

# PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

## FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

In this series, we look at the current production at LifeHouse Theater through the lens of the Christian perspective. While we can say much about "Phantom of the Opera," I'd like to focus on the theme of God's involvement in human affairs, or **God's sovereignty**.



**God's sovereignty** asks some of the following questions: Is God in control of the world? If so, how much of it? How can a loving God allow evil and suffering? "Phantom" speaks to many of these questions. If you watch closely, you'll find allusions throughout the songs and dialogue.

When it comes to the issue of how can a good God allow evil, sometimes well-intentioned people try to get God "off the hook" by saying that God wants to remove all evil from the world *but he can't*. He can't because man or Satan or some other force keeps Him from doing what he wants.

While this answer may sound appealing at first, it's actually a frightening answer for a number of reasons. A main reason is that it would mean that God is not in control of the world, and instead something else is!

What if *chance* dictated the happenings in the world?

I'm reminded of when Mifroid, the Managers, and the Company try to console themselves with the idea that the fall of the chandelier was not someone's ill-intent, but an accident. "Twas only an accident, purely by chance--" they sing.

But chance didn't flicker the lights and demand a salary, an intelligent human being did, a person did. And, therefore, LifeHouse's "Phantom of the Opera" slams the door on the idea of chance running amok in the universe.

## The Avengers

POP



CULTURE

In the newest Avenger's film--*Infinity Wars*, we're told that chance had a place in the origin of the universe. Jason Wong, the friend of Dr. Strange and fellow-protector of the Time Stone, offers an explanation of how the universe came into being, "**At the dawn of the universe, there was nothing...then...boom. The Big Bang sent six elemental crystals...hurtling across the virgin universe.**" If chance -- and not intelligence -- brought the universe into existence, how might that affect the people who live in it? If chance rules the universe, can anything in it, including human beings, have real significance or meaning?



## Waiting for Godot

MODERN

To consider the last question (Can chance bring about meaning?), I'm going to point you to the modern classic *Waiting for Godot* (debuted 1953), written by the Nobel Prize-winning author Samuel Beckett. The plot of this play is terribly simple. **Two men wait -- the entire play -- for a man named Godot to arrive. But Godot doesn't arrive and the play ends.**



CULTURE

Sound a little bleak and nonsensical? That's the point. I think Beckett's making the existential point that our reliance upon God ("**Godot**"), or the Judeo-Christian worldview or the ideas underlying the West, has gotten us nowhere. God is not arriving to solve our problems; the universe is nonsensical, without meaning. Would you pay the price of a ticket to see a play in which the whole point is that the universe has no point?

## Hamlet

PAST

We're going to shift back some centuries. As times change, so do ideas about the world. These ideas ultimately filter into culture, including the arts. Here's an example from my favorite play, *Hamlet*. Written during the Reformation era, Shakespeare believed the world was not ruled by chance but by God. Hamlet makes the following statements:



**"There's a divinity that shapes our ends" (Act 5 Scene 2).**

CULTURE

**"[T]here is special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (Ibid.).**

While at times Hamlet wasn't pleased with God's sovereignty, he always feared it. God's involvement in the universe gave Hamlet a meaningful structure to live by. Do you see the shift in thinking that has taken place from *Hamlet* to *Avengers*?

In the beautiful song, "Where Can She Be?", Phillipe comforts the grieved Raoul with the following words:

"The Lord above knows all,  
Our Father truly cares,  
When sparrows fall, the Lord is quite aware."

The final line is a reference to Jesus' own words in Matthew 10. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?" Jesus asks. "And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father....Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." (It looks like Shakespeare knew his Bible too--see the second line from *Hamlet* above.)



The most explicit references to God's care for humanity comes in a dialogue between Christine and Erik in his lair. One reason that Erik feels compelled to manipulate and harass those around him is rooted in his lifelong struggle with his physical deformity. Because of it, people have treated him cruelly, inhumanely, even his mother.

But in stark contrast to so many, Christine shows him kindness, treating him not as an object but a human being. At one moment, she comforts him with God's love. But in response, Erik replies with the age-old question, "If He is a God of love, then...why this [pointing to his face]?" (Act 2 Scene 5).

Christine admits she doesn't really know the answer to his question, but she offers the best response she can.

**CHRISTINE:** "There is so much we do not understand about the events of this fallen world....Things impossible to understand in this life. Be we pray to a God who can understand what we are going through--the God who dwelt among us. Who endured so much suffering to take on the sins of the world."

Christine's answer highlights three important biblical points worth noting:

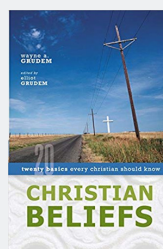
- Our world is not as it should be. God originally created it without flaw, but man's sinful rebellion in the Garden ushered in pain, suffering, deformity, hatred.
- But God so loved his cursed and rebellious creation that he became a man, Jesus, to rescue mankind.
- Jesus' life, ministry, and death broke the curse and is the only path of redemption for mankind.

Together, these points affirm that a human life has meaning and significance. The universe is not a cosmic accident and neither is evil. Jesus is God's answer to the evil in the world and a resounding answer to the following question: Does God care for humanity? Whatever you may be facing today, place your rest in your heavenly Father. Not only is he sovereign over all affairs, but he cares for you.

## For Further Study

Isaiah 46; Romans 9; Ephesians 1:11-12

"Christian Beliefs:  
Twenty Basics  
Every Christian  
Should Know"



See ch. 2 "What is God Like?"  
By Wayne Grudem