

## B. God's Relationship to Suffering

We have taken note of the five root causes of suffering among human beings, as they are revealed in Scripture. Scripture does not teach that God is the creator of any of these five causes of suffering, although it does teach that God established the framework within which certain kinds of human actions and behaviors would result in suffering.

God originally placed mankind in a probationary setting in the Garden of Eden, set before him a simple test of obedience, and told him that if he freely, deliberately, wilfully disobeyed Him and failed the test, mankind would die and lose both spiritual and physical life. Mankind's original transgression brought the curse of sin and all of its terrible results upon all humanity and upon the created world.

In addition, at creation God established a system of physical, biological, moral, and spiritual laws which, if obeyed and observed, would result in mankind's well-being, and, if violated or ignored, would result in suffering. Mankind has continually transgressed these laws, and thus brought further suffering upon itself.

In connection with the system of physical, biological, moral, and spiritual laws that God has established, the word "law" is used in two senses: (1) a principle of uniform, consistent, dependable operation of physical or mental or spiritual relationships or actions; (2) a rule or norm or standard intended to regulate conduct, established by some authority, and carrying with it certain sanctions.

Examples of the first sense include the law of gravity, the laws of thermodynamics, the laws of heredity, the law of contradiction, the law that sin must be punished, and the law that one reaps what he or she sows. Examples of the second sense include the just laws enacted by human governments, the law implanted in man's nature and monitored by conscience, the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments, the two Great Laws enunciated by Christ, and the Law of God, which is the will of God addressed to man's obedience in every dispensation.

Suffering is one result of mankind's deliberate rejection of God's Word and deliberate rebellion against God's Law.

God willed to permit mankind initially to freely and voluntarily do that which mankind wanted to do, even though God knew that a sinful exercise of this freedom would bring suffering on man. Thus man, not God, is the creator of the causes of his suffering! Even Satan's attempt in the Garden to hurt and destroy humanity would have been futile if man had chosen to obey God and to remain faithful to Him and to His Word. Thus all of the causes of suffering have been brought upon mankind by man's own sinful actions!

What, then, is God's role in suffering?