain some connection with major denominations.

Methodist churches were less impacted by battles over fundamentalism than other denominations such as the Presbyterians and Baptists.⁷¹ The fact that many Methodists had previously left to join more conservative holiness congregations left a smaller conservative membership among Methodists.⁷² This, in turn, meant that there were fewer Methodists who shared conservative concerns. However, Methodism was not entirely immune to fundamentalism. Early in the 1920s Methodism witnessed a theologically conservative movement of its own. A New Jersey pastor, Harold Paul Sloan, launched a campaign intended to fight liberal corruption across Northern Methodist theological education. His aim was to bring an end to the study or support for liberalism in seminaries. Ultimately, his concerns and aim were dismissed by the denomination's General Conference.⁷³

In this context, the teaching of Darwinism⁷⁴ became an important battle line between conservative and liberal Protestants. In 1925, under the direction of the American Civil Liberties Union, a young teacher in rural Dayton, Tennessee volunteered to defy Tennessee law that forbade the teaching of evolution. The ensuing trial ended in a guilty verdict and token fine. Coverage of the trial itself worked to discredit conservatives. Significantly, the trial created an enduring image of fundamentalists as

⁷¹ Richey, Rowe and Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America*, 327.

⁷² Richey, Rowe and Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America*, 330-332.

⁷³ Richey, Rowe and Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America*, 330-332.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of "Creation Science" and its two primary originators see Edward B. Davis, "Fundamentalism and Folk Science between the Wars," *Religion and American Culture* 5, no.2 (Summer 1995): 217-48.

rural and unsophisticated.⁷⁵ By 1925, fundamentalist hopes of control within Protestant denominations declined. At the time, liberals widely assumed that fundamentalism would fade away as the nation became more educated.⁷⁶ This did not happen and, as argued by Joel A. Carpenter, by the 1930s and 1940s, “Fundamentalism was a popular movement and, as such, its strength was not to be measured according to the degree of its organizational unity.”⁷⁷ However, the notion circulated in the media that fundamentalism was in decline.⁷⁸

More accurately, mainline churches faced decline in the 1930s.⁷⁹ For their part, during this time, fundamentalists were quietly regrouping.⁸⁰ Notably, evangelical denominations outpaced general population growth throughout the 1930s.⁸¹ Some left mainline churches to found or join Bible or Baptist churches.⁸² In part because of their conservatism and perhaps because of their own ambivalence towards elements of American culture, many immigrants and Northern European churches (e.g. Swedish Baptist, German Baptist, and Christian Reformed) also found a home in fundamentalist denominations.⁸³ In addition to founding churches, fundamentalists built their own network of institutions (e.g. radio shows, publications, missions, and youth organizations, to name a few.)⁸⁴ Many of these provided a parallel alternative to traditional

⁷⁵ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 195.

⁷⁶ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 197.

⁷⁷ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 16.

⁷⁸ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 197.

⁷⁹ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 197; Joel A. Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942,” *Church History* 49, no.1 (1980): 65.

⁸⁰ Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942,” 63.

⁸¹ Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 16.

⁸² Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 195.

⁸³ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 194-195.

⁸⁴ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 194-195; Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942,” 62-75; Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 22-28.

denominationalism. In particular, pushed out of higher education, Bible schools were built to address the educational needs of conservatives.⁸⁵

While entrance into World War I had been met with caution, entrance into World War II was initially and widely opposed. The bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 resulted in not only a change of policy regarding entrance into the war but broad based popular support. Notably, World War II re-opened the wounds among those critical and/or wary of American culture. During the 1940s, it was not apparent that a split between two fundamentalist camps was forming. The first group refused to engage in controversy or make separation from mainline churches a test of orthodoxy. The most visible manifestation of this group was the National Association of Evangelicals, founded in 1942. This organization was a loose group of evangelical organizations and individuals banded together to promote evangelism.⁸⁶ However, other fundamentalists were offended by this group's unwillingness to fight against modernist forces and refusal to separate from them. In particular, they were uneasy about the alliances forged in the 1940s, by fundamentalists who do not seek separation.⁸⁷

Nationally, Protestant religion prospered in the post-war years. Increasing numbers of Americans were attending and joining religious groups.⁸⁸ However, as America grew more urban and educated, fundamentalists did not disappear as predicted. Indeed, a rising evangelical movement, adopting much from earlier fundamentalists, emerged.⁸⁹ The focus of evangelicals was conversion. However, evangelicals in order to

⁸⁵ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 128-129; Carpenter, "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942," 66-69.

⁸⁶ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 68-69.

⁸⁷ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 71.

⁸⁸ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 213-14.

⁸⁹ Douglas A. Sweeney, "Fundamentalism and the Neo-evangelicals," *Fides et Historia* 24, no.1 (Winter-Spring 1992): 81-96.

re-establish their position as insiders in Protestantism believed that they needed to become more respectable. They needed to distance themselves from perceptions that painted them as rural, uneducated and unsophisticated. As a result, some fundamentalist intellectuals move away from premillennial-dispensationalism. In doing so, they believed that they were rebuilding Christian civilization.⁹⁰ Proponents of this re-packaging supported conservative seminaries and sophisticated biblical scholarship. Further, they encouraged relationships between their own and mainline denominations.⁹¹ In the 1950s, Billy Graham moved fundamentalism to the respectable borders of American life. In 1957, he offended hardline fundamentalists by accepting the sponsorship of the mainline local Protestant Council of Churches.⁹² This precipitated a definitive split with hard line fundamentalists.⁹³ After this time, “fundamentalism” became the word used almost exclusively by those who demand ecclesiastical separation.⁹⁴

Primary Sources

It was against this religious backdrop that readers of each of the following journals asked questions about suffering and writers responded. In the following study, I reviewed four Protestant journals. Two of the four journals reviewed were fundamentalist (Moody publications and *The Sunday School Times*), one was Methodist (*Zion's Herald*) and the last was less conservative than fundamentalists but of no particular Protestant denomination (*Christian Herald*). I reviewed each of the journals for the years 1908, 1918, 1919, 1929, 1930, 1943, 1945 and 1955. These journals were

⁹⁰ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 72; Sweeney, “Fundamentalism and the Neo-evangelicals,” 83.

⁹¹ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 72-73.

⁹² Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 73.

⁹³ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 73.

⁹⁴ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 73.

geographically situated in the American Mid-West and East coast. They provide a view of fundamentalist/evangelical, Methodist, as well as mainline attitudes and beliefs held by at least some fundamentalist and mainline Protestant believers during the period among the writers and readers of the journals.

Although I have attempted to include voices of regular people of the period, the views presented are generally somewhat elite. I say “somewhat” elite because while writers for each of the journals present more of the official line, they are not philosophers or theologians. Most seem to have been active local ministers or lay leaders. It appears to have been a convention shared among each of the periodicals that writers are noted with very little information other than a name, and in the case of clergy, a vocation. Occasionally the church where they pastor or minister is noted but more often, it is not. Several cases were found where an article appears without even an author’s name. Although this information would have been useful in order to identify who was in a position to write prescriptive literature, it simply is not available.

Here, it is important to make another point. While providing guidance to other believers, ministers and pastors in Christian denominations are not necessarily seen as having a stronger relationship with God. As a result, their religious authority is limited. Further, within Protestantism, there was a particularly strong willingness to develop one’s own religious beliefs, although, and notably, this latitude was not unlimited. Thus, the history of Protestant churches suggests complicated relationships and challenge over authority on religious points. So, while popular confusion over the purpose of suffering is detailed in the journals, confusion is also evident in the prescriptive views formulated by ministers, lay leaders and unidentified writers. One of the strengths of the current

study is its ability to detail the ways in which regular church-goers (as well as some writers) expressed confusion over suffering. The pages of these journals also demonstrate that writers felt the need to engage with this confusion.

Although I have been unable to establish the geographical residence of the readership of each of the journals, the journals themselves were all based in the East Coast or Midwest of the US. *Sunday School Times* in Philadelphia, the journals of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, *Zion's Herald* in Boston and *Christian Herald* in New York. Only the journals of Moody Bible Institute are noted as national periodicals. However, secondary sources, by not noting *Sunday School Times*, *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald*, as regional magazines, suggest that the readership may not have been strictly determined by the location of the publisher. Nonetheless, except in the case of the journals of Moody Bible Institute, it is reasonable to assume that most of the readership came from the region in which the publisher was based.

The Journals

Sunday School Times

The Sunday School Times was a popular theologically conservative weekly. The magazine displayed deep religious conservatism from its inception in 1908 through to the end of this study in 1955. Indeed, no changes in the focus or tenor of the periodical were noted during this period. In the early 1930s, when the magazine was most influential, it had a nationwide circulation of approximately eighty thousand.⁹⁵ Like Moody publications, the journal was influenced by and an important voice for holiness

⁹⁵ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 26.

teachings.⁹⁶ Holiness teachings originally emerged from John Wesley's teaching of personal perfection, through Christianity, in this life. True to their name, adherents of holiness movements focused on the personal holiness of the individual. While Wesleyan teachings (prominent in Methodist understandings of holiness) emphasized the complete eradication of a sinful nature, Keswick teachings (essential to fundamentalist views of holiness) rejected the idea of eradication of sin and argued that only through the continual work of the Holy Spirit could the Christian approach personal spiritual perfection.⁹⁷ In 1910, editor Charles G. Trumball was drawn into Keswick holiness teachings and used the journal as a means to introduce Americans to these ideas.⁹⁸ Keswick was a less radical form of holiness teaching than that of other holiness groups.⁹⁹ For this reason it appealed not to the socially and economically marginalized but to those whose financial fortunes seemed more certain.¹⁰⁰ In particular, Keswick teachings emphasized a personal and victorious life in Christ. Accompanying this was support for evangelism – particularly missionary work and a deep devotional life. Unlike more radical holiness movements, Keswick teachings were almost entirely devoid of an interest in social concerns.¹⁰¹ Notably, as early as 1914, editor, Charles Trumball argued that an insistence on social service, as seen in the Progressive Movement, was dangerous.¹⁰² He argued that this mistakenly placed the emphasis on results in this world rather than the next. While, as previously noted, it is a mistake to assume that social concerns were exclusively or even primarily a concern of the theologically liberal, it would also be a

⁹⁶ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 96.

⁹⁷ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 96.

⁹⁸ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 25.

⁹⁹ Named for a seminal meeting in Keswick, England.

¹⁰⁰ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 96.

¹⁰¹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 96.

¹⁰² Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 96-97.

mistake to suggest that all theologically conservative parties focused on social issues. As George M. Marsden notes, there was the tendency among some premillennialist holiness Bible teachers to see the world as beyond redemption and thus focus exclusively on saving souls.¹⁰³ This was the approach demonstrated by the magazine before the “Great Reversal” and at a time when the importance of social service was accepted by most conservative evangelicals.

Journals of Moody Bible Institute

Named for a key figure in Protestant conservatism, Moody Bible Institute was named after evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Moody Bible Institute was created and still functions as a key fundamentalist/evangelical institution. The journal emerged as a national magazine in 1907. *The Institute Tie*, later *The Christian Worker’s Magazine*, *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* and finally, *Moody Monthly* all were the consecutive journals of Moody Bible Institute. These name changes reflected the changing purpose of the institute’s journals.¹⁰⁴ First conceived as a way of keeping prior students up to date on happenings of the Institute, the title change to *The Christian Worker’s* magazine in 1910 reflected a change in the mandate of the publication. This altered mandate was to provide previous students – clergy and lay – with tools and lessons to aid in evangelistic efforts.¹⁰⁵ *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* (beginning in 1920) and *Moody Monthly* (beginning in 1938) continued and expanded this practical and evangelical emphasis. Theologically conservative journal writers displayed an enduring belief in

¹⁰³ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 85.

¹⁰⁴ John Corrigan, “The Moody Monthly,” in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 368.

¹⁰⁵ Corrigan, “The Moody Monthly,” 368.

premillennialism. Paid circulation rose from twenty-eight-thousand in 1933, to over fifty-thousand in 1942.¹⁰⁶

While writers increasingly looked askance at academic understandings of their faith, they were not anti-intellectual.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, in an interesting turn and in response to the growth of the social gospel, it was argued that a greater emphasis on intellect rather than emotion would successfully move the focus of contemporary preaching from political and sociological concerns back to Christ and redemption.¹⁰⁸ Initially, concern over the displacement of salvation and redemption by strictly material concerns, as seen in the social gospel, was not as strongly articulated as it would become in the “Great Reversal.” For instance, in 1908 the “Social Creed of the Churches” was embraced by the editors of *The Institute Tie* as “a most righteous and reasonable appeal on behalf of laboring man which we should like to forward to the utmost of our ability.”¹⁰⁹ This sentiment would fade over the ensuing decades.

Zion’s Herald

Zion’s Herald was first established in 1823.¹¹⁰ In order to assure its continuation as a New England publication the journal was purchased by the Boston Wesleyan Association in 1831.¹¹¹ The independent Methodist organization oversaw the production of the magazine through various incarnations. During the nineteenth century a large number of holiness sects emerged from Methodism. At this time, from 1865 to 1920 the

¹⁰⁶ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 133.

¹⁰⁷ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 129.

¹⁰⁸ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 130-131.

¹⁰⁹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 131.

¹¹⁰ Edward D. Jervey, “Zion’s Herald: The Independent Voice of American Methodism,” *Methodist History* 25, no.2 (January 1987): 91.

¹¹¹ Jervey, “Zion’s Herald: The Independent Voice of American Methodism,” 92-93.

Northern Methodist Episcopal Church and the Southern Methodist Church saw exponential growth. A popular and evangelical church movement, Methodism was viewed during this time as a church of the “poor and lowly.” However, by the late nineteenth century, many Methodists had become middle income earners. The church itself had passed through its infancy to become well established.

The journal seemed to accept most of the liberal currents of the day. Notably, by the 1880s there was a general acceptance of Darwinism by the writers of this magazine.¹¹² Further, German Higher Criticism was also embraced at this time as making the Bible more accessible and intelligible. While championing new scholarship regarding the Bible, writers for the journal maintained traditional supernatural beliefs such as the truth of the virgin birth, as well as the miracles and resurrection of Jesus.¹¹³ Receptive to modernism, articles attacking fundamentalism in general and a belief in biblical inerrancy and premillennialism specifically, were frequent.¹¹⁴ Instead of these conservative concerns, writers focused attention on progressive social and political matters. However, as noted in the preceding chapter, liberalism was not broadly accepted within Methodism until the 1930s. In addition, membership in Methodism was wide and diverse, so a broad spectrum of positions were represented in the magazine.

Christian Herald

The *Christian Herald* was a popular nondenominational weekly periodical founded in 1878.¹¹⁵ In this year, Joseph Spurgeon, cousin of the well-known British

¹¹² Jervey, “Zion’s Herald: The Independent Voice of American Methodism,” 104.

¹¹³ Jervey, “Zion’s Herald: The Independent Voice of American Methodism,” 105.

¹¹⁴ Jervey, “Zion’s Herald: The Independent Voice of American Methodism,” 107.

¹¹⁵ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 84.

evangelist Charles H. Spurgeon, traveled to New York City to establish an American version of *Christian Herald and Sign of the Times*. The journal was to be a means of propagating premillennial support.¹¹⁶ Twelve years later, in 1890, Dr. Louis Klopsch became the new owner of the weekly. By this time, readership had climbed to thirty thousand.¹¹⁷ Under Klopsch's leadership, the *Christian Herald* developed into a large and enduring charitable enterprise that exists to this day.

From its inception, the *Christian Herald* exhibited theologically conservative Protestant efforts to address social problems.¹¹⁸ The organization was heavily involved in relief work, which included a Bowery mission and a summer camp for children of the tenements. Indeed, it became one of the leading national social organizations. By 1910, readership had grown to nearly a quarter of a million.¹¹⁹ Pursuing an even broader readership, writers for the *Christian Herald* had by now dropped premillennialism.¹²⁰ As George M. Marsden explains it, "Despite its theological conservatism and its continued championing of a number of exclusively evangelistic efforts, by 1910 the *Christian Herald* had become distinctively progressive in politics." Writers for the magazine championed labour unions, labour legislation involving both women and children, better treatment of immigrants and blacks, and enduring efforts for world peace. These interests and efforts would remain unchanged both before and after the "Great Reversal."¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 84.

¹¹⁷ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 84.

¹¹⁸ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 84.

¹¹⁹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 84.

¹²⁰ Editor George Sandison returns the magazine to its original purpose of propagating premillennialism from 1917 through to the end of his tenure three years later.

¹²¹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 85.

WWI resulted in a dramatic increase in premillennial beliefs in the larger culture and this was reflected in the journal. Thus, from 1917 to 1919, the journal briefly returned to its premillennial roots. However, after 1919, premillennialism was again abandoned. From 1919 through to 1955, *Christian Herald* again returned to progressive political interests and an emphasis on social service.

Informed by the general religious and historical context detailed above, each of the four journals noted were chosen for strategic as well as practical reasons. I began by looking for fundamentalist journals. In addition to these, I wanted mainline journals that would represent a point of contrast to fundamentalist publications. I was also explicitly looking for non-academic journals. I wanted periodicals that would have appeared in people's homes and were potentially read by diverse family members. Notably, I was not looking for journals that were simple reflections of the debates taking place in schools of theology. On the contrary, I was looking for less academic viewpoints and more accurate reflections of how ordinary churchgoers were engaging with, reconstituting and reflecting back the academic debates detailed in the preceding chapter. In addition, I wanted journals that would provide an opportunity for readers to express their own concerns or viewpoints. These aims were achieved by choosing periodicals that included a variety of pieces. Among these were poems and fiction, reader's questions as well as columns geared specifically towards women or children. In a time with fewer entertainment or media choices, these periodicals were meant to hold a significant place in reader's homes and lives.

Because I needed a longer period of time in hopes of capturing discussions of suffering in theory as well as in practice, finding journals with long enough runs was critical. The four journals chosen reflect these parameters. Both *The Sunday School Times* and the journals of Moody Bible Institute were clearly part of the fundamentalism/evangelicalism that was discussed in the preceding background history chapter. Each presented a clear and unequivocal voice of the fundamentalist movement. However, and notably, they are not examples of ‘high theology.’ *Zion’s Herald* and the *Christian Herald* diverge from both fundamentalism and the picture of liberal Protestants provided in the preceding chapter. Placed on a spectrum with liberal Protestantism on one end and fundamentalism/evangelicalism on the other, *Zion’s Herald* and *Christian Herald* would fall between the two. The voices of liberal Protestantism provided by these two journals are complicated, and at times incomplete or tentative. With regard to *Zion’s Herald*, this is consistent with both the heterogeneous membership of Methodist congregations and the fact that the denomination as a whole remained centrist through the twentieth century. With *Christian Herald*, this is, at least in part, a reflection of the fact that the magazine has roots in premillennialism and thus, at least in certain periods, affinities to fundamentalism, despite its support for social service. Additionally, in the period reviewed, Protestants are in the process of making sense of an altered religious landscape. In this context, *Zion’s Herald* and *Christian Herald* do not represent unquestioning and unequivocal versions of liberal Protestantism. Although liberal in focus, there are moments of uncertainty that lean back towards conservatism. Writers for the journals were trying to work out many of the issues that emerge in the debates between fundamentalism/evangelicalism and liberal theology. These debates and this

uncertainty are reflected in the succeeding chapters and, when relevant to discussions of suffering, they are noted. Moody publications, *The Sunday School Times*, *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald* were chosen with a specific purpose in mind. In particular, in the following chapters, they are used to explore how non-elite American fundamentalists/evangelicals and mainline believers understood the existence of suffering.

Chapter Two: Readers Question, Writers Respond

In the US, the first half of the twentieth century marked very difficult years for a great many people. The US formally entered WWI in 1917. In 1918 and 1919, the Spanish flu pandemic reached American shores. In the US, the Great Depression would last from the early 1930s through to WWII. In 1941, the US entered WWII. Through all of this great calamity, and through the mundane difficulties of everyday life, U.S. Protestant laity, regardless of conservative or liberal leanings, wanted and searched for answers to explain the suffering they experienced and saw around them. I had hoped to include discussions of race in this chapter. However, the existence and realities of race and suffering are all but invisible in the periodicals under review.¹ What is visible in the journals is the fact that consistently over this period, readers of the journals voiced concerns over the existence of suffering in the world. Indeed, across time and periodicals, readers wrote in to express confusion and even anger over the purpose and meaning of suffering. As an outgrowth of this confusion, readers entertained a host of questions and concerns regarding the relationship between God² and suffering.³

¹ One rare example appears in *Institute Tie* in 1908. Here, the comfort that Christianity provides is contrasted with the sorrow that Chinese “superstition” brings to the death of an infant. (“The Dead Babes: A Contrast,” *IT* (October 1908): 79-80.) Another appears in *Christian Herald* in 1929. The article involves a discussion of doctors and other staff who work at a “Negro” hospital. (Fred Hamlin, “Making a Rainbow Out of the Color Line,” *CH* (November 16, 1929): 6)

² Taking my lead from Dr. Robert Orsi and Dr. Marie Griffith, herein, the term “God” is used in precisely the way it is found in the sources used. If and when the term is used to discuss Jesus, the fatherhood of God or the Holy Spirit, this information is detailed. However, most frequently, the sources simply made reference to “God” without further qualifications.

³ Notably, and as is consistent with Orsi’s finding that what Catholics believed set them apart from Protestants was that they did not require explanations from God, it is clear in the following study that at least some American Protestants in the first half of the twentieth-century did ask questions and did wonder at God’s reasons and plan.

Between 1908 and 1955, in each of the primary source journals surveyed, questions were repeatedly raised. Across the first half of the twentieth century, there were many readers who asked in one form or another, “Why does God allow me and those around me to suffer?”⁴ Writers from *Christian Herald* and *Zion’s Herald* as well as Moody publications and the *Sunday School Times*, respond in varied and inconsistent voices. Thus, from empathy with readers’ confusion to anger at their doubt, writers’ voices provide no consistent response to readers. Nonetheless, the most prevalent response to reader confusion is for writers to dismiss the right and ability of readers to comprehend God’s ways.⁵ Further, they often identify the act of asking questions with doubting or defying God. Despite their heterogeneous responses, writers do offer prescriptive answers to reader questions. As is consistent with what was found by Pinn⁶, Orsi⁷ and Griffith⁸, in prescriptive understandings of suffering, suffering itself is assumed not only to ultimately make sense but bring redemption or benefits. Further, suffering is understood as being beneficial either directly or through what is learned by suffering.

⁴ Every example that could be found of readers asking for explanations for suffering are provided. That they appear perennially and across journals, would suggest both that questions themselves were commonly asked and that the magazines received a higher number of similar questions than appear in the journals. This assumption is further buoyed by the fact that writers for separate articles feel the need to address the issue of suffering. It is impossible to know to what extent the questions themselves were filtered. However, while it is likely that not all questions regarding suffering were published, it’s not clear who would have been served by filtering the individual questions themselves. Each of the magazines come out of and continues to believe in the importance of evangelism. In so far as the existence of suffering was an impediment to belief, writers would have wanted to address the issues. It does not serve their purposes to pretend that their readership does not struggle with the question of why suffering exists. Would they have softened or hardened writer questions in order to suit their answers? That is impossible to say, but even if they did alter the questions for effect, these changes would have been relatively minor and the doubt and yearning behind the questions remains clear.

⁵ In many respects, this echoes the response given in the Biblical book of Job. Notably, in reviewing reader questions and writer responses, this is not the only place where parallels to the book of Job can be found. However, not only is there not a single instance of a reader noting this parallel but writers never reference this overlap either. Thus, taking a cue from the sources used, while acknowledging that there are parallels, these are neither explored or detailed.

⁶ Anthony B. Pinn, ed., *Moral Evil and Redemptive Suffering: A History of Theodicy in African American Religious Thought* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 7-9

⁷ Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 157.

⁸ Griffith, *God’s Daughters*, 89-91. (See also Griffith, “Female Suffering,” 190.)

The answers journal writers provide for suffering are diverse and are premised upon different versions of who God is, whether the Devil exists, who people are, and the purpose of suffering. For this reason each of these elements are explored, delineated and charted below. Writers agree (although with some variation in understanding) that God is all-good and all-powerful. In addition, the world is/was designed by God with a purpose in mind. Stated this way with certainty, fault for suffering must therefore lie with human beings. As a result, punishment or consequences are the most common explanations offered for suffering. However, other possibilities are also offered. In either case, sufferers and observers are left with the responsibility of determining the cause of their suffering.

In 1929, a *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* reader from Toledo asks, “Was God responsible for the Cleveland hospital blast which caused the death of about one hundred and twenty-five people? Did God permit the World War or was He just indifferent to it?”⁹ The following year, in 1930, a reader from Andes, New York wrote, “How could God allow any human being to suffer?”¹⁰ Twelve years earlier, seeking to clarify the relationship of God to human suffering, a *Christian Herald* reader from Eldorado Springs, Missouri, asked, “Does He see? Does He care?”¹¹ In 1955, in the Methodist journal *Zion’s Herald*, a reader asked, “If God is good, why do the innocent suffer?”¹² Each of these readers provides an example of questioning not only the necessity of suffering but also God’s role in this suffering. Yet, the final query makes an additional move, directly and explicitly judging God’s goodness in light of human suffering. The

⁹ Grant Stroth, “Practical and Perplexing Questions,” *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* (July 1929): 545 (hereafter cited as *MBIM*).

¹⁰ Grant Stroth, “Practical and Perplexing Questions,” *MBIM* (June 1930): 502.

¹¹ “Our Mailbox,” *Christian Herald* (January 9, 1918): 120 (hereafter cited as *CH*).

¹² Howard H. Hare, “What’s On Your Mind?” *Zion’s Herald* (June-July 1955): 9 (hereafter cited as *ZH*).

question posed was, “*If* God is good, why do the innocent suffer?” [italics added] Certainly, the possibility of an explanation for God’s involvement, or lack of it, is left open, even desired. But it would seem that the reader is searching for an explanation for the seeming contradictions that arises by asserting the existence of a *God* who *allows* suffering.

Yet, it is not simply God’s goodness that is up for debate. For if His goodness is called into question by human suffering, so too is His power. Perhaps, it is not the case that He does not want to act, but rather that He does not have the power to act. And, so, other readers wonder not at His desire to protect the innocent, but at His very ability to control and act upon the world. In 1930, in the pages of *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, directly raising the question of the limits of God’s power, B.W.K. of Scranton, Pennsylvania writes, “Is God powerless to wipe out all sin, corruption and misery, and to establish a heaven upon earth?”¹³

However, across journals, even assuming the power and the goodness of God, questions remain regarding the existence of suffering. Some readers seem willing to accept that God has both the power to prevent suffering and the goodness to wish it were not necessary. But readers still search for an explanation for why God would design the world as it is. Many want not only to know that God has a plan in place (assurance that there is a reason for suffering) but want to understand the workings of this plan. Further, it is clear that some entertain serious doubts about the very design of God’s plan. In 1943, one *Zion’s Herald* reader asked, “In looking over the strange drama of human history, have you found, amid its apparent chaos and cruelty, any evidence of plan of

¹³ Grant Stroth, “Practical and Perplexing Questions,” *MBIM* (July 1930): 549.

law?”¹⁴ Another, taking for granted that God possesses the power to change events, asks why He does not act. In *Christian Herald*, in 1930, Beverly Eastman, from Waterville, New York, asks, “Why does God permit war, and...who or what is to blame for the evil in the world?”¹⁵ Here the writer seems to take for granted that God *permits* war, that war would not occur without His approval. What is at issue is *why* God permits war.

In a related letter, a reader expresses concern and confusion over the purpose of suffering in the world. A reader of *The Christian Herald* in 1943, from Des Moines, Iowa writes,

How do you explain the ‘hard things’ of our Christian experience, such as financial losses, accidents, catastrophes, sickness and suffering of loved ones, and personal sufferings and afflictions? Are they from God or Satan? Are they all divine chastisements?¹⁶

Again, this is not as much a question of God’s goodness or power but an attempt to understand why the world is designed as it is. How, the reader asks, does the world make sense? How am I to understand suffering? And, more to the point, must I accept every moment or experience of suffering as God’s punishment for my failings?

Relating a parallel instance of questioning God’s design in 1943, Rev. Willard M. Aldrich, a writer for *Moody Monthly*, relays the comments of a member of his community, “I can’t understand why God doesn’t do something for us *now*. Right *now* is when we need it. Why would He do so much for us in the future and nothing now?”¹⁷ Here the community member seems to accept that everything will work out for the best in the end. What is at issue is *how* God carries out His plan. The question that is being

¹⁴ Joseph Fort Newton, “Everyday Living,” *ZH* (December 8, 1943): 968.

¹⁵ Frank S. Mead, “Straight Talk,” *CH*, (November 1943): 72.

¹⁶ Grant Stroth, “Practical and Perplexing Questions,” *MBIM* (August 1930): 596.

¹⁷ Rev. Willard M. Aldrich, “Why Doesn’t God Do Something for Us Now?” *Moody Monthly* (February 1943): 335 (hereafter cited as *MM*).

asked, is why the world *needs* to be the way it is? Why does not it work in a way that seems obviously comprehensible? Or, as the reader asks, why does not God provide some help *now*? Though an eschatological solution promises much in the future, the reader asks, what about the present?

Taken together, across periodicals readers ask a series of related questions regarding God's place in the world. Regarding suffering, there was no real difference in the kinds of questions asked in the more liberal or conservative journals. Among these were: Is he active in the world? Does he care what happens to people? Does He have the power to change or act on the world? In addition to these questions of God's involvement, goodness and power, readers ask a series of questions regarding why the world is laid out the way it is. Is there a plan? Am I to blame for my own suffering? Why is so much suffering permitted? And, 'why won't God help us now'? Each of these questions involves a desire to understand as well as confusion over God's design of the world.

In turn, across time and journals, a plethora of writers address themselves to the apparent incomprehensibility of God's plan. In articles, many with poignant and revealing titles, distress and confusion are revealed. "Why is God Silent?"¹⁸ "Getting the Breaks": If you haven't been 'getting the breaks' you probably need some breaks first from God."¹⁹ "Those Having No Hope."²⁰ "Does God Care?"²¹ "Answering the Objection That God is Cruel."²² Here, writers are drawn into a dialogue of doubt and

¹⁸ John Bishop, "Why Is God Silent?" *ZH* (February 24, 1943): 171.

¹⁹ Rev. Harold P. Warren, "Getting the Breaks," *MM* (August 1943): 675.

²⁰ Rev. R.A. Torrey, "Those Having No Hope," *CH* (May 17, 1930): 11.

²¹ "Does God Care?" *ZH* (December 31, 1919): 1711.

²² Elzoe Prindle Stead, "Answering the Objection That God is Cruel," *The Sunday School Times* (October 2, 1943): 780 (hereafter cited as *TSSST*).

confusion. In turn, these articles and sermons not only acknowledge the wide confusion of readers but also represent an attempt to address these concerns.

Encapsulating many of the reader concerns already addressed, a *Zion's Herald* writer delineates the concerns and questions he is aware exist about the nature of God's involvement in human affairs. He contends that, "Many people today, if they were frank, would confess to grave suspicions as to the absence of God."²³ He continues by explaining that assured of His presence, other readers doubt His power. They would argue that while God is present in the world, He lacks the power to act. Still others are convinced of God's indifference to human travails. In the tumultuous years of the Second World War, readers, according to *Zion's Herald* writer John Bishop, exhibited profound doubts about the nature of the world they lived in. They struggled to conceptualize a God who appeared to them to be absent from, indifferent to or powerless to act upon human struggles. They wonder how they are to understand, let alone have faith in this God. The most salient point to be gathered from this piece is how explicitly aware writers were of the dilemmas and confusion that faced readers.

Yet, and importantly, the response to readers' doubts and answers to readers' questions are neither simple nor consistent. Some responses entail no attempt at explanation, and certainly none at consolation. In response to doubts and a yearning for coherence displayed by readers, one of the most prevalent responses by periodical writers was one of anger. In these cases, explanations for the apparent incomprehensibility of the planet can be read not so much as answers but rather as rebukes. Writers consistently call into question the right of readers to ask for answers or explanations. They insist that humans are not in a position to understand or call into question God's workings in the

²³ John Bishop, "Why Is God Silent?" *ZH* (February 24, 1943): 171.

world. William G. Chanter, writing for *Zion's Herald*, states, "The Infinite cannot be comprehended by the finite, nor His ways mapped by the children of heaven."²⁴ Readers are not capable of understanding God or His ways. Further, questioning God, in any form, is discouraged in clear terms.

Here, questioning is identified with doubt and prohibitions against doubt in any form are clear. A writer for *Zion's Herald* identifies doubt with arrogance, "We take for granted that we are capable of understanding everything that God does."²⁵ Further, a writer for *The Christian Herald* identifies doubt with defiance, "When we doubt God it is easy to defy Him. When we defy God we seldom fail to come to doubt him."²⁶ In this equation, doubt (e.g. asking questions) is identified with defiance. More directly stated by a writer for *Moody Monthly*, "It is only unbelief that leads one to ask the question, 'If God cares, why does He permit this calamity that causes me so much grief?'"²⁷ Thus, doubt or simply asking questions not only demonstrates defiance but is tantamount to betrayal. It calls into question one's faith in God. Further, in *The Sunday School Times*, Elzoe Prindle Stead writes, "We cannot get salvation by arguing with God or stumbling at His word."²⁸ Here doubt does not simply call into question one's relationship with God but precludes salvation. Yet, notwithstanding the dangers, these are precisely the questions that readers ask.

Here it is important to note, as will often be the case, that both within and across periodicals there is no consensus among writers on the need for rebuke. Indeed, far from monolithic, attempts to address readers' questions are varied, even inconsistent. In each

²⁴ William G. Chanter, "Things Which Cannot Be Shaken," *ZH* (January 6, 1943): 9.

²⁵ John Bishop, "Why Is God Silent?" *ZH* (February 24, 1943): 172.

²⁶ Dr. Clovis G. Chappell, "Daily Meditations For the Quiet Hour" *CH* (November 1945): 42.

²⁷ Harry A. Ironside, "The Treasures of Darkness," *MM* (May 1943): 512.

²⁸ Elzoe Prindle Stead, "Understanding the Severity of God," *TSSST* (October 16, 1943): 825.

periodical there are instances of great compassion for those who are suffering and confused. Far from judgmental, a *Zion's Herald* author sympathizes with doubt and desire to understand. He writes, in rhyme, "I say it once, I say it again, / I do not see the use of pain. / I do not question that God has wisely planned, / Still I say I do not understand."²⁹ Another writer, in the pages of *The Christian Herald*, acknowledging the need for and the perceived deficiency of explanations of suffering, writes, "There are certainly, things we shall never know, problems insoluble, the problem of the trouble, of pain, of wickedness. There are many answers to these, none adequate and satisfactory."³⁰ Thirty-five years earlier, an author in *Moody Monthly* responded with kindness and consolation to confusion over the purpose of human troubles, "Of course you do not understand the why and wherefore. Just wait, dear one; by and by you will know the reason ... To be sure, all things are not good, but all things *work together* for good."³¹ Each of these responses is in stark departure from the harsh judgment that is also displayed, in each of the periodicals, towards those that doubt or feel they are even in a position to ask questions. Thus, while rebuke may have been a prevalent response, it was not the only one. And here the vital point is that this inconsistency is consistent over time and across periodicals. Indeed, across a 47-year period and within four different journals there exists a degree of flexibility and pliancy regarding what is expected or demanded of believers in relation to how individuals understand suffering.

While writers sometimes make clear that they do not believe that readers are entitled to ask questions regarding the apparent incomprehensibility of God's plans, it is nonetheless universally agreed that suffering, *if* incomprehensible now, will ultimately

²⁹ Raymond H. Huse, "Whence and Whither?" *ZH* (Sept. 29, 1943): 808.

³⁰ Rev. Cyrus T. Brady, "The Reproach of the Troubled," *CH* (September 9, 1908): 705.

³¹ Rev. David D. Allen, "Calamitous Circumstances," *MM* (July 1943): 618.

make sense.³² As it is explained by Rev. Madison C. Peters in the pages of *The Christian Herald*, “It behooves us to have this patience and faith to wait until the ‘afterward,’ when the whole mystery will be unveiled to our sight.”³³ In the afterlife, everything that now cannot be fathomed will be revealed to have made ultimate and perfect sense. Another writer, Joseph Fort Newton writes, “Why there must be so much suffering to bring us to clearer vision and a kinder heart, nobody knows; but we do know that it is true by the facts of the human story, red with blood and with a Cross at its center.”³⁴ A writer for *Zion’s Herald* explains that while we are not capable of fully understanding it, “the silence of heaven is not the silence of absence, of impotence or indifference, but the silence of eternity interpreted by love.”³⁵ In other words, while the purpose of human suffering is not clear now, it will ultimately be understood as part of the will and plan of God.

Thus, while it is unequivocally argued that there **is** a solution, this solution is not clear in the present. Rather, in the future God’s perfect plan will be revealed. In the meantime, as urged by Rev. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Moody Monthly* readers are to; “Rest in the consciousness that our omnipotent God will not permit anything to come to us that will interfere with His plan for our lives.”³⁶ Whatever happens, readers are encouraged to believe that God is in control; that He had and has a plan for the past, present and future.

³² Here it should be noted that this promise is not extended to “non-Christians”. Those acting outside of God’s will are not entitled to such a promise. See *MBIM*, August 1930, 28. “The Promises of God,” *ZH* (February 27, 1929): 259-260. Even for “Christians”, certain conditions must be met. See Ozora S. Davis, “The Spirit Giveth Life,” *ZH* (Jan.16, 1929): 83; “When and Why Saints Are Tested,” *MBIM* (December 1930): 218.

³³ Rev. Madison C. Peters, “The American Pulpit,” *CH* (September 30, 1908): 764.

³⁴ Joseph Fort Newton, “The Resurrection of Humanity,” *CH* (April 1943): 29.

³⁵ John Bishop, “Why Is God Silent?” *ZH* (February 24, 1943): 171-2.

³⁶ Rev. Kenneth S. Wuest, “How to Have Peace in Times of War,” *MM* (July 1943): 614.

Whatever confusion or doubts exist today, readers are assured that there will one day be clarity.

Notably, while the very act of asking questions is potentially suspect, and answers are often assumed to be available only in the future, this in no way impedes the plethora of explanations offered to account for suffering in the world. The basis for reader questions and writer responses is a shared cultural and religious understanding of the purpose and place of suffering. In positing and responding to questions, each party takes part in the ongoing project of defining and redefining the boundaries of their shared tradition(s) in time and place. The questions that are raised about the nature and purpose of suffering implicitly and explicitly engage a constellation of beliefs. Readers ask what role does God play in human suffering? In turn, the answers given involve negotiating particular and specific understandings of the nature of God, the design of the world, and the nature of humankind. Thus, while the existence and purpose of suffering may be a mystery to both readers and writers alike, it is a mystery that readers want explained and writers feel compelled to address.

One justification of suffering that did not involve the questions of guilt or responsibility was simple denial of its significance. Of suffering, writers were willing to argue that human adversities were so transitory as to be irrelevant. As explained in 1918 in *The Christian Herald*, “But the Christian feels that this life is but a seed sown for eternity.”³⁷ And, later, “Our brief life here is but to plan, to build, to prepare in every thought, word, and deed for the larger and more wonderful life eternal...How trivial, whether one be rich or poor, at ease or suffering, when life is but a step in our endless

³⁷ Junius B. Remensnyder, “The Glorious Easter Hope,” *CH* (Mar. 27, 1918): 376.

career!”³⁸ The same line of thought is followed in a poem published in 1930, in the pages of *Sunday School Times*.³⁹ In *Zion’s Herald* in 1908, a writer concludes, “After all, we have such a little time to live and bear our burdens! ...And then rewards of life and its celestial fulfillments are forever and forever.”⁴⁰ The argument frequently made is that what happens in this life is all but irrelevant. In relation to an eternity in heaven, a lifetime, no matter the challenges or pain, is in the balance, of little importance.⁴¹ Note, however, this is not an explanation for earthly suffering. Rather, it is a rejection of the importance of earthly existence and trials.

In a related line of argument, an editor for *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* states in 1930, “How much more important is the soul than the body, for ‘what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and loses his soul?’”⁴² The argument made is that what happens to the body, what is felt or experienced in the body, is of secondary importance. Thus, suffering is again deemed irrelevant.

Another variation of this response to human trauma could also be found. What is argued is not the irrelevance but the unreality of suffering. Here, it is argued that perceived suffering is actually the result of failing to have sufficient faith. Found in *Christian Herald* in 1908, a writer argues that faced with sickness, grief and confusion, Jesus asks humans to have faith. This is a point of “will” and Mrs. M. Baxter concludes that, “The Lord says, ‘I am willing and ye are not.’”⁴³ In this understanding, calamity in

³⁸ Remensnyder, “The Glorious Easter Hope,” *CH* (Mar. 27, 1918): 376.

³⁹ Amos R. Wells, “My Cross,” *TSST* (March 22, 1930): 183.

⁴⁰ “The Family Department,” *ZH* (June 24, 1908): 815.

⁴¹ See also Rev. Luther P. Fincke, “The Laughter of God,” *MM* (May 1943) 513,522.

⁴² “Editorial Notes,” *MBIM* (September 1930): 3.

⁴³ Mrs. M. Baxter, “Healing Waters,” *CH* (Feb. 12, 190): 134.

all forms provisionally exists only because humans do not have enough faith. Suffering is in an act of will – not so much real as a consequence of attitude and faith.

When suffering is acknowledged it was widely agreed that suffering was one of God's tools to shape human life to His will. Importantly, this insistence on the redemptive power of suffering is also charted in different historical contexts by Pinn, Orsi and Griffith. One might experience suffering as a consequence of making the wrong decisions or choices. In *Zion's Herald*, in 1918, the following is found, "He will trace His own image on thee line by line, effacing by His grace and gracious discipline the marks and spots of sin which have defaced it."⁴⁴ Suffering was a clear indication that one should check one's behaviour for wrongdoing. Again, whether understood as punishment or the result of moral law, suffering was conceived as a clear (if not unambiguous) warning. But there were also understandings of suffering that were less linear. One such understanding did not showcase the guilt of the sufferer. Rather, suffering itself became a measure of the faith and character of the believer. In this, suffering was understood, not as a consequence of wrong-doing but as an opportunity. Suffering was a "good" that brought with it human improvement in some form or another. As explained in *Sunday School Times* in 1943, suffering could bring with it a necessary lesson, "he learned obedience by the things he suffered."⁴⁵ But most particularly, suffering was conceived as a trial in which faith was exposed. Expressed in clear terms in *Christian Herald* in 1908, "trouble is a test of belief, sorrow the touchstone of faith."⁴⁶ Further, it was argued that the believer who had suffered and demonstrated continued faith, were of greater worth to God. This made suffering itself worthwhile. In

⁴⁴ "The Family Department," *ZH* (January 23, 1918): 114.

⁴⁵ "Resting in His Will," *TSST* (March 13, 1943): 206. (See also *Institute Tie* (January 1908): 356.)

⁴⁶ Rev. Cyrus T. Brady, "The American Pulpit: The Reproach of the Troubled," *CH* (September 9, 1908): 704.

1943 in *The Sunday School Times* a writer identified only as a “Christian Businessman” writes, “Often God’s child-rearing leads these ‘babes’ through tests of faith, for tried faith is ‘more precious’ to Him.”⁴⁷ Writers for *Moody Monthly* and *The Sunday School Times* imagined the shaping power of suffering as a necessary purification. The notion of purification or cleansing was not unknown to writers for *The Christian Herald* or *Zion’s Herald*. Yet, what dominates in these more modernist accounts of the necessity and utility of human suffering was not purification but perfection or the instruction of others.

Sometimes suffering was not for the ultimate good of the sufferer, but in what Robert Orsi refers to as a, “redistributive economy of distress,”⁴⁸ was for the use and edification of others. In this case, it is argued that one suffers for the good of others, often in order to provide comfort and understanding to those who share in suffering or simply for God’s glory. In *Zion’s Herald* in 1930, a young boy, who is able to save another boy with his crutches, exclaims, “If I’d had legs like the rest, Dick would have been drowned!”⁴⁹ Further, it is argued in *Zion’s Herald* in 1943, that only those who suffer can understand the suffering of others, “Only those who have walked the same dark, lonely way can speak to their condition.”⁵⁰

In 1942 in *Moody Monthly* a piece entitled, “The Man Born Blind,” is also instructive. The author notes that, “There are few notions to which men seem to cling so naturally as to the notion that all human suffering and affliction are the direct consequences of sin.”⁵¹ Instead, a child born blind⁵² is an example of God allowing an

⁴⁷ Christian Businessman, “A Haven for Men in Despair,” *TSSST* (October 16, 1943): 825.

⁴⁸ Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 157.

⁴⁹ Katherine Harrington, “Because of Crutches,” *ZH* (Jan. 8, 1930): 53.

⁵⁰ Joseph Fort Newton, “Everyday Living: Only the Wounded,” *ZH* (Aug. 25, 1943): 724.

⁵¹ Rev. William Thomas, “The Man Born Blind,” *MM* (Dec. 1942): 192-193, 250.

⁵² Being born blind, as opposed to having somehow acquired blindness, simplifies matters by assuring that the person in question could not have directly caused blindness through sin.

infirmity, not as punishment, but because, “It was for a nobler purpose than their limited and restricted minds could conceive.”⁵³ The blindness of an infant, therefore, was permitted because it was for the ultimate glory of God. In *Zion’s Herald* in 1919, physical pain and affliction is justified because of, “The more splendid spirit which often shines out.”⁵⁴

Suffering itself was also explained as an answer to prayers. In what could be read as a warning, a writer for *Christian Herald* in 1955, explains,

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve; I was made weak, that I might learn to obey. I asked for health, that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity, that I might do better things ... I received nothing I had asked for – everything I had hoped for. My prayers were answered.⁵⁵

A writer for *Moody Monthly* in 1943, mirrors much the same sentiment when he writes; “Much that perplexes us in our Christian experience is but the answer to prayers.”⁵⁶

Within both of these quotes there appears an embedded warning to be careful what you pray for. Prayers, it would seem, could be, for one’s own good, turned upside down and answered in the way you would explicitly least want them to be.

Punishment/consequence as explanations, though used with impressive regularity, only begin to represent the density and variety of explanations for human suffering. Rather, across time and periodicals there existed a diversity of explanations. While conservatives were most apt to use punishment for past sins⁵⁷ as an explanation for life trials, writers for the *Zion’s Herald* and *The Christian Herald* were likely to turn to

⁵³ Thomas, “The Man Born Blind,” *MM* (Dec. 1942): 193.

⁵⁴ “Errors of Faith Healers,” *ZH* (July 30, 1919): 994.

⁵⁵ Kenneth L. Wilson, ed., “I Remember,” *CH* (Jan. 1955): 8.

⁵⁶ “Your Problem May Be An Answer To Your Prayer,” *MM* (June 1943): 581.

⁵⁷ Again, as Dr. Robert Orsi and Dr. Marie Griffith do, and as was the case with the term “God”, the term “sin” is used in precisely the ways it was found and used in the sources at the heart of this thesis. As none of the journals used can be defined as “theology,” there is no discussion of the genealogy or complexity of the word in theology. Rather, the term “sin,” is simply used to note or discuss transgressions against God.

explanations that relied upon the notion of pain and suffering as instructive or perfecting.⁵⁸ The idea of human perfectability on earth was an uneasy one for writers of *Moody Monthly* and *The Sunday School Times*. Nonetheless, betterment, growth or learning were the conservative corollary of perfection. Though perfection was not possible, people could improve or strive to become more like God. Across journals there was, however, also more similarity than difference. Notably, there was a consistent display of creativity in finding and recreating answers to the questions of “Why?” While the question of guilt is often in the foreground of responses to suffering, this was by no means the only consideration. Indeed, some explanations never touched on questions of guilt. After calling into question both the true existence and relevance of suffering, one consideration that was equally important as consequence was the question of benefit. As shall be seen, across journals the ultimate utility of suffering was championed as the reason for its existence. Indeed, even assuming human guilt, this did not preclude suffering as an ultimately beneficial tool for shaping human life or glorifying God.

Returning to reader responses, readers ask a series of questions that underscore their understanding of the terms and their involvement in this shared Protestant tradition. In raising questions about the purpose and meaning of suffering, readers, as witnessed, consistently call into question the nature of God. Is He powerless? Is He apathetic? Is He good? What readers have ascertained is that if God were powerless to change the world or too cruel or apathetic to care, there would be no need for further explanation. Suffering in the world would be the result of a God who could not or would not put an end to it. They would have an explanation for the suffering they had both discovered and

⁵⁸ W.H.T. Dau, “Fortune in Misfortune,” *CH* (January 16, 1918): 69.; “The Lenten Season: The Ministry of Suffering,” *ZH* (February 13, 1918): 198.; E.W. Caswell, “The Philosophy of Pain,” *CH* (Mar. 1, 1919): 247.

experienced. But this is not the image of God that was promoted in the Protestant communities under study. Indeed, writer responses quickly dispense with any notion that suffering is the result of a failure on God's part. Across journals, writers' explanations share a great deal in common. Regardless of whether they had or had not embraced modernism, neither God's goodness or power was up for debate. Whether the Bible is the direct word of God or a vitally important link to him, the Bible remains essential to the teachings of both the conservative and mainline periodicals under review. While they may disagree on whether suffering potentially represents direct punishment from an involved deity or the consequence of contravening natural laws, on the essential matters of God's power and goodness, the writers of each journal concurred.

Regarding God's power and goodness each magazine maintains a shared set of teachings. Clearly laid out in 1943 in the pages of *Moody Monthly*,

God is infinitely wise, therefore He cannot err ... Nothing can come to the believer without God's knowledge. He is omnipotent; therefore nothing can take place except by His permission. He is absolutely just; therefore the rightness of what He does cannot be questioned. He is absolutely good; He therefore cannot be unkind.⁵⁹

As articulated, he is wise without the possibility of error. He is all-powerful, thus nothing happens without His knowledge and will. He is also all-good. In addition, because He is thoroughly just, humans have no ground upon which to question Him. Experiences only *seem* to call into question these assertions. In reality, as will be evidenced later, they expose the nature of one's relationship with God.

What makes these shared teachings somewhat complicated is that the teachings themselves are not always understood, even within single journals, on the same grounds. In each journal, the Bible defines the basis upon which writers stake the legitimacy of

⁵⁹ Rev. P.B. Fitzwater, "Cure For Troubled Hearts," *MM* (March 1943): 399, 428-429.

their explanations. According to journal writers' readings of the Bible, God's identity - His goodness, power and empathy - are not up for debate. As articulated in *Christian Herald* in 1918, regarding His goodness, "Over and over again the record declares God to be full of compassion, gracious and long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy."⁶⁰ As to His empathy, it is agreed that God cares for human beings. A writer for *Zion's Herald* in 1943 writes; "God made us, not we ourselves; God wants us more than we can want Him, and loves us beyond our knowing."⁶¹ However, before turning to His power, it should be noted that here there is an essential point of concern. What is confusing is the matter of what a loving God looks like. What makes descriptions of God's compassion and goodness complicated are parallel descriptions of God's anger. As a result, it becomes unclear what a good and empathetic God looks like. Nor is it clear that reader questions can encompass this anger in their conception of goodness. Further, while this complication is most clear in the fundamentalist journals, it is not absent from any of the journals.

To illustrate, while each periodical is filled with descriptions of a loving God, there are also visions of an angry or vengeful one. One particularly notable example comes from the pages of *Moody Monthly*. In 1943, Rev. Luther P. Fincke argues for the rightness of God's laughter at human troubles; "Take a kaleidoscopic view of the chaotic, war-torn, suffering world, which testifies to the utter inability of puny man to create an earthly paradise for himself, and you will no longer question the rightfulness of God's laughter!"⁶² In Fincke's estimation, and here he is not alone⁶³, derision and contempt are

⁶⁰ Rev. Gorham Easterbrook, "The Compassion of Jesus," *CH* (June 12, 1918): 726.

⁶¹ Joseph Fort Newton, "Everyday Living: Does God Want Us?" *ZH* (January 20, 1943): 62.

⁶² Rev. Luther P. Fincke, "The Laughter of God," *MM* (May 1943) 513,522.

not only part of God's goodness, they are a rightful part. Again in 1943, in the pages of *Christian Herald*, the following argument is made, "God is good, but not goody-goody." The writer continues by noting that while He "smites," He does so "in love, never mere anger."⁶⁴ However, it is conceivable that this picture of "goodness" was not what readers had in mind when they asked the question, "Is God good?" Indeed, if this is what God's goodness looks like, goodness itself may go far in explaining the existence of suffering in the world.

Returning to the issue of God's identity, there is no question that God is all-powerful. Yet, here again there are complications. As regards His involvement in human suffering, God's power is conceived differently between the writers of *Moody Monthly* and the *Sunday School Times* and, alternatively, *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald*. There is no debate over the limitlessness of God's power. The Bible asserts the truth, literal or otherwise, of this position. However, there are differences in the way journal writers explain God's power. It is in this explanation of the manner in which God limits His own power (or alternatively the manner in which the world is designed to administer itself) that a difference emerges.

The belief that God's limits are only those He imposes upon Himself, is reiterated in one form or another within the pages of *Moody Monthly* and *The Sunday School Times* to explain God's role in human suffering. Citing Matthew 6:30, "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field ... shall he not much more clothe you," a *Moody Monthly* author in 1943 expands on the verse writing He is "without any limit to His power,

⁶³ See Joseph Fort Newton, "Everyday Living: God Does Nothing," *ZH* (July 21, 1943): 644; *The Christian Worker's Magazine* (February, 1919): 382; T. Stanley Soltau, "Things a Christian Should Know," *TSSST* (May 7, 1955): 359-360 (Hereafter cited as *TCWM*).

⁶⁴ "Smiting to Heal," *CH* (May 1945): 45.

except such as His own moral nature may impose.”⁶⁵ As seen in the following quote, here a distinction is made between the permissive and directive will of God. As expressed in the *Sunday School Times* in 1955, while God allows certain things to happen, He does not actively cause them, “God has a directive will, that which is best for nations and individuals, and a permissive will, by which He sometimes allows men to make their own choices and have their own way for a period of time.”⁶⁶

In both *Zion’s Herald* and *The Christian Herald*, the formula is somewhat different. Here, as writers and editors attempt to demonstrate their modern faith, it seems that they increasingly argue between 1908 and 1955, that God does not choose punishment or blessing for individuals or actions.⁶⁷ Instead, these writers focus on God’s love for humans. In 1908, in *Christian Herald*, an author argues against those who represent God as a “cruel tyrant.”⁶⁸ In 1943, another author suggests that “hell” is part of “old pictures,” and is no longer part of the Christian faith.⁶⁹ In 1929, an article titled “How Shall We Think of God? Unless Our Conception of Deity Grows and Is Modified to Keep Pace with Our Increasing Knowledge of Life and the Universe, Our Souls Will Be Torn,” a writer for *Zion’s Herald* makes the desire for a more modern understanding of God explicit.⁷⁰ As one result, as expressed by a writer for *Zion’s Herald* in 1930,

⁶⁵ H.P. Liddon, “Providence,” *MM* (January 1943): 271.

⁶⁶ “Does God Have Three Wills?” *TSST* (July 16, 1955): 573.

⁶⁷ It is important to note that writers for both *Zion’s Herald* and *Christian Herald* do still use the word “sin” in addition to the word “consequence.” (See for example – David J. Burrell, “The American Pulpit: The Presence of God,” *CH* (September 2, 1908): 684; Ralph W. Sockman, “Sermon: Prepared For The Unexpected,” *CH* (August 1943): 29) However, an explanation based on inevitable consequence or moral law is **only** used in more liberal explanations. Thus, while, writers for both journals attempt to move away from elements of the Christian tradition they characterize as un-modern, this is not an accomplished fact but an ongoing project. Furthermore, writers in both magazines, do at times, return to the ‘antiquated’ but useful language of punishment over the more sedate ‘consequence.’

⁶⁸ Robert Stuart MacArthur, “The American Pulpit: The Divinest Quest,” *CH* (October 7, 1908): 784.

⁶⁹ Ralph W. Sockman, “Death is But a Going Home,” *CH* (April 1943): 32-33, 62-63.

⁷⁰ Eaton B. Marshall, “How Shall We Think of God?” *ZH* (November 13, 1929): 1452-54.

humans can now to be understood as running, “an account with moral law”.⁷¹ This results in “consequences” for those who work in opposition to these laws. Rather than drawing a distinction between God’s directive and permissive wills, the writer draws a picture of a world that functions (at least to some extent) without His active participation (although He did design the world the way it is). There are independent moral rules that govern the planet. While this writer never suggests that God is absent from the world, it is certainly the case that this understanding distances God from the harm and disruption that is often found in human existence.

However, the effect of this understanding in readers’ lives is unclear. That suffering and disruption are seen as potential consequences of breaking moral laws does not exempt readers from blame. Further, it is clear that this shift from the explanatory framework of punishment to that of consequence, does not quell reader confusion.

Indeed readers, whether fundamentalist or more modernist, can be equally confused. How can it be argued that God cares when He allows humans to suffer? Whether He actively chooses to punish individuals or designed a world in which impersonal moral laws mete out natural consequences, readers still ask for an explanation of God’s plan or His character. It is this space between what readers have been told in church and their experience that causes concern and confusion. As will be seen, much effort is invested in explaining these seeming contradictions.

Some readers focus their attention on God’s goodness, involvement or power. Others focus less on God’s nature and more on the shape of the world. They ask why the world was created as it was? In the pages of every periodical, the answer to this question

⁷¹ “Editorial Miscellany: What Troubles,” *ZH* (July 23, 1930): 934. (See also, Eaton B. Marshall, “How Shall We Think of God?” *ZH* (November 13, 1929): 1452-54.)

lies in both the ultimate utility of suffering and the nature of humanity. What is most consistently suggested is that the world, while potentially hard and cold was designed this way for a purpose. Yet, here again there were differences.

In fundamentalist periodicals, Satan is blamed for evil in the world. As Rev. P.B. Fitzwater notes in 1943, God created a perfect world, “God created the universe a harmonious whole. Law and order prevailed everywhere.”⁷² In this world, man was given a special place, “Man, a free moral being, was assigned dominion over the earth and all things therein.”⁷³ But the devil entered this world; a world man was given both dominion over and free will to act within, “At the instigation of a malignant being called the Devil, sin entered into the world, causing great confusion.”⁷⁴ Given a perfect world but also the ability and opportunity to fail, “All the troubles of mankind are traceable to the supreme tragedy of man’s rebellion, disobedience, and fall.”⁷⁵ Taking these together, it is argued that Satan introduced sin to the world but this introduction was made possible only through the disobedience of humans. Therefore Satan created and humans embraced that which is evil, wicked or destructive on earth.

In the pages of *Zion’s Herald* and *The Christian Herald*, Satan is an all but absent character. Consistent with a desire to be modern both largely excised a belief in the existence of Satan.⁷⁶ In these mainline understandings, not only is God no longer present in punishment but the Devil is no longer modern enough to exist. This is an important change. And, it is one that has profound consequences. If the Devil is no longer understood as active in explanations of human failings, the explanation left is that

⁷² Rev. P.B. Fitzwater, “Cure For Troubled Hearts,” *MM* (March 1943): 399.

⁷³ Rev. P.B. Fitzwater, “Cure For Troubled Hearts,” *MM* (March 1943): 399.

⁷⁴ Rev. P.B. Fitzwater, “Cure For Troubled Hearts,” *MM* (March 1943): 399.

⁷⁵ Rev. P.B. Fitzwater, “Cure For Troubled Hearts,” *MM* (March 1943): 399.

⁷⁶ A single reference to the devil was found in the pages of *Christian Herald* in 1918. (See Rev. J.H. Jowett, “A Soldier of Christ: A Sermon,” *CH* (January 2, 1918): 8.)

humans are responsible. So, in this understanding, humans are granted greater agency but that modern understanding comes with price tag. I will return to this issue in the following chapter. Nonetheless, as shall be seen, the existence of Satan is not necessary in order for blame and recrimination to be present.

Nonetheless, across journals it is simultaneously argued that while God had no hand in evil, once introduced, God made suffering crucial to His ultimate plan for humanity. For God ultimately oversees sin and insures that the world remains always ordered to His design and plans. As expressed in the *Sunday School Times* in 1955, “The daily experiences of our lives are the instruments in God’s hands that He uses to shape us and to polish us.”⁷⁷ Thus, this writer argued that God can and will transform sins and mold them and humans to His will. As expressed in the same periodical in 1930, “God makes every trouble a helper to those who love him.”⁷⁸ In God’s reworking of human failure, the world is not designed or meant for pleasure. As noted in *Christian Herald* in 1929, “Life is not a recreation center.”⁷⁹ Instead, life is intended to instruct and to test. Clearly articulated in 1918 in the pages of *Christian Herald*, “If the purpose of God in ordaining the world and this life of ours had been to produce happiness, his purposes were indeed a failure. But if his intention had been and is to try our faith, then the world is admirably adapted to its purpose.”⁸⁰ Surely, life is difficult, “Hills of difficulty everywhere! Life at best is filled with troubles, reverses.” Yet, as explained in *Zion’s Herald* in 1943, the believer finds that, “the climb has been good for him.”⁸¹ Thus, it would be a mistake to expect life or the world to lack pain or danger, upheaval or

⁷⁷ T. Stanley, Soltau, “VI. Things a Christian Should Know,” *TSSST* (June 11, 1955): 467.

⁷⁸ “Harnessing Our Troubles,” *TSSST* (February 15, 1930): 89.

⁷⁹ Rev. T. Guthrie Speers, “Why Religion?” *CH* (November 2, 1929): 15. (See also James M. Gray, “Why Did Jesus Work Miracles?,” *TSSST* (March 16, 1918): 151.)

⁸⁰ Rev. Charles Carroll Albertson, “The Trial of Our Faith,” *CH* (January 23, 1918): 96.

⁸¹ “The Hill Difficulty,” *ZH* (September 1, 1943): 743.

suffering. Rather, these tests reveal a great deal about those being tested. Most importantly they reveal the quality of one's faith.

Therefore, it is agreed that while God did not choose a suffering world and is not responsible for its inception, God transformed suffering into a necessary element of His ultimate plan. Thus, while it may be a mystery why there is so much suffering, or why the innocent must suffer, the necessity and utility of suffering is confirmed. In short, in response to explicit reader questions and a general sense of doubt and confusion, writers respond with certainty regarding who or what is to blame. God is good and He is powerful. If He wanted the world to be different, He could make it so. Rather, the world is as it is through human disobedience and subsequently by God's design. Human beings, their nature and their failings, become the grounds upon which explanations are worked out. Indeed, across these conservative and liberal periodicals, humans are conceived as being at the core of the existence or at least the purpose of suffering.

Narratives of punishment or consequence are perhaps the most obvious and direct explanation for suffering. In a world that ultimately makes sense, humans, having disobeyed God or strayed from His teachings, are given reminders of the path they should have chosen. God wants humankind to obey Him, to follow His teachings. Failing this He is willing to lead through other means. It is God's wish that humans take His counsel, but this is only possible if believers are living according to His will. Though there are differences in the terms of their understandings, it is universally agreed across writers for each of the journals under review that people are imperfect and require guidance. Yet, there is an essential difference here. Whether upheaval is imagined to be punishment visited by a personal deity or the moral consequence of contravening natural laws is

dependent on the periodical in question. Further, hope in humanity is only found in *The Christian Herald* and *Zion's Herald*. These journal writers' belief in a modern Christianity allows them to insist on the possibility of human perfection. Moreover, they are willing to argue that this perfection can be attained through suffering. However, suffering or guidance are not the only explanations for suffering offered by journal writers. Indeed, as will be seen, they put forward a plethora of alternative explanations.

Characteristically, writers for those journals that most consistently display premillennial beliefs state a belief in human guilt in the harshest and most punitive terms. Articulated without sympathy within the pages of both Moody publications and *The Sunday School Times*, humans require redemption. As explained in *The Sunday School Times* in 1955, "Our conduct and our character are absolutely worthless when judged by the high and holy standards of the perfect righteousness of God."⁸² What is argued in each of these conservative journals is that humans require punishment because they are inherently corrupt and unworthy of God's redemption.

Further, as explained in *Moody Monthly* in 1943, if necessary, though, "God does not want to do it ...if you are a child of God He loves you enough to lash you along the path of His will."⁸³ Another writer for *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* in 1929, argues on the same note that, "Our Father takes away the rod when His design in using it is fully served."⁸⁴ Thus, it is noted that humans are inherently flawed and it is necessary for God to use punishment to bring about His plans for individual humans and the world.

While blame and recrimination are clear in conservative accounts of suffering, so too is the necessity and ultimate value of suffering. One writer for *Moody Monthly* in

⁸² T. Stanley Soltau, "V. Things a Christian Should Know," *TSSST* (June 4, 1955): 442.

⁸³ "Bit and Lash," *MBIM* (January 1929): 229.

⁸⁴ Charles Spurgeon, "Quietly Wait," *MM* (October 1955): 3.

1943 concludes that, “Some of the darkest hours many of us have ever known were the direct result of our own failures.” Yet, because of God this darkness becomes the ground of transformation. In another article also published in 1943 entitled, “Getting the Breaks,” the *Moody Monthly* author argues, “It is often painful and costly to get the breaks from the Lord, but they are the best for us.”⁸⁵ Thus, adherents should be thankful for punishment and guidance because it leads to growth as a Christian. As further explained, this is the case because He, “Turns even our failures into the means of a blessing.”⁸⁶ Expressed another way in the pages of *MBIM* in 1930,

Fire is purifying, destructive, and touching our flesh, painful. These are the effects of the process of divine disciplinary treatment, to which every Christian must submit himself at the hands of the heavenly Purifier of souls. He would burn out the worldly rubbish, the pride and selfishness, which in our fallen nature burdens and impedes our progress to spiritual development. This will be ever a painful experience, but in the view of the rewards to be obtained, is of comparatively little account.⁸⁷

Fault and blame are clear in these accounts. For their own good, humans require pain and punishment. The equation is made explicit-- human suffering, while the experience is of “little account”, brings rewards both in this life and the next.

Though stated in this way less frequently, the relationship of suffering to sin is not foreign in more liberal journals either. In 1918, in the early years of *Christian Herald*, the following explanation is offered, “God must cast us into the furnace of affliction and purge the dross of our conceits and self-will from us, before the new man can come forth in us that is renewed after his likeness.”⁸⁸ Again in 1918 in *Christian Herald* a connection is made between “chastening” and the upheavals readers face, “let us not fail

⁸⁵ Rev. Harold P. Warren, “Getting the Breaks,” *MM* (August 1943): 675.

⁸⁶ Harry A. Ironside, “The Treasures of Darkness,” *MM* (May 1943): 511.

⁸⁷ Charles A. Ingraham, “The Heavenly Refiner,” *MBIM* (Oct. 1930): 62.

⁸⁸ W.H.T. Dau, “Fortune in Misfortune,” *CH* (January 16, 1918): 69.

to see that our personal woes, our heavy burdens, our bereavement and trouble may be the instruments of chastening to bring us into the likeness of the Great Sufferer.”⁸⁹

However, it is not necessary for God to be currently present in the equation of punishment to suffering. It is also possible to conceptualize natural laws that, though not meted out by God in the present, were established according to God’s wishes in their inception and do include pain and/or suffering. In 1919, in the pages of *Christian Herald*, a writer emphasizes that damnation is, “derived from natural moral laws which did not require the direct intervention of a vindictive God.”⁹⁰ Therefore, in this account, while God does not play any **present** role in damnation, the equation of suffering to punishment is still clearly evidenced. In *Zion’s Herald* in 1943 a writer concludes, “But God has spoken, and He still speaks... ‘History thunders the laws of right and wrong.’ How could God speak more plainly than He does in events?”⁹¹ Responding to a reader’s question, in 1919, a *Christian Herald* writer explains, “Pain and suffering, loss and disappointments are to be accepted as discipline.”⁹² The reader’s question is not printed but the answer given is to accept the correlation of suffering to discipline or punishment. Regardless of their differences, in each periodical and across time, there is an acceptance of the human need for guidance. The imperfection of humanity is widely acknowledged. Further, writers assert, although certainly inconsistently, that there is a direct and necessary relationship between individual human choices and suffering.

However, in the pages of both *Zion’s Herald* and *Christian Herald* great hope is also placed in humanity. Here, redemption is found, not only in God but in the nature of

⁸⁹ Rev. George D. Allison, “Jesus Faces the Cross,” *CH* (May 1, 1918): 554.

⁹⁰ *CH* (March 1919): 298

⁹¹ Joseph Fort Newton, “Everyday Living: God Does Nothing,” *ZH* (July 21, 1943): 644. (See also Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, “Fragrant Christian,” *ZH* (June 10, 1908): 749; Dr. Amos R. Wells, “The Daily Meditation,” *CH* (November 23, 1929): 12).

⁹² “Questions and Answers,” *CH* (January 29, 1919): 122.

humankind. As explained in *Zion's Herald* in 1930, while there is suffering, the goodness of humanity outweighs this evil; "Life is terrible in some of its aspects... experiences of the Great War seem to me to present an almost unendurable picture of humanity. But I know that this is neither the complete nor the true picture. I have such friends!"⁹³ Here there are doubts concerning human goodness. Indeed, the picture of humanity presented is a complicated one. The writer does not deny the "unendurable picture of humanity." Rather, he contains it by noting, in contrast, the goodness he has witnessed in relationships, in friends. This view includes both weakness and possibility. In another case, acknowledging human flaws, a writer for *Zion's Herald* in 1943 concludes, "We are at war with ourselves. We harbor mean thoughts, false motives, evil designs."⁹⁴ Yet, rather than ending here, he continues with hope and promise, "The resurrection reveals the Christ in us."⁹⁵ Hope in humanity is specific to *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald* in this study. Hope based on human nature is entirely lacking in both conservative periodicals during the first half of the twentieth century.

While human perfection is antithetical to conservative accounts of existence, they are part of modern understandings of the purpose of life. Thus for these adherents, suffering was presented as an opportunity to perfect both faith and action. A writer for *The Christian Herald* argued in 1918 that, "The culture of suffering elevates the soul to the very heights of perfection, if it is a willing submission, a thankful service."⁹⁶ A writer for *Zion's Herald* makes the same argument in 1918 regarding the equation of suffering

⁹³ Ozora S. Davis, "The Spirit Giveth," *ZH* (June 11, 1930): 754. (See also Dr. Clovis G. Chappell, "Daily Meditations For the Quiet Hour," *CH* (December 1945): 40.)

⁹⁴ "Power of the Resurrection," *ZH* (April 21, 1943): 367.

⁹⁵ "Power of the Resurrection," *ZH* (April 21, 1943): 367.

⁹⁶ W.H.T. Dau, "Fortune in Misfortune," *CH* (January 16, 1918): 69.

and perfection. He writes, “In sacrifice also there is perfection of character.”⁹⁷ Examples from the natural world are used to support the idea that suffering, in and of itself, brings positive consequences. One sustained example of this is found in the pages of *Christian Herald* in 1919, “It is known that the pearl is formed by a grain of sand getting entrance into the shell of the oyster, and thereby causing pain to its sensitive body.”⁹⁸ However, things are not as they might seem, for, “What seemed a trial is converted into a jewel.” What is concluded from this is that nature provides examples of the uses of pain and further, “thus furnishes facts explaining the philosophy of pain.”⁹⁹

Further to this, in each of the periodicals under review, pain and suffering are not necessarily seen as the direct product of sin. Indeed, in each periodical there is evidence of a counter position where adherents refuse to necessarily tie pain and punishment. In response to a reader’s question (the question is not disclosed) a writer for *Christian Herald* in 1919, while recognizing that God does discipline believers and non-believers alike, writes, “The Bible does not teach that all trouble and suffering comes from God as punishment.”¹⁰⁰ Rather, it is recognized that, “Trouble is in the world, and that sickness is bound to occur.”¹⁰¹ Taking this view a step further, a writer in *Zion’s Herald* in 1943, speaking of WWII, clearly rejects a connection between suffering and punishment, “I could not accept the ‘judgement-of-God’ view of this war, for it seems entirely out of harmony with the basic view of God set forth.” He continues, “it gives me far more satisfaction to believe that, far from being separate and apart from this awful conflict,

⁹⁷ “The Lenten Season: The Ministry of Suffering,” *ZH* (February 13, 1918): 198.

⁹⁸ E.W. Caswell, “The Philosophy of Pain,” *CH* (Mar. 1, 1919): 247.

⁹⁹ E.W. Caswell, “The Philosophy of Pain,” *CH* (Mar. 1, 1919): 247.

¹⁰⁰ M.W. McG, “Our Mailbag,” *CH* (Mar. 22, 1919): 316. (See also Rev. Ralph H. Stoll, “Contrary Winds,” *MM* (May 1945): 473-474, 508.)

¹⁰¹ M.W. McG, “Our Mailbag,” *CH* (Mar. 22, 1919): 316.

God is in this struggle suffering with all His children.”¹⁰² Indeed, as argued in *Zion’s Herald* in 1943, it is a mistake to assume, “That the will of God is that no faithful servant of his shall suffer bodily affliction.”¹⁰³ Rather, “The one continuous problem of the Bible from beginning to end is the mysterious fact that the righteous have to suffer so great and so various troubles, trials and pains.”¹⁰⁴ Note that here, the suffering of the righteous or innocent is recognized as a reality. Indeed, even in the conservative journals, this possibility is duly noted. In *The Sunday School Times* in 1955, the following statement is found “Godliness is no guarantee of security against those ills common to mankind.”¹⁰⁵ Also, as noted in *Zion’s Herald* in 1945, “Certainty that in a world in which man has free will...there is inevitable suffering of the innocent for the sins of the guilty.”¹⁰⁶ In others words, punishment may be visited on the innocent rather than the guilty. Personal sins may cause others pain. For someone suffering, this explanation provided an understanding of one’s plight that did not include recrimination.

Thus both human guilt and innocence are viewed as realities across all journals. In the pages of *The Sunday School Times* and Moody publications, an understanding that people are inevitably guilty of imperfection coexists with assurances that the innocent also suffer. In *Christian Herald* and *Zion’s Herald*, writers also believe in the possibility of the suffering of the innocent. For while humans were not universally viewed as innocent, writers argued that individuals may not be directly responsible for their present sorrow or turmoil.

¹⁰² Murray T. Titus, “God and the War,” *ZH* (April 7, 1943): 315.

¹⁰³ “Errors of Faith Healers,” *ZH* (July 30, 1919): 994.

¹⁰⁴ “Errors of Faith Healers,” *ZH* (July 30, 1919): 994.

¹⁰⁵ “Notes on Open Letters: Is Godliness a Guarantee of Physical Safety,” *TSST* (August 13, 1955): 630.

¹⁰⁶ Franklin P. Frye, “When God Seems Odd,” *ZH* (June 20, 1945): 387.

I began this chapter by noting that Protestant readers asked a number of questions regarding suffering. To these questions, writers for the journals responded in varied voices; these ranged from noting anger at doubts to expressing clear empathy with confusion. There were also numerous explanations offered for the purpose or reason for suffering. Suffering could be insignificant, unimportant, or unreal. However, it was widely, though not exclusively, also understood as a punishment or a consequence. Whether as a result of blame or not, suffering was understood as a tool to shape one's own, or even other's behavior and thought. Here, I unpacked the particulars upon which conservatives and mainline believers conceptualized their understandings of suffering. It was agreed that God was good. It was also agreed that God was all-powerful. Yet, here there were complications as-well as differences. Mainline believers argued that God was not actively or presently involved in punishing individuals. Instead, moral laws regarding actions and reactions were understood to keep humans in line. Regarding understandings of the shape of the world, significantly, conservatives retained a belief that Satan continued to play an active role in human dramas. However, Satan disappeared from mainline discussions. In conservative understandings, alongside this continuing belief in cosmic battles and a supremely evil force, humans are noted as inherently corrupt. In contrast, mainline believers place great hope in humanity. However, and as will be explored in the following chapter, loss of a belief in Satan is tied to somewhat surprising consequences for more mainline believers.

Chapter Three: “How to” - Suffering in Practice

As noted in the previous chapter, there were many possible explanations offered for why one suffered by the fundamentalist/conservative writers of Moody publications and *Sunday School Times* as well as the more mainline writers for *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald*. However, with so many possible explanations it was not always clear why an individual suffered. Suffering did not arrive with a label letting people know whether or not someone was suffering due to punishment, consequence or through no fault of their own. As a result, pressure would have been placed on those suffering to understand the reason or purpose of their situation “correctly.” Moreover, there was a great deal of room for observers to produce and offer their own judgments of the reasons for, and the appropriateness of, the suffering of others. Further, the sufferer, even if not immediately held responsible for his or her situation, may be deemed guilty of not suffering well. So, while sufferers may not be guilty of requiring suffering, they may be guilty because they fail to suffer in the prescribed ways. How one suffers becomes a marker or outside manifestation of why one is suffering. And, on the issue of human guilt, it is writers for *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald* who appear more severe in their judgments. In part, these mainline writers were harsher precisely because they had rejected belief in the Devil. This makes mainline believers responsible for how they feel and act because, except in rare cases, there is no other possible explanation or actor.¹ Further, these judgments were gendered, applying exclusively to women and resulting in an emphasis on training girls in cheerfulness. In this chapter, I will proceed with an

¹ No instance was found in either of these journals where broader social forces were used as an explanation for human behavior.

examination of how human actors were expected to suffer in practice. The conclusions I come to are perhaps surprising.

Across time, in both conservative and more liberal journals, a connection is clearly and repeatedly made between character and responses to hardship. The first shared basis of understanding, during this period and among those under study, was a belief that submitting to suffering and the upheaval of life in general, provided an essential measure of one's character – and by extension, a reflection of the quality of one's Christianity. Writers for the four journals reviewed, agreed that suffering was inextricably present in the world. Whatever blame one could accept for suffering, and there was plenty to go around, the world was also to be understood as God's house. Life experiences, positive or negative, were ultimately part of God's plan. In 1918, in *The Christian Workers' Magazine*, a connection between suffering and character is expressed, "Life circumstances which strengthen the truly earnest," also, "discourage and destroy the frivolous."² As a result, suffering becomes the grounds upon which to prove and display the quality of one's character. In *Christian Herald* in 1908 this sentiment is clearly expressed: "because no one can control destiny, and trouble of some sort is certain, sooner or later, to invade every life. The way in which one meets trouble is an unerring test of character."³ Further, it is argued that: "the way in which the Christian receives bad news will be the indication of the completeness of his Christian experience."⁴ Therefore how one reacts to turmoil reveals, or in other words, determines the quality of one's Christianity. As is made clear, one must suffer 'well' to escape charges of being frivolous or lacking in character.

² *TCWM* (February 1918): 497.

³ Margaret E. Sangster, "Around the Home Hearth: In Times of Discouragement," *CH* (March 11, 1908): 211.

⁴ Rev. Walter Vail Watson, "On Receipt of Bad News," *MM* (June 1945): 523.

In addition, within the constellation of beliefs governing how to suffer there was an insistence that suffering not only revealed one's character but also brought a host of specific benefits. This is consistent with what both Orsi and Griffith found in their studies of Catholic and Protestant women believers. Griffith writes that for women of the Aglow network suffering was understood as a "gift rather than a punishment."⁵ In the same vein, Orsi argues that in the middle years of 20th century Catholic priests viewed suffering as an individual's "main opportunity for spiritual growth."⁶ In the *Christian Herald* in 1918, the argument made is that God "knows what it is best for us to learn. God, out of the wideness of his knowledge and love, knows also what we must master before we can call our life complete."⁷ In addition, there were, as writers described it, blessings to be gained from sorrow. Indeed, readers were warned against wasting suffering. As expressed in *Zion's Herald* in 1908, "Take care that you do not waste your sorrows; that you do not let the precious gifts of disappointment, pain, loss, loneliness, ill health, or similar afflictions which come into your daily life, mar you instead of mending you."⁸ The only acceptable conclusion was clear – human grief brings blessing. By extension, readers were to welcome them as "God's angels, coming with hands full of good gifts."⁹ Therefore readers were told that the only acceptable way to face sorrow or pain, was to accept it as a good and to thank God for the blessing of their sorrow.

However, statements regarding the gifts that should be taken from suffering made difficult demands of believers. They were expected to respond to suffering as a blessing,

⁵ Griffith, *God's Daughters*, 91.

⁶ Orsi, *Thank You St. Jude*, 151

⁷ Margare E. Sangster, "The Girl Who Hated Lessons," *CH* (April 3, 1918): 415.

⁸ "Comfort for the Bereaved," *ZH* (May 20, 1908): 65. (See also Maltbie D. Babcock, "Thoughts for the Thoughtful," *ZH* (January 29, 1908): 144; W.H.T. Dau, "Daily Meditation: Singing in Suffering," *CH* (June 26, 1918): 771)

⁹ "Comfort for the Bereaved," *ZH* (May 20, 1908): 65.

to reframe their experience to make what was difficult or painful, beautiful and desirable. Indeed, statements extolling the pleasures of pain were often and clearly meant as a guide for those suffering. In a poem published in *Moody Monthly* in January 1945, the writer demands, “Don’t complain;/ You are only being made/ Fit to reign.” And then: “PRECIOUS pain,/ Used of God to teach His child/ How to reign/ Taught by God Himself / And we complain!”¹⁰ The demands this author made of those suffering were clear and unambiguous. In this account, pain was not only “precious” but desirable. Citing II Corinthians 12:10, ‘I take pleasure in infirmities,’ a *Christian Herald* writer in 1919 concurs with this assessment adding, “Human nature has the capacity to submit. The human will may set itself at a noble figure and resolve to suffer and be silent, to suffer and grow strong...Most of us make too much of pleasure and too much of pain.”¹¹ Here, what is made explicit were the judgments that were made of sufferers based on the appropriateness of their response to hardships. Following from this it is clear across the pages of each of these journals that there was a right way and a wrong way to suffer.

Another gift promised to those in turmoil was that Christian sufferers can trust that God will be with them in suffering.¹² It was a promise that was also found by Orsi and Griffith. In 1943, in the pages of *Zion’s Herald* the following promise is offered: “we can only conclude that He is “always near to bless” and, “that He is the best friend we ever had.”¹³ In *Moody Monthly* much the same sentiment is revealed in 1930: “God is

¹⁰ Martha Snell Nicholson, “Taught of God,” (January 1945): 278.

¹¹ C.C. Albertson, “Conquering Pain,” *CH* (March 8, 1919): 267.

¹² Orsi, *Thank You St. Jude*, 199 and Griffith, *God’s Daughters*, 89.

¹³ “Serenity of Soul,” *ZH* (February 17, 1943): 152.

there, in the midst of the cloud, the thick darkness and the fire.”¹⁴ Therefore, across the liberal and conservative divide, in suffering, God’s presence is assured.

Indeed, it was widely argued that there was not only presence but divine relationship to be found in pain and suffering.¹⁵ This romance was premised on a belief that if God had ordained suffering, then to suffer was to partake of or be connected to God. A writer for *Zion’s Herald* concludes in 1908, “Let me ... rejoice rather, that I am a partaker of Christ’s suffering.”¹⁶ Another writer in *Moody Monthly* in 1945, extols,

God saith, ‘I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.’ Does not the world come like a soft shower, assuaging the fury of the flame? ... Let affliction come – God has chosen me... Whatever befalls me in this vale of tears, I know that He has ‘chosen’ me.¹⁷

Thus, suffering provides individuals the chance to know that they have been chosen by God. In suffering itself is the promise of identifying with God’s experience on the cross. In the pages of *Christian Herald*, a writer in 1955 not only notes the littleness of her own suffering, but the ability it brought to her to identify with Christ, “Many a time in the seven-and-a-half weeks I was in the hospital... My suffering and sacrifice were nothing in comparison with Christ’s. I was identified with Him in a very real way; and from this, I received inner strength.”¹⁸ Here, suffering is understood as a way of verifying a relationship with God, “He has chosen me.”¹⁹ Yet, this conclusion is a complicated one. There are many explanations for suffering. Therefore, the question remains, how does

¹⁴ Rev. John G. Reid, “Out of the Cloud,” *MM* (May 1930): 431.

¹⁵ See also Orsi, *Thank You St. Jude*, 105-118 and Griffith, “Female Suffering and Devotion in Pentecostalism,” 199.)

¹⁶ Lucy Rider Meyer, “Thoughts for the Thoughtful,” *ZH* (August 5, 1908): 1006.

¹⁷ Charles H. Spurgeon, “For the Tried One,” *MM* (June 29, 1945): 519.

¹⁸ Madeline S. Miller, “Don’t Be Afraid Of Tomorrow,” *CH* (April 1955): 59.

¹⁹ Charles H. Spurgeon, “For the Tried One,” *MM* (June 29, 1945): 519.

one know that suffering is the result of having been chosen or has another less propitious explanation?²⁰

Notably, shame is also mixed with this promise of relationship. This shame was also found by Orsi with regards to Catholic prescriptive literature. Here the sick were directed to understand that, “someone else is suffering more than you are...besides, Jesus suffered most of all, so be quiet!”²¹ Returning to my study, journal readers are reminded not only to bring their suffering to God’s feet but note that His suffering at their hands was superior to any experience of their own. In *Zion’s Herald*, in 1908, the following poem appears,

One Thing I Know

“You ask why I thought this loving Christ
 Would heed my prayer?
 I knew He died upon the cross for me –
 I nailed Him there.
 I heard His dying cry: “Father, forgive!”
 I saw Him drain death’s cup that I might live;
 My head was bowed upon my breast in shame!
 He called me – and in penitence I came.
 He heard my prayer! I cannot tell you how,
 Nor when, nor where; only – I love him now.”²²

The writer of the above poem asks readers to understand that they are the cause of Christ’s pain and crucifixion. As a result, this relationship also demands shame for being human. That He hears them, that He loves them is inexplicable to the sufferer but He calls for at least their love in return.

Within this constellation of beliefs, worrying about one’s circumstances was unacceptable. To do so revealed a lack of character, a failure to appreciate the gifts of

²⁰ This difficulty is also noted by R. Marie Griffith in “*Female Suffering and Devotion to Pentecostalism*,” 193.

²¹ Orsi, *Thank You St. Jude*, 155.

²² “One Thing I Know,” *ZH* (January 1, 1908): 14.

hardship and a lack of faith. It was argued that worry, fear and distress, regardless of the cause, represented, at best, a misunderstanding and was more likely a sign of willful disobedience. Writers for each journal made clear and unambiguous that there was no place for these feelings in Christian life. In a 1955 *Christian Herald* piece entitled, “How to Conquer Your Fears,” the writer argues that, “We believe that in the religion of Jesus Christ there is no place for the paralysis caused by fear.”²³ Indeed, across journals and time, writers argue, in one form or another, as does this *Christian Herald* writer in 1930, that, “Fear is a sin because it is a denial of God.”²⁴ Phrased another way in the *Sunday School Times* in 1918, “To worry as we pray is to insult God.”²⁵ Fundamentally, as expressed in The *Sunday School Times* in 1943, it is argued that worry and fear imply questioning of God’s will or plan. Thus, they are a sign of a lack of faith, “We cannot be the kind of Christians that we should be, if we are worried about what we are going to eat or drink or wherewithal we shall be clothed.”²⁶ In 1929, in the pages of *Zion’s Herald* a contributor goes so far as to argue that, “A life of worry and a life of faith are, in the deepest sense of the term, mutually antagonistic. If you have sufficient faith, you will not worry.”²⁷ Fear and worry are unacceptable feelings for a Christian to harbor.

While there are points of fundamental agreement between journals there are also deep differences.²⁸ Difference first begins to emerge regarding treatment of fear and worry in fundamentalist versus mainline positions. Both groups agree that the Christian

²³ Frederick W. Cropp, “How to Conquer Your Fears,” *CH* (August 1955): 29.

²⁴ Rev. Dr. Charles E. Woodcock, “The Poison of Fear,” *CH* (March 29, 1930): 11.

²⁵ “Editorial: The Worry Insult,” *TSSST* (November 16, 1918): 637.

²⁶ Graham Gilmer, “The Christ Who Meets Every Need,” *TSSST* (January 23, 1943): 61.

²⁷ Elmer A. Leslie, “Young People in the Church: Epworth League Topic,” *ZH* (January 9, 1929): 55.

²⁸ Here, the examples provided of ‘how not to suffer’ in these mainline journals are limited but encompass all of the examples found in the sources reviewed. No similar examples were found in the fundamentalist/evangelical journals. As a result, the conclusions I draw must be understood as preliminary. However, what makes these conclusions supportable is the fact that they are logically consistent with what is being argued by each conservatives and mainline believers in general.

should not worry. However, liberals place greater personal responsibility and in turn, judgment, on those who do. It is individual human actors who choose to worry – they have plenty of reasons to know better. Thus, they are responsible and culpable in their own worrying. Unlike mainline believers, conservatives take human failure and weakness as a given. Indeed, it is precisely their severe view of human nature and their belief in another possible cause for thought, feeling and behavior (i.e. Satan), that appears to allow conservatives to, at times, respond with greater understanding to human fears and worries. There is the possibility of deep empathy for those who are experiencing difficulties. Responding to a reader's fear and anxiety, the following response is offered in the *Sunday School Times* in 1930,

Lay you 'head upon His breast' and see if you can feel a single fear. Do you know how much the Lord Jesus loves you? And since he loves you, can you not realize 'that no evil shall befall thee,' according to his own words?²⁹

Thus, there is the possibility of great empathy for one living in a spoiled world with all of the concurrent evil, darkness and threat. The focus is on submission, faith and God's plan for the Christian in the midst of chaos.

The result of a more liberal emphasis on human agency could lead to a more punitive view of those suffering. The fading or virtual disappearance of Satan results in a situation where humans (barring illness – mental or physical³⁰) are viewed as responsible for feelings or actions that in generations past could have been explained with reference to the Devil. So, while modernism invites people to believe in and strive for human progress, the flip side of this is that it also appears to usher in a belief in the culpability of

²⁹ Mother Ruth, "Girls' Problems of Today," *TSST* (May 10, 1930): 303.

³⁰ Manfred A. Carter, "The Demon Nerves," *ZH* (August 13, 1930): 1038.

human actors, not for original sin, but potentially for a daily lack of discipline or emotional control.

What is perhaps surprising is that it is the existence of the Devil that allows people to locate blame for human actions and emotions elsewhere. As a result, the existence of the Devil as an actor in human existence also allows individuals a greater space of empathy. In more conservative accounts, humans are understood as guilty by virtue of being human, but agency is also located in both God and Satan. For those embracing more liberal doctrines, agency is no longer located in a cosmic battle between God and the Devil with humans as guilty and essentially defective pawns. Instead, in these accounts, and as will be seen in the following examples, agency is relocated much more clearly to humankind.

More liberal views were premised on a belief that humans could control their feelings and emotions while conservatives believed that human control was limited and that there was another, by definition, culpable actor (the Devil). With the devil no longer present in the mainline journals reviewed, he could not be held responsible for human failings. Thus there was an insistence that people “can make” their “moods.”³¹ These believers became wholly responsible for something which was until quite recently, potentially understood as not entirely under their control. In turn, understandings of human agency were also, essentially understandings of human responsibility or fault. With emotional control now the measure of how people were to respond to hardship, women were found lacking. Thus, mainline writers often insist that women should stop feeling too much and the wrong emotion. Significantly, this insistence is not found in conservative prescriptions.

³¹ “The Family Department, Making Your Mood,” *ZH* (October 9, 1918): 1299.

In 1918, at the closing of World War I, an article appeared in *Zion's Herald*. The title was: "Cheerful Under Tribulation."³² It opened with several women bitterly complaining about another,

'I was determined to outstay that woman, even if it was not the right thing to do!' exclaimed the caller, with flashing eyes. 'And it was well for all concerned that she left when she did, for my blood was so near the boiling point that a few more tears, and another "I'm half beside myself with worry," would have meant getting out of my system what I think of such a weak mother!' ³³

It turns out that this vitriol is aimed at a woman who has openly worried that her son, a soldier, is dead. She has not heard from him in months and is beside herself. The other mother who has complained so bitterly advises that the worrying mother must be shamed for believing that her suffering is worthy of attention. Of the woman's son she exclaims, "One would think to hear her go on that he is all she has to live for." Another asks, "Is this the case?"

"No, indeed!" replies the other mother. "She has a large family, and thus far there has never been a break in it, she tells me, though I fancy she is all the weaker to face real sorrow, because of that."³⁴ What seems to be argued here, is that the soldier's mother requires suffering. Because, and in a circular argument, it will teach her to better suffer and, thus, teach her to be a better person and Christian.

The following day, one of the women takes the opportunity to instruct the soldier's mother. The mother has discovered that her son is well and unharmed. She is happy and consoled. Rather than joining in the woman's relief, the other woman takes this opportunity to inform the mother that countless mothers have been proud to give

³² Helena H. Thomas, "Cheerful Under Tribulation," *ZH* (March 27, 1918): 398-400.

³³ Helena H. Thomas, "Cheerful Under Tribulation," *ZH* (March 27, 1918): 398-400.

³⁴ Helena H. Thomas, "Cheerful Under Tribulation," *ZH* (March 27, 1918): 398-400.

their sons to their country. Indeed, she continues by telling the mother that she should fortify herself in preparation for the very real possibility of losing her own son.

The mother replies that to be happy in the face of loss is unnatural and beyond her capacity. The other woman informs her that God does not want weak Christians. Instead, humans are to be both strong and of good cheer. Lest the mother need further convincing, the woman relays a story of an “ideal sufferer”. This woman became seriously ill at an early age, lost every member of her family and suffered financial losses. Aged, she is now unable to move anything other than her eyes and tongue. Indeed, in what can only be described as a final flourish, the other mother notes that the sufferer will not even indulge suffering by crying because she does not have the use of hands to wipe her tears away.

Having heard this tale, and shamed, the soldier’s mother responds, “I will never be so selfish and weak again! For whatever comes, I will at least thank God for hands with which to wipe tears away!”³⁵ What seems clear in this narrative is that women should suffer silently and invisibly, making sure not to exhibit any signs of trouble. Further, those around them are encouraged to judge the sufferer for how they sufferer.

Notably, the prescriptions are gendered.³⁶ It is men who become the model for how women should respond emotionally in these mainline narratives.³⁷ One story, published in 1908 in *The Christian Herald*, began with the death of a young daughter. The, “wife abandoned herself to sorrow.” Two days after the death, “she almost reproached him (her husband) for taking up the every-day threads of life.”³⁸

³⁵ Helena H. Thomas, “Cheerful Under Tribulation,” *ZH* (March 27, 1918): 398-400.

³⁶ This is also consistent with Orsi and Griffith’s findings.

³⁷ See also Margaret E. Sangster, “‘Over There’; An Easter Message,” *CH* (April 15, 1908): 317.

³⁸ Helen A. Hawley, “‘Out of the Mouths of Babes,’” *ZH* (July 15, 1908): 913.

Another young daughter asks, “Do you s’pose ...that mother really thinks Edna is up in heaven with Jesus? ‘Cause I should think ‘twould make her glad *some* times.”³⁹

The mother overhears the girl and is shamed to acknowledge “How true that fathers must go out and bear the brunt, grief or no grief. Family life would go to pieces if fathers shut themselves in to hopeless sorrow.”⁴⁰

The mother recognizes her rebellion against God. On her knees she begs for forgiveness. She begs for forgiveness for grieving the death of her daughter.

When her husband returns home, she knows what she must do. “‘Mark!’ She called her husband in as soon as she heard his step. It was his due to receive her first word of the new peace which filled her being. ‘I have been so selfish, Mark, so abominably selfish!’”⁴¹ Here again it is made clear that one should sufferer without disturbing or impacting others. Further, in this narrative, men become model sufferers.

While there are important parallels that can be drawn between the insistence in these two mainline accounts on cheerfulness and the same insistence that Robert Orsi reveals in *Thank You St. Jude*, there are also significant differences. In the former, cheerfulness is one result of a more modern belief in the loss of any other outside focus for blame (i.e. Satan) and the subsequent possibility or responsibility for human mastery over emotions. The insistence on cheerfulness that Orsi finds is not self-consciously modern. Rather, it seems premised on an insistence that Catholics accept God’s plans for them without complaint and do not ask questions.

In both Protestant mainline and Catholic literature, women are marked as being particularly troublesome when it came to how they suffer. In both studies, it is not

³⁹ Helen A. Hawley, “‘Out of the Mouths of Babes,’” *ZH* (July 15, 1908): 913.

⁴⁰ Helen A. Hawley, “‘Out of the Mouths of Babes,’” *ZH* (July 15, 1908): 913.

⁴¹ Helen A. Hawley, “‘Out of the Mouths of Babes,’” *ZH* (July 15, 1908): 913.

entirely clear that women suffered the way they were supposed to. In *Thank you, St. Jude*, a woman throws a statue of a saint in the backseat to think about his failings.⁴² This is not best understood as accepting life without complaint. With regards to mainline suffering, although there is one example of a woman who writes in to proclaim her success at meeting the prescriptive views of how she should suffer⁴³, hers was the only response that clearly accepted the prescriptive direction of the writers. As described in the previous chapter, each of the mainline readers who wrote in to the journals, and some of these readers were female, asked pointed questions of God's purpose or plan. Thus, in neither the case of Catholics nor mainline Protestants did believers necessarily accept prescriptive admonitions on how they were to suffer.

Acceptance of God's will on this earth cuts across genders in the pages of Moody publications and *The Sunday School Times*. The fact that this particular prescription does not appear to be gendered in Moody publications and the *Sunday School Times*, should not be taken as evidence that conservative Protestants or fundamentalists were more inclusive or hospitable to women. Indeed, there is evidence that conservative Christians were sexist in their views of how women were to function in their families, churches, and society at large.⁴⁴ I am simply arguing that on the issues related to how one should suffer, the views presented in Moody publications and the *Sunday School Times*, do not appear to be gendered.

⁴² Orsi, *Thank You St. Jude*, 113.

⁴³ Madeline S. Miller, "Don't Be Afraid Of Tomorrow," *CH* (April 1955): 58. For further details, please see the same reference on page 19.

⁴⁴ See for example Betty A. Deberg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2000).

Returning to acceptance of God's will, in, "Her Thanksgiving Day Sermon," published in *The Christian Worker's Magazine* in 1918, a wife chastises her husband for lamenting his plight.

Now, Dan'el, this is Thanksgivin' – a day when the good Lord meant
That we should set down an' think over the blessin's He has sent,
An' give Him the credit that's due Him for the good things He bestows;
But you've got into the habit, as every one round you knows,
Of findin' fault with most things an' overlookin' the good,
An' you don't thank the Giver for 'em as a decent Christian should.⁴⁵

She continues to reprimand her husband for failing, not to be cheerful but to accept the perfection and rightness of God's will, "...You'll see you ain't actin' right, Dan'el, to look on the dark side so." Instead she advises that he should, "Give Him the credit that's due Him, an' you'll have a Thanksgivin', I know."⁴⁶ Thus, accepting God's will no matter what shape it takes or what the consequences are, appears not to be a gendered admonition in this conservative telling.

Alternatively, female selfishness and self-pity in the face of fear prove to be enduring matters of concern in the liberal periodicals under review. This is consistent with a larger cultural insistence on women's cheerfulness. Christina Kotchemidova argues in "From Good Cheer to 'Drive-By Smiling': A Social History of Cheerfulness,"⁴⁷ that an ethic of cheerfulness develops in the nineteenth-century as a part of Victorian women's culture.⁴⁸ The expectation that emerged was that women owed their husbands a calm and pleasant home environment. Further, they were responsible for constant emotional management to insure that their families maintained a positive mood. By the

⁴⁵ Eben E. Rexford, "Her Thanksgiving Day Sermon," *TCWM* (November 1918): 194.

⁴⁶ Eben E. Rexford, "Her Thanksgiving Day Sermon," *TCWM* (November 1918): 194.

⁴⁷ Christina Kotchemidova, "From Good Cheer to 'Drive-By Smiling': A Social History of Cheerfulness," *Journal of Social History* 39, no.1 (Fall 2005)

⁴⁸ Kotchemidova, "From Good Cheer," 12.

1930s, this includes not only the home but industrial workplaces, business and service sectors.⁴⁹ The insistence on female cheerfulness in the mainline journals can best be understood as a reflection of prevailing norms in the culture at large. Liberal Protestants were less troubled than conservatives by American culture and had already shown that they were willing to accommodate this culture in order to remain socially relevant.

In 1930 in *Christian Herald*, the concern about the need for female cheerfulness is expressed in theory: “Self-pity is a confession of weakness and may degenerate into abject cowardice . . . self-pity misinterprets life, violates duty, shirks responsibility and proclaims inefficiency.”⁵⁰ Not only were men held up as a more reasonable model of Christian behaviour but training young girls is also a matter of concern and focus. Across decades in *Zion’s Herald* this concern was important enough that emphasis is placed on raising girls so as not to indulge in self-pity. In 1929, a mother notes, “I was shocked when I finally realized that Lucille was unhappy because she was indulging in a daily habit of self-pity”⁵¹ And later, “Some children form lazy thought habits and this tendency must be watched for and broken up by teaching them to form active, vigorous thought habits.”⁵² Further, it seems vital to raise girls and later women to hide what is painful or ugly and focus only on the good. In 1908, in a piece entitled, “In Love with Misery,” demands are made of those experiencing hardship. “Be careful that you do not fall in love with misery, daughter,” warns a, “wise” mother. One wishes to be pitied. The sufferer puts on a sad or pensive face. They fall in love with being coddled and make misery their closest companion. They want attention and so they fail to disguise

⁴⁹ Kotchemidova, “From Good Cheer,” 12.

⁵⁰ Rev. Dr. Charles E. Woodcock, “The Poison of Fear,” *CH* (March 29, 1930): 11.

⁵¹ Margaret Conn Rhoads, “Healthy Thought Habits,” *ZH* (June 12, 1929): 756. (See also, Sophia T. Newman, “Try to ‘Happy Up,’” *ZH* (March 4, 1908): 306.)

⁵² Margaret Conn Rhoads, “Healthy Thought Habits,” *ZH* (June 12, 1929): 756.

their feelings. And their suffering is only to gain pity from others. She further contends that, “Nothing is lost and much is gained by trying to be brave and triumphant, to keep one’s misery out of other’s sight and out of too conspicuous a place in one’s own sight.” Avoiding or denying hardship not only diminishes these experiences but makes clear that they are irrelevant. And in a final and insistent demand for a pleasant outlook she closes, “The little vexations, even the greater ones, are like some other things: if kept in the dark they lose their strength. It has been said of one whose life is long-drawn-out suffering: ‘He works his woes up into fun.’”⁵³

Returning to conservative narratives, rather than blaming the sufferer there are examples suggesting that a lack of joy or acceptance of God’s will may be the result, not of self-pity, but the work of Satan. In *The Christian Worker’s Magazine* in 1918 a writer suggests that if, “... everything seems a burden to you instead of a joy ... Your trouble may be directly from Satan as you suppose ...”⁵⁴ And, in the *Sunday School Times* in 1930, in response to a reader’s depression and doubt, the following is offered,

No doubt Satan is trying to discourage you and to get you to leave the Lord you have loved and trusted ... Trust Christ as you never have trusted before. Soon you will see sunshine of his love radiating your soul, and giving you the faith and joy that belong to all his children.⁵⁵

Fundamentally, what appears to be suggested is that a Christian’s natural state is one of peace and acceptance. Any deviation from this has the potential to be the result of Satan working in one’s life and against God’s plan.

In a final move in the pages of *Christian Herald* and *Zion’s Herald*, not only are fear and self-pity strongly discouraged but there is also an insistence that sufferers

⁵³ “In Love with Misery,” *ZH* (February 26, 1908): 274.

⁵⁴ W.J.V. “Practical and Perplexing Questions,” *TCWM* (September 1919): 37.

⁵⁵ Mother Ruth, “Girls’ Problems of Today,” *TSSST* (September 27, 1930): 561.

respond with cheerfulness to experiences of pain, suffering and upheaval. Orsi found the same for the whole period he reviewed from 1929 through to the late twentieth century⁵⁶ and, Griffith found it for the late twentieth century.⁵⁷ Notably, as is consistent with the conservative Protestants in this review, cheerfulness was not required of Pentecostal women in the 1930s or 1940s.⁵⁸ Returning to my own study and as relayed in *Christian Herald* in 1945, “God is eager for him to live, not in gloom, but in the sunshine. That is God’s will for all of us. Joy is more than a privilege, it is a positive duty.”⁵⁹ Failing to meet this demand left one open to highly critical judgments. A lack of cheerfulness was taken as a sign of sin and subsequent distance from God. As one writer phrased it in *Christian Herald* in 1918, cheerfulness is the, “kindly condition of a soul purified in harmony with Christ.”⁶⁰ Or as another writer for *Zion’s Herald* explains, “Joy is a Christian duty. God wants all His children to be happy.”⁶¹ By extension, a lack of cheerfulness, a lack of right thinking, was a sign of disharmony with God.

Here writers for *Christian Herald* and *Zion’s Herald* were not merely expressing an interest in the emotional health of readers. Rather, there was an ongoing denial of experience. In 1945, in the pages of *Christian Herald*, a writer counsels, “Yet his hard lot is not the real cause of his moping. Were he to look about him he would find others whose sufferings are equal to, or greater than, his who are living joyously and abundantly. Therefore, his gloom is an inside job for which he himself is to blame.”⁶²

⁵⁶ Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 154-5.

⁵⁷ R. Marie Griffith, “Female Suffering and Religious Devotion in American Pentecostalism.” In *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, ed. Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 200-1.

⁵⁸ Griffith, “Female Suffering,” 200-1.

⁵⁹ “Daily Meditations For The Quiet Hour,” *CH* (October 1945): 38.

⁶⁰ George H. Sandison, ed., “Our Editorial Forum: Look for the Bright Things,” *CH* (February 20, 1918): 212.

⁶¹ Lucy Rider Meyer, “Thoughts for the Thoughtful,” *ZH* (August 5, 1908): 1006.

⁶² Dr. Clovis G. Chappell, “Daily Meditations For the Quiet Hour,” *CH* (December 1945): 40.

Notably, though men are included in general admonitions to be cheerful, as seen in the instances already explored, actual examples of those who are not cheerful are primarily applied to women in *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald*.⁶³ And it was not only applied to spilt milk or poor weather. Rather, sadness at death or disease were also unacceptable.

Lest women require instruction on how to be cheerful, across *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald*, examples of the ideal sufferer were held up for comparison. It seems clear, if not explicitly stated, that these stories were printed to shame those who had more mundane concerns – or simply did not suffer well. Indeed, these were not simply stories of cheerfulness. Stories of the “good sufferer” were also stories of rebuke - particularly where women’s lives and emotions were involved.

The rules of cheerful model suffering were clear enough that at least one woman wrote into *Christian Herald* expressing how she met these requirements – how she believed she had suffered well – better than other women. Indeed, as she explains, “In my case, sorrow has energized me.” She continues, “Death of a dear one is purifying, sanctifying, bringing into proper perspective the desire to live a life worthy of the one who is now in the realm of God’s ultimate values.” Ultimately, suffering provides an opportunity to develop a soul fit to be received by Him and the “dear one when the adventurous journey of death comes.”⁶⁴ Thus the gifts that suffering brings, if one is willing to accept them, are developed in order to be worthy of God’s love.

⁶³ Helena H. Thomas, “Cheerful Under Tribulation,” *ZH* (March 27, 1918): 398-400; Margaret E. Sangster, “‘Over There’; An Easter Message,” *CH* (April 15, 1908): 317; Helen A. Hawley, “‘Out of the Mouths of Babes,’” *ZH* (July 15, 1908): 913.

⁶⁴ Madeline S. Miller, “Don’t Be Afraid Of Tomorrow,” *CH* (April 1955): 58.

Notably, conservative writers are less than convinced that cheerfulness is the appropriate response to suffering. Of Jesus Himself, a writer for *The Christian Worker's Magazine* notes in 1918,

Is there any indication His life was one of lightness and of frivolity? We may well believe that the great burden that rested on Him through His life was the burden of our sins, the breaking force of the burden coming at the cross. He was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.⁶⁵

As a result of their worldview and their related understanding of who Jesus was, conservative writers seem unwilling to countenance suggestions that cheer is a Christian duty. Indeed, their view of human existence is inconsistent with the need to be positive or cheerful. The world is corrupt and heading towards disaster. In this understanding, the appropriateness of cheer is not at all certain. It is true that conservatives in this study concur that Christians should accept God's will for them without worry. This is based on a belief in the rightness of God's will for each individual. Relayed in *Moody Monthly* in 1943, "What a blessed truth. Nothing can come to the child of God except that which God sends or allows to come. None of us would desire anything but the will of God for our loved ones ..."⁶⁶ The admonition is to accept what life brings, what God chooses for one with what is perhaps best called stoicism, even grace, but not cheerfulness. Phrased another way in *Moody Monthly* in 1945, "Therefore, bear with distress. Pray, abide in the Word, be silent, suffer the pain, humble yourself, endure, obey, wait, believe, give thanks."⁶⁷

In the pages of Moody publications examples of a narrative of acceptance can be found across the period under review. For example, in 1908 and again in 1945, examples

⁶⁵ *TCWM* (March 1918): 552.

⁶⁶ Rev. Kenneth S. Wuest, "How to Have Peace in Times of War," *MM* (July 1943): 613.

⁶⁷ Dean L.M. Engstrom, "In Sore Distress," *MM* (August 1945): 629.

of the stoicism and acceptance required of those experiencing turmoil and suffering is made clear. The first of these is published in *The Institute Tie* in 1908. In a Section entitled: 'Let not Your Heart be Troubled,' the author begins, it has been, "Some time since it was our sad privilege to be called in to minister to a dying young woman. Her husband was a drunkard..."⁶⁸ When asked about the difficulties she faced, she answered, "I have no troubles, sir." The writer expresses disbelief at this response, a response that was hard to fathom,

'No troubles?' That seemed a startling confession. A drunkard's home, and yet no troubles! Two little tots in the corner, one four, the other six, shoeless, almost garmentless, and yet no trouble! No pictures on the wall, no carpet on the floor, no curtain on the window, no flower on the table, no kind friend near – not even a physician and yet no trouble!⁶⁹

The dying woman responds that, "My life was nothing but trouble," and later, "until a few weeks ago I brought everything to Him, and yielded."⁷⁰

The second example published in 1945, begins with a young woman who returns home after becoming a Christian. She had originally left home because her father was a "drunkard." Upon becoming a Christian she returns home with the goal of "reclaiming" him.⁷¹ Upon hearing of her plans, someone asks "But what will you do when he finds fault with all your efforts to please him?" Her answer, given with, "a soft light in her eyes," is that she will, "Try a little harder." In response the questioner exclaims, "Yes, but when he is unreasonable and unkind you will be tempted to lose your temper, and answer him angrily. What will you do then?" This time she responds with a fearless ring in her words. "Pray a little harder," she responds. Yet, the, "discourager had one

⁶⁸ "For Sermon and Scrapbook, 'Let not Your Heart be Troubled,'" *The Institute Tie* (May 1908): 700.

⁶⁹ "For Sermon and Scrapbook, 'Let not Your Heart be Troubled,'" *The Institute Tie* (May 1908): 700.

⁷⁰ "For Sermon and Scrapbook, 'Let not Your Heart be Troubled,'" *The Institute Tie* (May 1908): 700.

⁷¹ William Norton, "Truth Illuminated," *MM* (January 1945): 290.

more arrow: ‘Suppose he should strike you, as he did before. What could you do but leave him again?’” This time she responds steadily that she will, “‘Love him a little harder,’”⁷²

In this telling, the good Christian has a light in her eyes, a fearless ring in her words and steadiness in the face of difficulty. She displays an absolute acceptance of her circumstances. Furthermore, she does so without complaint. However, cheerfulness is never mentioned let alone demanded. She is not cheerful regarding the task in front of her, only and absolutely committed to completing it without complaint.

The story of the dying young woman was an example of accepting difficulty and suffering without crying out or complaining. The second is an example of stoically accepting hardship for God’s glory. Both are stories of extraordinary submission and acceptance of God’s plan. What they are not is stories of cheerfulness. It is clear that these narratives are as instructive as those in *Christian Herald* and *Zion’s Herald*; however, the demands they make are decidedly different. Cheerfulness does not appear to have been a requirement made of conservative Christians in the period under review.

Across the conservative and liberal journals writers argued that suffering brings a host of benefits. Among these benefits is the promise not only that God is with the sufferer but that suffering itself brings one closer to God. As a result, sufferers were to welcome and appreciate suffering. In addition, it is implicitly suggested that how one suffers is a marker of why one is suffering. Thus, to avoid the conclusion that one is suffering due to punishment, the sufferer needs to suffer well by accepting hardship as a gift. Shame is noted as a rightful recognition that God suffered because of humans and His suffering takes precedence in every way over human suffering. Further, worry is

⁷² William Norton, “Truth Illuminated,” *MM* (January 1945): 290.

unacceptable because it reveals a lack of faith in God's plan. Notably, in the more liberal journals referenced, a harsh and gendered insistence that humans exhibit 'cheerfulness' is found in narratives of how to sufferer well. Having rejected the existence of Satan, this insistence is premised on a belief that humans are in complete control of their emotions – or at least should be. Women in particular are seen as sadly lacking in this regard. In contrast, as regards suffering, the demands made in the conservative journals were applied across genders. With a world view that included the inevitable and necessary destruction of human life in end times, there was no impetus and no subsequent demand for cheerfulness. Thus, the sufferer was not asked to be cheerful but was clearly expected to display their acceptance of God's will for them.

Conclusion

Across 1908 to 1955, readers of the Protestant journals, Moody publications, *The Sunday School Times*, *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald*, asked a plethora of questions regarding God's role in suffering. Although not stated formally or formulaically, the questions asked by believers mirrored the questions that make up formal theodicies. Is God good? Is God powerful enough to have chosen differently? And, since he hasn't, how am I to understand the purpose or reasoning behind suffering? At the core, readers were asking questions regarding who God was and why the world worked the way it did. In turn, writers for each of the journals responded to the questions posed. The general existence of commentary on the purposes of suffering makes clear that individual readers were not alone in asking questions. To these questions, writers did not respond in a single voice. Instead, there were variations in understanding. However, the most common response was to assert that suffering did make sense. Many writers tied asking questions to doubt and expressed anger that readers questioned God's power, goodness or plan. Nonetheless, rebuke was not the only response. Indeed, other writers showed compassion for reader's confusion and stated only that the world would one day make sense.

Regardless of common assertions that people were not in a position to question God, writers felt compelled to address questions regarding God's goodness, power and plan. In each of the journals, it was asserted that God was both good and wise. Yet, there were complications. While, within each journal, the goodness of God was confirmed, His goodness was complicated by His concurrent anger with humans. His

power was also complicated. In mainline publications, God's power was informed by more modern understandings. In this equation, writers removed God from a direct relationship in which He punished humans. Instead, God was understood as having designed and set-up the world to function as it did, but once put in place, did not act to directly punish people. Here, there were simply consequences that arose from behaviours. An understanding of natural laws that functioned to direct or punish human behavior was a further elucidation of this understanding of consequence. Nonetheless, regarding God's plan, across conservative and liberal journals, there was no question that God's plan, even if humans were unable to understand it, was the best one possible.

Following from this, because it was clear that God's goodness and power was a given, the grounds upon which to understand the reasons for suffering were most characteristically traced to humans. Most frequently, this included punishment for or direction of human behavior. This was relayed in the most punitive terms in conservative journals but it is present across journals. However, regardless of human blame, writers argued that punishment or direction were useful and moreover, brought widely described benefits. Journal writers also accepted that not all suffering was the direct result of sin. On this account, a wide variety of further possible explanations for suffering were proposed. Many, if not most, minimized human experiences of suffering by suggesting that humans made too much of suffering. What was not left open for debate, and mirroring Pinn, Prentiss, Orsi, and Griffith's findings, was that suffering itself was redemptive, bringing with it a host of benefits. Further, it becomes clear that how one suffers was taken as a measure of why one was suffering. How one responded to suffering was taken as a barometer of character and by extension, the quality of one's

faith. It was clear across journals that suffering was to be understood as bringing benefits. One of these benefits was the assurance of God's presence or relationship. In this constellation, fear and worry were unacceptable. However, on this count, it is these mainline adherents who appear a great deal harsher. While conservatives hold harsher views of human nature, more liberal understandings place great hope in human kind. This is possible, at least in part as a result of the fading of or disappearance of the Devil as an actor in human affairs. In both *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Herald*, this disappearance resulted in greater agency being located with humans. However, this came at a price because greater agency resulted in greater responsibility and, thus, the possibility of greater blame.

Further, these mainline views of how to suffer were gendered. In the pieces focusing on this issue, men with emotional control became the model for how women were to suffer. Though admonitions to be cheerful are broadly made to both men and women, in practice, it is women who are castigated for failing to meet this prescription. As one result, there was interest in training girls in how to behave. Specifically, and as can be said of the wider culture, cheerfulness became a requirement for both women and girls. Perhaps because it is inconsistent with believing the world is hurtling towards destruction, conservatives, for their part, did not demand cheerfulness. However, their demands were equally prescriptive. They wanted believers to react in particular ways. In short, they insisted that believers accept God's plans for them without complaint.

A number of questions remain and they will be left to those who come after me. Marie Griffith found both the same willingness to ask questions and no demand for a positive outlook in her study of American Pentecostal women during the 1930s and

1940s. However, in her study of Charismatic Protestant women during the last decade of the twentieth century she notes an insistence on cheerfulness. Would the same be true of evangelicals in particular? And if so, when did this change occur? And, why? It cannot be the result of the disappearance of Satan. However, could it be the result of a declining resonance in the figure of Satan? Or, was it the result of a shift in understanding of Satan or humans? More research is necessary to explore this issue.

I hope that others take up the questions posed by myself, Pinn, Prentiss, Orsi, and Griffith. As this study demonstrates, a broader overview of both fundamentalist/evangelical and mainline views of suffering would be valuable. Further, oral interviews, as seen in Orsi's work, would be invaluable in rounding out a more personal and intimate understanding of how "regular Protestants" understood suffering. It would be interesting to explore how American Protestants viewed pain, rather than suffering more generally. Further, it is important to note that all of the research to date regarding historical understandings of suffering has focused on the United States. I hope that this research can be undertaken for other countries and for other religious traditions.

To end with the questions I began with, I will say that I now understand more than I did about the religious worlds that my Mother and Grandmother found and created themselves in relation to. In that, at least, I feel I have closed the circle and reached the understanding that I sought.

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