

The Fatal Flaw Behind Fatalism

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Examining the flawed doctrine of Fatalism, a doctrine of never trying and therefore of absolute failure.

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I remember a year or so back when some friends had a baby die, other friends tried to comfort them saying, "God must have needed another angel."

I recall being shocked and a little disgusted by this suggestion. My pastor, Michael Sim, teaches that God does not need any more angels. And that most definitely God does not murder babies! It might have comforted the parents, but the suggestion that God needed another angel was patently untrue. So why did their young one die tragically?

In 1987 my beloved brother John, aged thirty-two, died the victim of a hit-and-run drunk driver, who then turned up in court with his transvestite "mistress" in full drag to fake an insanity plea. The plea worked and he got away with it.

This left me wondering how God could have allowed John to die this way. And why would he allow the killer to turn the court room into a circus and successfully pervert justice?

More recently I have learnt that my beloved cat, Missy, who I have had for eight years, after my mother owned her for seven years before me, is now dying of cancer. If I were not long-time unemployed I could pay \$800 for an operation with about a one-third chance of saving her. Although her age means that she would probably die on the operating table anyway "thereby robbing her of the one or two months extra life she may have if she does not have the operation. Again if I were not long-time unemployed I could spend \$500 for a biopsy to see if the type of cancer might respond to chemo-therapy. However, most cat cancers do not respond to chemo-therapy, so I would be spending all of that money with only (according to the vet) a two to three Percent chance that her cancer would respond to chemo-therapy.

So again I have to ask why God allows such a tragedy to happen. Missy is a good little girl who spends most of her days with me, keeping me company, and as a middle-aged bachelor living alone, stopping me from getting too depressed or lonely during the day-time.

I know in my heart that God is perfect, God is always righteous! I have absolutely no doubts about this. So how can he allow such heart-rending tragedies to occur?

Well to answer this question I have to first ask you a question. Namely have you heard of fatalisms, or the term fatalist?

The answer is yes, you probably have. But you probably misunderstand both terms. Most people take a fatalist to be like a cynic, a sceptic, or a pessimist. In truth a fatalist is nothing like any of these. A fatalist believes that we are not really alive. That we are merely puppets performing a playlette that is our life. Fatalists believe that before each person is born God writes a play that is their life. It contains every success, every failure, and every heartache that will occur throughout his or her lifetime.

Since (the fatalists believe) we have no free will and are merely puppets performing the play that God has written for us, they believe that there is no point trying to better yourself. They believe that if God has fated you to be a failure, nothing you can do can change that, so you might as well not try to achieve anything. Conversely if God has fated us to be successful, even as almost unbelievably successful as a Bill Gates, then there is still no need to try to better ourselves, because God has fated us to be a success and we will succeed without even trying.

If you were to ask Bill Gates whether he achieved his almost unbelievable fortune by: a) sitting on his brains doing nothing for decades and God mysteriously rewarded him to such a degree anyway, or b) working his guts out for decades until he had achieved such massive success by his own labours. I'm fairly certain that he would say the answer is b).

If we never try we cannot succeed. But if we have no free choice we are not really humans, merely puppets. To make this point better I have to go into a seemingly bizarre aside, by telling you a little about Doctor Who, and what I call the Logopolan theory of why god has to let tragedies occur.

I was six when Dr Who started and grew up watching it. Stopping in the late 1970s in my early twenties, so that the last Doctor I originally watched was Tom Baker. Then a dozen years later my older sister, Denise, became a massive Dr Who fan and started buying up every Dr Who VCR tape she could find. So for the first

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time I was introduced to the three Doctors after Tom Baker (in the original show which ended in 1989), Peter Davidson, Colin Baker, and Sylvester McCoy.

The important one for this essay though, is Peter Davidson. In particular his first Doctor Who four-part series Logopolis. In this series the Doctor lands at Logopolis a seemingly normal place with an ancient history going back thousands of years. But immediately the Doctor senses that something is wrong, but due to trouble with his regeneration, the doctor initially cannot work out what is not right about Logopolis.

Finally he realises that although the Logopolans have a written history purporting to date back thousands of years, that all of their history books are brand new. They have no ancient books, no ancient papers or pamphlettes, no ancient scrolls. Every book in their library is new. Because the history of Logopolis is fake. Logopolis does not exist, it is a computer simulation and the Logopolans are computer-generated holograms who have been programmed to think that they are alive.

If the fatalists were right then this would be our existence. Without free will God would have designed us as nothing but computer-generated holograms who have been programmed (by God) to think that we are alive.

That is why God must let babies die. Why he has let my beloved Missy die. (There was a four month gap between me writing the early paragraphs of this essay and being able to bring myself to write the remainder.)

When Missy was diagnosed with cancer, the vet told me that she might live one to two more months. But a tragic accident meant that she only lived one more week after that. She slept on the bed with me and one night (I was lying awake due to my sleep apnoea); she suddenly rolled off the bed in her sleep. I made a desperate bid to catch her, but missed and she hit the wooden floor with a bone-shattering crunching sound that will haunt me for years.

I have no light in my bedroom, so I had to use the remote to switch on the TV for light. I expected to find Missy lying dead on the floor, but there was no sign of her. I hunted through the house and finally found her, seeming physically undamaged but scared and hiding in the lounge room. So I picked her up and carried her back to bed. That was a Friday night. Saturday, Sunday, and Monday she seemed fine. Then Monday evening she had a fit and seemed to have died. I stroked her thinking that she was already dead and she slowly started to move again then climbed off the coffee table (beside my bed) and started to stagger like she was drunk into the spare bedroom to hide under a chair.

Thinking that she was going there to die, I moved the chair and picked her up and nursed her, expecting her to die. But she seemed to pick up, so I took her back to my bed. Then Tuesday morning I awoke and there was no sign of her. I thought she must have fallen off the other side of the bed and looked for her. Then I spent half an hour searching the entire house. Finally I found her in the bottom of the crockery cupboard in the kitchen. I picked her out and put her down to see if she could walk properly, but she could no longer even stand up. So I rang the animal hospital, then the pet ambulance and took her in to be put down rather than let her live like that.

The Pastor of my church lent me a shovel to bury her the next day. It was 6 PM and pitch black when he arrived, so I laid Missy out in the spare bedroom on a cat blanket that the animal hospital had given me -- they could afford it, the month or so trying to save her cost me \$550 dollars. The next morning I started trying to dig her grave near the letter box out front, where she had always liked to lie in sunny weather. At first I thought that I physically would not be able to dig the grave because the ground was so rocky. Finally I rested an hour then went back for fifteen minutes digging, then another hour's rest, and had to keep doing that all day. I started digging at 9:30 AM, but wasn't able to put Missy in and fill the grave till 4:30 PM, so it literally took me all day and almost killed me. But I know that if you let an animal hospital dispose of a pet, they just throw it in the rubbish, and I did not want that happening to her.

So with such a tragedy robbing Missy of her last month or two of life, and me of her companionship, do I rant against God as so many do after losing loved ones? No, because I know that God gives us life, but he does not kill us! We just die, sometimes due to horrific accidents. God does not cause the accidents that kill us. God loves us too much to rob us of life, by robbing us of free will. That is why God will not make us into puppets or holograms like the Logopolans. For us to be living, breathing human beings, we must have free will. But free will means tragedies happen, that some people have the huge success of Bill Gates and billions of people live in abject poverty. If God protected us all to the point that no-one ever died tragically, no-one ever had too much, and no-one too little, we would be artificial life forms like the Logopolans and like the

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fatalists believe. That is the fatal flaw behind fatalism. If God granted us everything we ever prayed for, he would be making our lives too easy, pre-programmed in fact, just as the fatalists believe. God hears all of our prayers and knows what we want before we even pray. But if he answered every single prayer he would be robbing us of our free will, and therefore robbing us of our humanity.

Fatalism is a very dangerous doctrine, because it is the doctrine of never trying. And therefore it is the doctrine of absolute failure. If we were all fatalists, there would be no Bill Gates in the world. There would be no rich people. There would be no upper or even lower middle class people. There would not even be any upper working class people. We would be all abject failures living in the almost unbelievable squalor and poverty of people in poor third world countries. (I mean poor in both senses, that they are poor, and that I regret that they are poor.)

So the next time someone you love dies, do not rant against God, thank the Lord for letting them live as long (or as short) as they did as a real, live, human being. Not merely a puppet at the fatalists wrongly believe.

THE END

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