

## It Isn't Fair

Johnny doesn't get to play in the tightly contested Little League baseball game and complains to his mother, "*It isn't fair!*" Brenda doesn't make the cheerleading squad and complains, "*It isn't fair!*" George doesn't get into the college of his choice and complains, "*It isn't fair!*" Grandpa died of cancer at age sixty-two, momma died of a heart attack before age fifty, the teenage girl next door was killed by a drunk driver, a sniper's bullet slays a man pumping gas, and we all say, "*It isn't fair!*" One madman incites a nation to kill a whole race of people, another starves his own to keep his power, and still another murders and tortures anyone who is perceived to oppose his regime and we say, "*It isn't fair!*" From the least of the offenses to the greatest we make a value judgment that something is not right; that the situation "*ought*" to be other than it is. Whether we have judged rightly in each case is not the point at the moment, but we all have an innate sense of justice, of "*ought*." The smallest children do not have to be taught when something seems not to be what it "*ought*." This sense of "*ought*" simply exists in our being.

C. S. Lewis in *The Case for Christianity* sees this peculiar phenomenon in man. He writes:

*... human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and can't really get rid of it. Secondly, ... they don't in fact behave that way.*

This sense that men ought to act in certain ways is called variously the Law of Nature, the Universal Moral Code, or some similar expression. What Lewis observes is what all the people observed in the examples above; things "*ought*" to be a certain way, but experience is that often they are not.

Regardless of how poorly we live up to what "*ought to be*," the pressure to be a certain way is always with us. It hangs on us like a fog that won't lift. When we violate it, we are depressed. When we live by it, we are gratified. To ignore it or defy it requires we develop a certain callousness in ourselves that we despise in others. This Universal Law creates, and has always created, a problem for man that never goes away.

We must note that we are not talking about the laws which govern our physical world, although there are some interesting parallels involved. The laws that the scientist identifies demonstrate that insentient matter operates in predictable ways. Because it does man has been able to do marvelous things in harnessing the world he inhabits and make physical living more comfortable. When we obey the physical rules of the universe, life goes much better than when we violate them. Violation of the physical laws subjects us to injury and, in the extreme, death. One who steps out of an airplane at 20,000 feet with disregard to the laws of gravity will quickly suffer for the error of his ways.

What we are discussing here are not the physical rules, but the moral ones. While the physical laws are not laws at all, but merely rigid patterns

of physical operation which compel matter to operate in a precise way without a choice, the moral laws can be violated. Matter obeys the physical "rules" without a choice. The rules of morality come with an option to obey or not to obey. The physical rules apply to all matter, including ourselves. The moral rules apply only to man, the only part of the world that has a free will. Matter does not ignore the rules of its own behavior. It cannot. Man can disregard both the physical and the moral laws. In both cases there will be consequences.

The governing force of morality does not operate like the force behind the physical world. It governs by "will" or "*presence*" or "*conscience*," or some other concept that we apply to what we call a sense of "*ought*." This sense of we "*ought to do this*" or "*we ought not to do that*" is a nagging, ever-present, difficult-to-ignore thing. Regardless of how we deny this overriding moral force, regardless of how successful we are at doing so, this force remains center stage in every society in every age. Ruthless men may disregard it, faithless men may repudiate it, ordinary men may wish it away, but life does not proceed for long before even the most arrogant, the most reprobate, the most ardent denier of God, will, when his bull is gored (or, more appropriately for our age, his car is smashed) cry "*foul!*" Except that he be granted justice he will complain, "*It isn't fair!*" He, by his protestations, adds another piece of evidence in the prima facie case for the existence of God, the source of "*ought*."