

BIG TRUTH little books™

The Problem of Evil

Cliff McManis

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The Problem of Evil

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In Memory of Bill Rehrer

loving husband, dedicated father,
godly leader, man of God,
who overcame evil and now
reigns with Christ in glory

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SERIES PREFACE

Our mission with the *BIG TRUTH little books*[™] series is to provide edifying, accessible literature for Christian readers from all walks of life. We understand that it is often difficult to find time to read good books. But we also understand that reading is a valuable means of spiritual growth. The answer? Get some really big truth into some little books. Every book in this series is only 5" x 8" and around 120 pages. But each is full of Scripture, theological reflection, and pastoral insight. Our hope is that Christians young and old will benefit from these books as they grow in their knowledge of Christ through his Word.

Cliff McManis, General Editor
Derek Brown, Series Editor

INTRODUCTION: CHRISTIANITY'S GREATEST CHALLENGE?

Few believers alive today have fielded more questions from skeptics of Christianity than the popular evangelist and apologist, Ravi Zacharias. For more than three decades he has taught and preached all over the world and is in constant demand as a speaker at prominent universities like Oxford, Princeton, Harvard and countless others. He enjoys interacting with heady, aggressive, unbelieving and skeptical collegiates. They ask challenging questions about the validity of theism and Christianity in particular. Ravi attests that the number one issue that comes up wherever he goes, hands down, is the classic dilemma—the problem of evil.

No discussion on apologetics is complete

without addressing the problem of evil. Opponents have long held that the problem of evil is the most impregnable charge confronting Christianity. It is the critic's ultimate trump card against the Bible's credibility...so we are told. Popular atheist and best-selling author, Victor J. Stenger says, "The problem of evil remains the most powerful argument against God."¹ Many evangelical philosophers and theologians have embraced the skeptic's notion. E. J. Carnell, theologian and former president of Fuller Seminary, believed the problem of evil was "the most stimulating challenge to the logic of the Christian faith."² John Frame, theologian and professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, asserts the problem of evil is "the most serious and cogent objection that unbelievers have brought against Christian theism."³ William Lane Craig, a notable Christian apologist, agrees: "Undoubtedly the greatest intellectual obstacle to belief in God—for both the Christian and the

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non-Christian—is the so-called problem of evil.”⁴

Kelly James Clark goes even further by alleging,

The problem of evil is the most formidable and apparently intractable obstacle to belief in God, and it is easy to see why. It is difficult to imagine that God could exist given the various kinds and amounts of evils that exist in the world today....there still seems to be too much evil for God to exist.”⁵

Several Christian philosophers undermine the sufficiency of Scripture on this issue by asserting that “the Bible...does not explicitly reveal why God allows [evil].”⁶ Bickel and Jantz allege Christians “don’t have some kind of special insight into the mind of God and know what His purpose is.”⁷ That blatantly contradicts the Bible which says, “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). The highly influential and popular theologian, N. T Wright, similarly says the Bible does not give full answers to questions

like, What is evil? Why is there evil? Why is evil allowed to continue? And when will evil end? He goes on to say, “The Bible simply doesn’t appear to want to say what God can say about evil.”⁸ Sproul is equally disappointing when he alleges that “we cannot explain the existence of evil.”⁹ Craig says, “we are just so ignorant of God’s designs. We are simply not in a position to know why God permits various evils to occur,” and again, “we don’t know why God permits evil.”¹⁰ Evans and Manis are just as doubtful as they concede, “When all is said and done, it is difficult for the theist to be confident that she truly understands why God allows all the evil we find in the world.”¹¹ In contrast to such ill informed scholarly pessimism, this chapter will show that the Bible says otherwise: evil is not a problem for God. He has everything under control. “Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases” (Psalm 115:3). God is in control of all things, including evil, and He even has a plan for evil:

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“The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Proverbs 16:4). Scripture specifically, thoroughly and satisfactorily addresses the supposed problem of evil and as a result it is not the unassailable juggernaut against the faith that so many have been led to believe. Jay Adams was correct when he said,

The Christian is not left speechless; God *has* revealed Himself concerning this matter. And, He has done so unequivocally, satisfyingly. The problem is not stated properly. It should be put this way: when God has given an unmistakably clear and sufficient reply to such questions, why do theologians persist in saying that He has not? Why do they go through the foot shuffling routine only to hem and haw about a fact that is plain as the way of salvation itself? The answer, I am afraid, is that they are so

heavily loaded with humanism that they are either blinded to the truth, or, understanding it, refuse to teach it out of fear of what others may say.¹²

The Problem Stated

The problem of evil has been articulated in many ways for thousands of years, from the days of the ancient Greek deist, Epicurus (341-270 BC), to the Enlightenment era, by the eighteenth-century Scottish skeptic, David Hume, to today, from the likes of the crude atheist-comedian, Bill Maher. The problem of evil simply asks, “If God is absolutely good, then why is there evil?” It has been expressed axiomatically as follows:

1. If God is all-powerful, then He would prevent evil.
2. If God is all-good, then He would desire to prevent evil.
3. But there is evil.

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4. Therefore, there is no all-powerful, all-good God.

Said another way, if God really exists, wills only good and is powerful enough to get everything He wills, then evil would not exist. But evil does exist, therefore God is either impotent, not good or does not exist at all. So goes the skeptic's most potent syllogism.

Proposed Solutions

Virtually every belief system has tangoed with the problem of evil. Five classic approaches prevail as options for wrestling with this longstanding philosophical canard. First, there is *atheism* which says evil is real but God is not. Second, there is *pantheism* which says God is real but not all-good. Third, there is *naturalism* in its various forms which says that God is not all-powerful. This is the view of process theology, Open Theism, liberation theology and its ilk. This was the view of the highly popular book by Harold Kushner,

When Bad Things Happen to Good People. The liberal Jewish rabbi concluded: “There are some things God does not control....can you learn to love and forgive Him despite His limitations?”¹³ Fourth, there is *idealism* that says evil is not real, but God is. This includes religious systems like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christian Science and various New Age beliefs. Fifth and finally is *theism*, or Christianity in particular, that affirms that God is all-powerful and all-good while evil exists. All three realities are true and are not mutually exclusive or contradictory to each other. Option five is the only viable option as will be shown from the Bible.

There is Evil

Christians are realists about the problem of evil. The world is rife with pain, evil and suffering. And it is manifest in many horrific ways. Man’s self-inflicted inhumanity towards each other abounds. Senseless random acts of violence are reported daily in the news. Hatred, prejudice,

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rape, murder, theft, child abuse and countless other acts of violence are universal, transcending cultural boundaries. Diseases, cancer and bodily deformities are commonplace, many of which defy explanation or justification like babies born with chronic birth defects, being deaf, blind or having defective limbs or inadequate life-sustaining organs. Natural disasters—earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, floods, fires, famine and the like—plague the world, claiming the lives of countless millions. How do Christians account for all this misery? How can the Bible explain this horror? Why does God sit back and let all this happen?

The first observation to note is that skeptics usually raise the issue of the “problem of evil” as though it’s an issue that Christians have never thought of before. Supposedly for us theists, the problem of pain and suffering is an afterthought...or we’ve actually never considered the issue at all. The anti-theist says, “A hah!

Gotcha on that one.” Contrary to their ignorance, the Bible is actually a book about pain and suffering—that is actually one of Scripture’s major themes. God and the Bible are experts on pain, suffering and evil. Examples of it abound from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible details the following real-life horrific historical events: the first murder in human history (Genesis 4:8), Lamech the first serial killer (Genesis 4:23), a universal flood that killed all living beings on earth save eight people (Genesis 7:23), war (Genesis 14:2), theft (Genesis 14:11), kidnapping (Genesis 14:12), gang rape (Genesis 19), prostitution (Genesis 38), famine (Genesis 41:54), slavery (Exodus 1:11), infanticide (Exodus 1:16), homicidal bodily dismemberment (Judges 19), a crippled child (2 Samuel 4:4), forty-two children mauled by two vicious bears (2 Kings 2:24), a sudden tornado that killed an entire family (Job 1:19), a baby born blind (John 9:1), a stillborn child (Psalm 58:8), a mother dying while giving

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birth (Genesis 35:19), sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts that kill one fourth of the earth's population (Revelation 6:8), countless earthquakes and more. The Bible is no stranger to evil, pain and suffering. Actually, the Bible is the authority on the matter.

Shaky Ground

Antagonists to Christianity say that the religion of the Bible and the reality of the problem of evil cannot co-exist, for they are mutually exclusive. But the problem of evil as typically stated is technically not a logical contradiction or in conflict with the Christian worldview. Saying so doesn't make it so. This is true for two reasons. First of all, for something to be a logical contradiction, it must be internally inconsistent, not simply be in conflict with another view. In this case, the atheist says that the Christian view of God is in conflict with the atheist's view of evil. That is not a contradiction. One view may simply be wrong. Christianity and the Bible allow

for evil and a good and omnipotent God to co-exist. Therefore there is no internal inconsistency.

Second, the atheist's traditional anti-theistic assertion is actually based on other implied, unspoken assumptions or presuppositions that are left out of the syllogism. As a result, on the surface the argument seems to be impervious to attack, and hence the smokescreen of the argument continues to daze, choke and even intimidate Christians. But the skeptic's presupposed, unstated auxiliary assumptions need to be exposed. These assumptions include the following:

1. The atheist's definition of "evil" is the correct one and must be accepted.
2. The atheist's definition of "good" is the correct one and must be accepted.
3. The atheist's definition of "God" is the correct one and must be accepted.
4. Evil has always existed.
5. God cannot use evil for good purposes.

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6. Evil will always exist.
7. The only attributes of God that are relevant are His goodness and power.

We will see from Scripture that these unstated assumptions that serve as the latent foundation and scaffolding for the historic problem of evil are fallacious, and as a result the argument collapses upon closer scrutiny. The skeptic's argument is based on a plurality of implied erroneous definitions (1-3) and wrong views of origins (premise 4), destiny (premise 6), and theology (premises 5 and 7). In other words, the atheist has an errant view of reality.

Who's Framing the Debate?

My daughter was on the debate team. I was her coach. One key to winning debates is to try to get your opponent to accept your premise. If you can frame the discussion, establish the rules and the definitions, and get your enemy to accept all the terms—you'll win. That is what atheists and

skeptics have successfully been able to do for centuries with the problem of evil—they typically get Christians to accept their premise, buy into all their definitions and lull them into limiting the argument to the parameters of their tri-fold, concocted syllogism. And in the end, in many cases, Christians think there is no answer to the age-old problem of evil.

Instead, Christians need to reject the atheist's trap. How can believers allow atheists to define "evil" and "good"? Atheists have no ultimate standard by which to define these terms. Worse still, how can atheists tell us what God is like? They define God by saying He is limited to two (or sometimes three)¹⁴ attributes: goodness (or love) and omnipotence (or power). That is not an accurate view of God, but a truncated, unbiblical, warped and blasphemous view of God. God is more than just goodness and omnipotence.

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Here is the atheist's equation of what constitutes God:

$$\text{GOD} = \heartsuit + \img alt="flexing arm" data-bbox="555 135 585 160"/>$$

But God is much more than this myopic depiction. So from the beginning we need to expose the hidden presuppositions and assumptions of the atheist, critique his false definitions of “evil,” “good,” and “God,” and counter his trite syllogism with the full arsenal of the composite truth on the matter as revealed so richly in Scripture.

~1~

DEFINING EVIL

We begin in this chapter by defining “evil.” To call something evil is to make a moral judgment. To make a moral judgment, one must have a moral standard. To enforce your moral standard on someone else, the standard must be universal. The atheist rejects a universally binding standard of morality. The atheist lives in an amoral world—there is no such thing as evil. Therefore, the atheist’s “problem of evil” syllogism makes no sense, for he cannot make judgments about what is “good” or “evil.”

Accommodating the Skeptic

When engaged in such controversial and sensitive matters, clear definitions need to be established as a

basis of fruitful dialogue between clashing viewpoints. Most books I have read by Christian philosophers trying to tackle the problem of evil fail to carefully define just what evil is from a biblical point of view. Many just concede with the atheist, acknowledging, “Yes, evil is real and it is bad,” and leave evil undefined. A good example is Greg Bahnsen, the late presuppositionalist, who, in his chapter on the problem of evil, never defines what evil is; rather he just acknowledges that it exists.¹

Defining Evil Without the Bible

Other traditional apologists, in an attempt to create neutral ground with the atheist or unbeliever, typically try to define evil apart from religion or God. Geisler defines evil with the medieval concept of Aquinas and other Catholic theologians by saying it is “a lack or privation of what ought to be present and is not.”² Groothuis says, “evil is ‘privation’ of the good.”³ Powell says, “evil is where good should be but is not.”⁴ In the same vein, N. T. Wright says evil is a “moral black hole.”⁵ Craig and Moreland

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equate evil with “pain and suffering...in the world.”⁶ Kreeft says, “evil is not a thing. Things are not evil in themselves...Evil is...not an entity...[evil is]...disordered love, disordered will.”⁷ Evans says evil is “pain and suffering of any kind.”⁸ Some confound the matter by never defining evil at all, but rather speaking presumptuously about it relative to the problem of evil.⁹

All these definitions are woefully deficient. The greatest deficiency is that they are all missing God and the Bible in the equation—as a result, ironically, their definitions are therefore “a”-theistic in a technical sense. Kreeft says “things are not evil” and evil “is not an entity.”¹⁰ Really? What about all those Bible verses where God and Jesus call all kinds of people evil? “Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished” (Proverbs 11:21). Men are evil—they are things and entities. Jesus said, “the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil” (Luke 6:45). Christian apologist, Dean Hardy, defines evil as “simply something missing that the

thing is expected to have.”¹¹ This is even more obtuse. Based on this vacuous definition he is able to assert that inanimate things can be evil. He avers, “a chair that is missing a leg is evil. A car without an engine is evil.”¹² Then in an inexplicable, bizarre twist of logic he goes on to say, “you cannot have a fully evil entity. Even Satan is not completely evil! He does have a few good qualities.”¹³ Satan—the destroyer, deceiver and accuser of the brethren; the father of lies and the destroyer of souls; the primary occupant of the place of eternal damnation called eternal hell—is not totally evil and has good qualities? Do not be deceived: Jesus categorically pronounced the utterly intrinsic, and repugnant nature of Satan by saying the devil “was a murderer from the beginning...there is no truth in him” (John 8:44). The devil is incorrigible and eternally condemned.

Another basic point needs to be made about evil and God. The Bible in a sense is a book about evil. Evil is mentioned in every book of the Bible, from

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Genesis to Revelation. God is well aware of the reality of evil and has a plan for it. Evil is illustrated, defined, highlighted, condemned, and counteracted time after time. The Bible goes into graphic detail, delineating the worst kinds of evils imaginable, from murder, to rape, to slavery, to genocide, to every kind of natural disaster. An entire, long book was written about the problem of evil and suffering—Job. The whole theme of the Bible is “Evil, and How God Intends to Eradicate it in His Perfect Time.” It is not like the atheist has caught the Christian—or God—off guard by raising the topic of evil as though it is some afterthought to biblical religion.

God Defines Evil in Scripture

To satisfactorily address this issue, a clear biblical definition of evil needs to be delineated. God defines what evil is. Evil is what God says is evil (2 Chronicles 21:6). Evil is anything contrary to God’s nature, will or Word (Psalm 119:9-11). Sin is the greatest evil. Scripture says, “He is pure...sin is

lawlessness” (1 John 3:3-4). The only way we can know what is evil today is by understanding what Scripture defines as evil. Without Scripture, trying to define evil becomes a futile exercise in relative ethics. Apart from Scripture we could not know whether anything was evil. For example, secular humanists would say, “Yes we can. Killing, war, floods and earthquakes are all evil.” The Bible says that is not true. Not all killing is evil. God killed the whole world save eight people with a worldwide flood (Genesis 7:23). God sent ten plagues against the wicked Egyptians, including the plague of death, where God Himself went out at midnight and killed the first born in all the homes of the Egyptians (Psalm 105:36). Scripture says the proper response to God for doing this is one of celebration, not repulsion: “Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; speak of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name” (Psalm 105:2-3). Jesus will kill His enemies when He returns at His second coming (Revelation 19:15-21)—that is not evil; that is good, righteous, and

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deserved. Not all war is evil. The Bible says, “There is a time for war” (Ecclesiastes 3:8). At the end of the age Jesus will make war with His enemies (Revelation 20:7-10; Psalm 2); believers will celebrate and rejoice in God’s victory over His enemies. Not all earthquakes are evil: God killed Korah and all his relatives in an earthquake in Numbers 16:31-34.

We cannot resort to sheer human reason, conscience, natural law, the laws of logic, or common sense to define evil or define good. And we especially can’t allow unbelievers to define evil for us as they dictate the conversation. Using only human reason, would we tell Abraham to kill his son as a sacrifice (Genesis 22), or tell Moses to execute a man for gathering sticks on a Sabbath (Numbers 15), or command Israelites to slaughter thousands of innocent animals and spread and sprinkle their blood all over (Leviticus 16)? Or, what about the ultimate example of pain and suffering...hell? Hell is a real place of physical,

conscious suffering, torment, and isolation, worse than anything ever experienced in the present life (Luke 16:19-31). Yet the Bible says hell is deserved for those who go there (Revelation 20:11-15). Hell was created by God (Matthew 25:41) and is ruled by God (Matthew 10:28). Many people will go there (Matthew 7:13) along with the devil and his angels. Jesus talked about the awfulness and the reality of hell. He called it a place of “judgment” and “fire” (Matthew 5:22), “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:30). Hell will last forever (Matthew 25:46). And somehow God will be glorified by hell’s existence (Revelation 14:9-11), “for true and just are His judgments” (Revelation 19:1-2). God’s definition of what is good and bad often differs from man’s perspective. Jesus warns that having a man-centered perspective, rather than a God-centered one, is satanic (Matthew 16:23).

Relative Evil

Left to human reason apart from Scripture, humanity is awash in relative ethics on any given

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issue. Consider the institution of marriage and intimacy for example. The Koran allows a man to marry up to four women¹⁴ and condones beating them¹⁵ if deemed necessary. This is considered to be “good” by traditional Muslims. Hindus say abstaining from intimacy with your wife is best, and Catholic priests say not getting married is the highest virtue. Mormons say they’ll be married for eternity in heaven, and today’s America says gay is OK. In contrast, God’s Word says it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18) and marriage is God-ordained, monogamous, permanent, intimate, heterosexual (Genesis 2:22-24) and an earthly picture of Christ’s eternal relationship to His precious Bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:22-32). Defining morality and ethics apart from God’s thoughts in Scripture is hazardous and misleading. Using relative human standards, Hindus say the pig is an ancestor, the vegetarian says pork is evil, the orthodox Jew says pigs are unclean, but Jesus, in Scripture (Acts 10:13), told Peter, “Well done,

and pass the barbeque sauce!” How liberating Scripture is.

Categories of “Evil”

When addressing the problem of evil, Scripture needs to drive the conversation and the definitions, starting with what is truly evil and what is the source of evil. According to the Bible, what humans typically call evil comes from five sources:

- (1) the very nature of man;
- (2) sinful activities of humans;
- (3) natural disasters;
- (4) satanic and demonic activity;
- (5) the decrees and activities of God.

We need to be careful here because many of the events that the world may define as evil may actually result from points 3) and 5) which are not always actually evil. God used earthquakes in the Old Testament (Numbers 16:31-35) and He will use

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them at the end of the age to accomplish His perfect will (Revelation 16:17-19). As has been shown, God issues decrees of war, capital punishment and the like which are righteous acts of justice, and are not evil.

The only legitimate way to address the question of “God and evil” is from a biblical perspective. But historically the topic is typically confronted on strictly philosophical grounds—this is true even among Christians as well as secularists. Gordon Clark, for example, addressed this dilemma in his classic book on apologetics, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, from a Reformed and Calvinistic perspective. Yet, in his nearly fifty-page dissertation, Bible verses are elusory as he tackles the subject from primarily a philosophical and historical vantage point instead of an expositional and exegetical one.¹⁶ The same is true for Craig¹⁷ and Evans.¹⁸ But it is the Bible, not man, that must define evil if we are going to truly address this issue.

LETTING THE BIBLE DEFINE GOD

After defining evil from a biblical point of view, we now must define “God” from a biblical point of view. Letting atheists like Stenger define God for us with the formula “God = love + power” is fallacious. When confronting the problem of evil, traditional apologists typically go with the paired down definition of God in trying to defend Christianity. They usually say that the greatest good is to love God.

What God Wants

But there are other requirements equally important to God. He also wants us to fear Him (Ecclesiastes 12:13) and worship Him (Luke 4:8), in addition to loving Him. And those actions are distinct,

although they can envelope each other. We should love our fellow man, as we are commanded (Mark 12:31), but we are not to fear man (Proverbs 29:25), nor are we to worship man (Exodus 20:4-5). But we are to fear and worship God. According to the Bible the greatest good is to know God and give Him glory, technically speaking. Jesus said, “And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Conversely, the people that Jesus will condemn at the end of the age by casting them into hell are those whom He did not know: “And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS’” (Matthew 7:23). So the greatest good is to know God.

When God created humanity His ultimate goal was to create people with the greatest capacity to know Him, which entails revealing the fullness of His character so humans can know Him in the most personal, intimate and comprehensive way (1

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Corinthians 13:12). This means God's intention is for us to know Him for who He truly is, in His fullness, in light of all of His attributes (Ephesians 1:17-18), and in response to worship and glorify Him. And His attributes are manifold. He wants us to know Him fully so we can worship Him accurately. Jesus said the Father is seeking true worshippers, who will worship "in...truth" (John 4:24). Knowing God means knowing Him truthfully, for who He truly is, which includes knowing Him in light of all of His virtues.

God has More than Two Attributes

Many people say they worship a God of love, but reject the idea of a God who is jealous and full of wrath. When addressing the problem of evil, traditional apologists are virtually silent about God's wrath being relevant. As a matter of fact, they usually apologize for God's wrath. But the Bible is clear—God's wrath is fundamental to His nature and all He does and allows needs to be seen through the prism of His retributive acts of

holiness, in addition to all of His attributes. In Nahum God says, “A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies” (1:2). In Deuteronomy God gives His own biography, saying, “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god beside Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal...I will take vengeance on My adversaries and will repay those who hate Me” (32:39, 41; ESV).

We must love and worship God for who He is, and He is a God of wrath just as much as He is a God of love and omnipotence. This is why the traditional syllogism for the problem of evil is flawed—it’s a red herring of the first order. It defines God as being only good and all-knowing. That is a deficient, unbiblical view of God.

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Remember the atheist's anemic equation for God:

$$\text{GOD} = \heartsuit + \img alt="muscle icon" data-bbox="548 138 578 162"/>$$

Contrast that with the real biblical equation for who God is: God is personal (Exodus 3:14), good (Psalm 136:1), love (1 John 4:8), gracious (Nehemiah 9:17), merciful (Psalm 145:8), forgiving (Numbers 14:18), compassionate (Deuteronomy 4:31), a spirit (John 4:24), infinite (1 Kings 8:27), immutable (James 1:17), imminent (Acts 17:27), transcendent (1 Timothy 6:16), omnipotent (Genesis 35:11), omniscient (Psalm 139:1-6), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-12), independent (Psalm 115:3), self-sufficient (Acts 17:25), triune (2 Corinthians 13:14), one (Deuteronomy 6:4), holy (Isaiah 6:3), righteous (Deuteronomy 32:4), jealous (Nahum 1:2), wrathful (Nahum 1:6), eternal (Isaiah 9:6) and sovereign (Isaiah 46:10; Romans 8:28). To know God is to know God experientially in light of

all these characteristics that are intrinsic to His nature.

God Uses Evil

This brings us to the problem of evil. How could we ever know God as a forgiving, gracious, merciful saving God if we have never experienced His forgiveness through salvation? How could we have ever experienced His salvation without ever sinning? The angels are creatures of God who have volition, the ability to choose, but they have never experientially come to know God's mercy and grace through salvation. They don't know God in the same capacity that forgiven saints know God. We know Him in a fuller sense. That's why Scripture says angels look from on high, scratching their heads, or wings, trying to figure out this salvation and forgiveness thing, because they have never experienced it (1 Peter 1:12).

So why did God create a world with the potential for sin and evil? He did so to fully reveal His character and so that we could come to know

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Him experientially as a loving, powerful, merciful and holy God. This is exactly what God tells us in Romans 9. “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?” (9:22).

God created a world with the potential for sin and evil to “demonstrate His wrath.” He desired to put His holy wrath on display. Wrath is one of God’s basic attributes. It flows from His holiness. He is perfect and sinless and cannot tolerate evil and must punish it (Ezekiel 18:4; Habakkuk 1:13). The outworking of His holiness against sin is His wrath. Without the existence of sin and evil we would never come to know God as a holy God of wrath. Similarly, God desired “to make His power known.” He wanted to put His power on display before His creatures. What power? His power to punish and overcome evil. That’s why He created people and angels who have the capacity to choose evil. The existence of evil beings like Pharaoh

(Romans 9:17) and Satan (Matthew 25:41) allows God to demonstrate His power of justice as He overcomes them and ultimately punishes them with death and eternal hell (Psalm 105:26-45; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:13-15). Hence the inspired proverb: “The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Proverbs 16:4).

Those are attributes of God’s justice. He also created a world with the potential for sin and evil to display His attributes of grace: “And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory” (Romans 9:23). God’s “glory” is mentioned twice in this verse. God’s glory refers to the full manifestation of all His combined attributes (Revelation 21:23). The positive, gracious attribute highlighted here is God’s “mercy.” God allowed a world of sin and evil so that He could rescue helpless sinners and thus prove Himself to be a merciful, saving God. Mercy

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refers to the act when God withholds punishment against those who deserve it. Every person who sins deserves death and hell (Romans 3:23). Because God is gracious and loving, He has chosen to be merciful to undeserving sinners by saving them from His holy wrath and punishment in hell. If humans were created without the potential of sin, they would never experience God in His fullness as a forgiving, merciful, gracious saving God. They would not know God in His fullness.

Jesus addressed this issue as well. There was a very sinful woman who came to believe in Christ and showed her adoration by washing His feet with her tears and her hair and kissing His feet. Yet Simon, a self-righteous Pharisee, despised the woman's unrestrained and unsophisticated expression of love. Simon thought it was embarrassing. Jesus rebuked Simon telling Him that the woman had a greater capacity for loving and worshipping Christ in light of all the sin she once had that was now forgiven. Unlike Simon, the

woman now had a greater sensitivity to the heinousness of her sin and as a result she experienced a deeper sense of Christ's love, mercy and grace. Jesus concluded: "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47). Why did God create a world with the potential for sin and evil? So He could reveal His true character through all of His attributes including His holiness, power and mercy. None of those attributes could be known experientially by humans without having been saved and forgiven of sin by God. This reality allows us to know God for who He is and as a result allows us to love and worship Him to the greatest degree. And all this is for His glory alone (Ephesians 1:14) and because of His good pleasure (Colossians 1:19).

~3~

TRADITIONAL RESPONSES TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The Inadequacy of Human Wisdom

Traditional apologetics has put much ink to paper grappling with the problem of evil. There seems to be a consensus that a cumulative case of compelling reasons have been proposed to serve as an adequate rebuttal to the problem. Some helpful suggestions have been made, but too often anemic solutions are offered in lieu of the most compelling ones. This results from Christian apologists who try to address the issue using human wisdom instead of God's wisdom. Christian apologist Winfried Corduan is a typical example. In his apologetics book, *Reasonable Faith*,

he spends twenty-three pages grappling with the problem of evil but never uses the Bible to diagnose or offer solutions to the supposed dilemma.¹ He relies strictly on raw, human wisdom. Similarly, William Lane Craig devotes an entire chapter in his book, *Hard Questions*, to solving the problem of evil using only human wisdom and no Bible. Amazingly, he concludes the chapter by confidently alleging that logic and philosophy have finally dispelled the challenge posed by the problem of evil: “I’m extremely pleased to report to you that after centuries of discussion, contemporary philosophy has come to recognize...that the logical problem of evil has been solved.”² Wow, case closed! I don’t think so. Carl Henry diagnosed this oft-repeated problem by Christian philosophers and theologians accurately: “Not even theistic arguments can fully vindicate God’s righteousness in the face of human evil if they appeal simply to empirical

considerations or to philosophical reasoning devoid of revelational illumination.”³

The Free Will Theory

The most common argument given by Christians in response to the problem of evil is philosophical and anthropocentric, or man-centered. It is the argument based on the preservation of the free will of man. It posits that the greatest good in the universe is the infinite God. And the greatest experience we can have as finite beings is to have a loving relationship with God. For that reason, God offers all people His love; it is God’s love that defines humanity and makes people complete.

Conversely, the greatest evil imaginable for humans is being separated from God’s love. However, before we can enter into a real loving relationship with God, we must first be truly free to either choose or reject His love, for true love is always persuasive and never coercive. Therefore, the paramount virtue of any loving relationship is

freedom—the ability to choose. In light of this logic, Geisler concludes, “In order for God to make a universe where the greatest good (a loving relationship with Him) was feasible, He would also have to create free creatures who would be capable of choosing or rejecting the greatest good.”⁴ The idea is that God could not have created a world where people could freely choose to love Him without also having the free choice to reject His love, which is the greatest evil. If God created people with the ability to only choose His love and with no ability to choose evil then they would not be humans—they would be robots or animals. As a result, Geisler *et al*, reason, “There is no way to create a world where people are free to love God in order to experience the greatest good but are not free to reject God’s love—the greatest evil.”⁵ This is also one of C. S. Lewis’ main arguments against the problem of evil—the preservation of human freedom: “The happiness which God designs for

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His creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other.”⁶ Lewis goes on to say that God even took a “risk” to create a free people who might choose to do evil and reject His love. Charles Colson uses this line of reasoning, concluding that, “Free will is the basis of our human dignity.”⁷ But that simply is not true. The basis of human dignity is the image of God (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

A chorus of other Christian theologians sing a similar refrain on the matter. Powell chimes in, saying, “for God to destroy evil would ultimately be evil itself since it would take away the greatest good—the ability to love God.”⁸ Similarly, John Feinberg conjectures that if God eliminated the possibility of evil then humans would be deprived of morality and volition and “He would have to contradict His intentions to create man and the world as He has.”⁹ Hardy argues God allowed evil because if He didn’t then God would have had to “create a deterministic world where agents

would not have true free choice and God would make the choices for them.”¹⁰ Kreeft and Tacelli say God created humans with the ability to choose evil, otherwise “that would have been a world without humans, a world without hate but also without love. Love too proceeds only from free will.”¹¹ They go on: God “could not have created a world in which there is genuine human freedom and yet no possibility of sin, for our freedom includes the possibility of sin within its own meaning.” Bickel and Jantz echo the same mantra: “what is the highest good for all free beings? It’s love (Matthew 22:36-40), which is impossible without freedom.”¹² Plantinga makes a similar contention.¹³ Craig also sings the classic Arminian refrain here: “If God grants people genuine freedom to choose as they like, then it is impossible for Him to determine what their choices will be.”¹⁴

The Bible on Free Will

Ironically, what is purported to be the strongest

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argument to counter the problem of evil actually creates many more problems in the process. The priority of preserving free will may pacify those with Arminian proclivities, but scripturally this view falls short. First of all, the free will view says that God could not have created a world without evil because that eliminates human volition. I have some follow-up questions for that view: (1) Do saints in heaven have volition or the ability to make real choices? (2) Can saints in heaven sin? Scripture is clear—people in heaven have free will and make real choices (Revelation 21:24-27). And the Bible also makes it clear that saints in heaven will never choose to sin (1 John 3:2; Revelation 21:8). The absence of evil does not automatically negate true humanity or volition. So the above assertions by these theologians and philosophers stand on a faulty premise. Contrary to what they say, it is possible for there to be a world where true humans (possessing genuine volition) exist with the ability to make free choices while at the

same time it will be impossible for them to choose evil. That world is called heaven. And Scripture says that God is even going to create a new earth in the future where that reality will be the rule for free, loving humans:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband....And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying or pain; the first things have passed away (Revelation 21:1-2, 4).

Another question the free will advocates must answer is as follows: If people can live in heaven with a real free will and yet never choose to sin,

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then why didn't God create people in a heavenly glorified state in the first place? If Adam is in heaven now, has a will, and never chooses to sin, then why did God allow him to go through the phase of temptation, sin, suffering and death the first time around on earth? Why not just create him from the get-go in a perfected heavenly state? The answer is because when God created Adam and Eve the first time in Genesis 1 and 2, that was not God's ideal. This is what free will apologists posit—the world God created in Genesis 1 and 2 is the best possible world God could create. Such a view is shortsighted. Adam and Eve were created sinless, but not perfect in the ultimate sense. God's creation in the beginning was "good" (Genesis 1:10) and even "very good" (1:31), but not yet in the ideal glorified state God ultimately intends.

Adam and Eve were created without sin, but they were created with vulnerabilities. Frame is incorrect when he says, "Adam was not created

morally immature.”¹⁵ Although originally sinless, Adam and Eve were still vulnerable to temptation, sin, compromise and death (Genesis 3). They were not yet “perfected” in the eschatological sense (Romans 8:23; Revelation 20:5-6). Some theologians mistakenly assert that God’s ideal for humanity is Genesis 1 and 2. Van Til gave that impression when he said Christ came, “to restore what man...was in paradise.”¹⁶ But that is erroneous. God’s ideal for humanity is not Genesis 1 and 2, but rather Revelation 21 and 22. Some would have us believe that God intends to bring us back to the original garden. But God’s ideal for humanity is not to become pre-Fall humanity all over again, but rather to become resurrection humanity. Jesus declared, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are

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sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:34-36).

Paul discusses this reality as well in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul says Adam’s original physical body was “natural,” “weak,” and not God’s ultimate ideal. Rather, the resurrection body after the likeness of the glorified Christ is God’s ideal:

All flesh is not the same....There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies....So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body* (15:39-44).

God’s ultimate goal for believers is to bring them to full glory (Romans 8:30). That glory is

replicated after the model of Jesus' glorious, physical resurrection body (Philippians 3:20-21). Jesus achieved His glorious resurrection status through the path of suffering, pain, evil, sorrow and death (Matthew 16:21; Philippians 2:5-11). And it is God's eternal, divine, wonderful plan of the ages to bring humanity to ultimate, Christ-like glory through the refining fire of the toils of suffering (Hebrews 2:9-10). So why did God and why does God continue to allow evil and suffering in the world? One reason is that God has chosen to use it, according to His incomparable wisdom, to accomplish His perfect plan for humanity—perfected resurrection glory.

Another defect in the free will view has to do with defining freedom. To say that humans have free will is a misnomer. At best humans have "freedom on a leash." To say that the essence of humanity is absolute freedom or that God prizes man's volition over all else is overstating the case. We reject Geisler's axiom that says, "to stop evil,

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God must stop free will, and to stop free will is to stop the greatest good—which is the greatest evil.”¹⁷ Man’s freedom is limited and even thwarted in many ways. Our freedom is inhibited and limited by Satan. God allowed Satan to torture Job and his family against Job’s free will: “the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power’” (Job 1:12). Our freedom is further limited by our finitude, by our contingency as dependent beings, by the fallen world we live in and by indwelling sin. Sinners aren’t free—we are slaves of sin. Jesus declared, “Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is the slave of sin” (John 8:34). Even as a Christian Apostle, Paul lamented the reality of indwelling sin that hampered his ability to make his desired free choices: “the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish” (Romans 7:19). So much for free will.

A final contention against the free will view is

that it is hedonistic and anthropocentric instead of theocentric and doxological. The overriding emphasis in this view is all on man—man’s choices, man’s happiness, man’s consequences, man’s relational capacities. Biblically speaking, the emphasis needs to be on God—His purposes, His goal, His will, His glory.

One of the clearest examples of the problem of evil illustrated in the Bible is in John 9. As Jesus was ministering in Jerusalem He came across a man born blind (9:1). A baby born blind is the quintessential poster-child for the atheist’s problem of evil scenario. Babies are helpless, innocent, harmless, fragile—why would a good God allow a baby to be born into the world blind?

This is a real dilemma and even Jesus’ disciples struggled with this painful reality. They actually had a proposed solution which they offered to Jesus in the form of a question. They asked Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that

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he should be born blind?” (9:2). They basically had an illegitimate and myopic man-made religious solution to the problem of evil. They in effect were saying, “This man was born blind as a baby because he had bad karma or his parents had bad karma—he deserved to be born blind.” The disciples’ diagnosis was grossly off base. They no doubt inherited that view from their religious teachers, the Pharisees, who later on in the chapter say the same thing, in effect, directly to the man born blind: “You were born entirely in sins” (9:34).

Jesus corrects the disciples’ pragmatic, shortsighted, man-centered view of the problem of evil. In response, Jesus proclaimed one of the most profound utterances ever declared by saying, “*It was* neither *that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* in order that the works of God might be displayed in him” (9:3). What was “the work of God” to be displayed? It was when Jesus, the God-Man, immediately after His

comment, healed the man born blind by restoring his sight (9:6-7)—a miracle unprecedented up until that moment (9:32). Jesus said that God allowed this man to be born blind for the sole purpose that God’s healing power would be put on display. In this case, God allowed evil, not to preserve man’s free will, but to glorify Himself. That is theocentric. That is doxological. That is the highest virtue. That is what Jesus clearly taught. Contrary to popular Christian apologist Doug Powell, who says, “the Bible...does not explicitly reveal why God allows” evil, Jesus clearly explained here why God allowed this evil. So one key answer to the question, “Why does a good, all powerful God allow evil?”¹⁸ is, “So that He can display His power over evil and as a result reveal His matchless glory.” Here’s where Van Til was refreshingly right on, going against the seven-hundred-year-old anthropocentric stronghold of traditional apologetics. He wrote: “[I]t was God’s will that sin should come into the world. He

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wished to enhance his glory by means of its punishment and removal.”¹⁹

~4~

THE REALITY AND SEVERITY OF THE FALL

The answer to the questions, “Why do people die? Why are there natural disasters? Why is there disease? Why is there pain and suffering?” is actually a simple one. The reason for all of these realities is that God cursed the earth at the time Adam and Eve sinned. All evil, pain, suffering, sorrow and tragedy are by-products of sin. This historical event is documented clearly in Genesis 3 and expounded upon throughout the rest of the Bible. This explanation is in stark contrast to the one given by traditional apologists like Dean Hardy who believes that “evil sometimes is merely an accidental by-product of good, and not necessarily a choice...humans can make free

good choices that result in evil.”¹ To Hardy, there is no direct correlation between evil and the Fall.

In the beginning God created the world out of nothing in six days (Genesis 1). The original creation was “very good” and without sin; all on earth was harmonious. Adam and Eve disobeyed and incurred the promised consequence of sin (2:17), namely death (Romans 6:23). A holy God must punish sin, and He did. Traditional apologists don’t like talking about the wrath of God in this context. Nevertheless, it’s at the heart of the issue. In His anger, God punished all of creation with a curse (3:14-19; 5:29; 8:21). God cursed the constitution of man, human relationships, nature, and the demon world. Since the Fall of Adam and Eve, God promised life would be characterized by “enmity” (3:15), “pain” (3:16), “toil” (3:17), hardship (3:18), and death (3:19).

God explains the effects and cause of the curse in the New Testament. Paul tells us the

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“sufferings of the present time” are a result of the curse, for “the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it” (Romans 8:18, 20). Why is there pain and suffering in the world? Because God cursed the creation. Why did He do this? As a punishment for sin. How long will the earth be cursed? Temporarily, for God cursed the earth “in hope, that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (8:20-21). God has a perfect plan; He’s the Author of history (Isaiah 46:9-10); He works all things together for good and in accord with His divine will (Romans 8:28). The curse will be terminated in the future, at the end of the age, because of the saving work of Jesus Christ, who is Savior of the world. Christ’s redeeming work on the cross had more than personal soteriological implications; it also had cosmic implications. Jesus created this universe

(Colossians 1:16) and He will also redeem this universe. At the end of the age, God declares, “there shall no longer be any curse” (Revelation 22:3).

The Fall was a Historical Event

One key reason traditional apologists struggle so much with the classic dilemma of the problem of evil is because so many of them deny the historicity and reality of Genesis 1-3, in whole or in part. This is where Cornelius Van Til was unique and at his best in establishing a solid foundation for apologetic methodology. He warned Evangelicals that if you compromise with the beginning (Genesis 1-3) then you concede the rest: “I have frequently argued...that the historicity of Christianity cannot be maintained unless the historicity of the Old Testament and in particular the historicity of the Genesis account be also maintained.”² Where did evil come from? Genesis is clear. Van Til goes on: “I hold sin to be that which the Confession and catechisms say

it is. This involves the historicity of the Genesis account.”³ He concludes, “I believe in the infallibility of the Bible. How could I believe in that unless I believed the historicity of the Genesis story.”⁴

Compromise Run Amuck

A literal view of Genesis 1-3 should be a basic litmus test for vetting Christian apologists’ views, theology and methodology. If scholars, theologians, philosophers or apologists botch the first chapter of Genesis and deny, marginalize or dismiss its literal historicity then that is a tell-tale sign that they are operating with a mangled hermeneutic. The preponderance of Christian apologists who have compromised in this area is startling. For example, Geisler says, “Most scientific evidence sets the age of the world at billions of years.”⁵ Similarly, J. P. Moreland speculates, “if science seems to point to a universe of several billions of years, it seems allowable to read Genesis in this light.”⁶ That’s

preposterous! No one can come to that conclusion reading Genesis at face value. These two Christian philosophers are basically saying, “Most secular, atheistic, humanistic, anti-biblical, Darwinian proponents tell us all their so-called invalidated hypotheses of origins suggest the world is billions of years old, and we believe the meaning of Scripture can be stretched to align with them.”

Everywhere he speaks William Lane Craig rejects the biblical perspective of a young earth, calling it naïve and not plausible, while wholeheartedly embracing the secular humanist’s notion that the universe is 13-plus billion years old. Kelly James Clark unabashedly embraces Darwinian theory with respect to the origin of the universe and humanity, and therefore outright rejects the literal history of Genesis 1-3. In his discussion on the problem of evil, Clark claims Christians need to explain the way God acts “naturalistically,” using “the truth of evolutionary

theory.”⁷ This comes from a professing Christian apologist who claims he follows in the footsteps of Calvin! Tremper Longman, one of the most influential evangelical theologians today, goes so far as to say that Adam was not even a real person but a concept.⁸ Space does not allow a detailed exposé of all the other well known evangelicals who have compromised in this area over the years, including Bible scholars such as B. B. Warfield, Gleason Archer, James Montgomery Boice, Meredith Kline, Douglas Groothuis and Walt Kaiser, to name a few.⁹

By contrast, God (Genesis 2:16), Eve, Adam’s wife, Cain, Abel and Seth, Moses (Genesis 5:5), Job (Job 31:33), the prophet Hosea (Hosea 6:7), Paul’s companion Luke (Luke 3:38), the Apostle Paul (Romans 5:14), Jude, the half brother of Jesus (1:14), Jesus (Matthew 19), the Jews of Jesus’ day, and the Church for 1,800 years all believed Adam was a real man and that Genesis 1-3 was all history. Even Adam believed he was a

real man (Genesis 2:23). When one takes the same view as God, Jesus and the saints of the ages on Genesis, then the problem of evil has a rational historical context and a future with perfect resolution.

Hebrew scholar, Bill Barrick, sets the record straight on the importance of maintaining biblical fidelity in the area of origins with this powerful admonition:

... in spite of the revelatory nature of the biblical record, many evangelical scholars continue to give up valuable ground to secular scientists and liberal biblical critics. Evangelicals too often attempt to baptize secular and humanistic theories in evangelical waters without realizing that those theories and their methodologies have never been converted. While there are valuable kernels of truth buried within contemporary critical and so-called “scientific” studies, evangelicals must take

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great care to irradiate the material with the Word of God so as not to unknowingly and unintentionally introduce secularized thinking into the Church.¹⁰

God, Mystery and Evil

A basic common denominator between Arminian theologians and Christian philosophers is that they don't like mystery, and as a result tend to downplay mystery. They want to diffuse all apparent tension, paradoxes and antinomies from religion. This is especially true when they confront the problem of evil. To eradicate any tension or mystery when it comes to the problem of evil or the conflict between God's sovereignty and human responsibility they concoct man-made doctrines like "middle knowledge" (Craig), Open theism (Pinnock), Arminianism (Geisler), pre-evangelism (Schaeffer) and natural theology (Sproul). Erickson gives an impeccable diagnosis on the matter:

...natural theologians tend to be Arminian...Natural theologians assiduously avoid paradoxes and logical contradictions, considering them something to be removed by a more complete logical scrutiny of the issues under consideration. A paradox is a sign of intellectual indigestion; had it been more completely chewed, it would have disappeared.¹¹

They seem to be bothered by the fact that God knows more than they do. If a Christian makes any reference to “mystery” then that Christian is quickly labeled a “fideist,” a “mystic” or an “anti-intellectual.” This is a dangerous mistake. God is infinite; we are finite. God is perfect; we are fallen. God is omniscient, we are ignorant and see through a glass dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12). In this life we can only “know in part” and what we can know about ultimate realities are only the things that God has revealed (Matthew 16:17).

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God has not revealed everything to us: “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever” (Deuteronomy 29:29). All the major Christian doctrines have elements of “apparent” irresolvable mystery. This attests to God’s infinity and our humanity. “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter” (Proverbs 25:2). That’s mystery. This is good, not bad. God is smarter than me...I like that.

Too often philosophers are like five-year-old children, asking endless questions, and worse, demanding answers for every one of them. This is human pride. Not every question is a legitimate question, especially when it comes to the deep things of God and His unrevealed mysteries. That’s why in Romans 9, when an antagonist keeps questioning why God does what He does with respect to human free will versus His sovereign choices, God the Creator stops the inquisitor in his tracks with this resounding divine

rebuke:

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? (9:20-22).

It is blasphemous to question God about His behavior. He’s the one who has the right to ask the questions. Remember the book of Job, God’s divine answer to the problem of evil. The lesson at the end of the book is that God is the Almighty sovereign One: “Then the LORD said to Job, ‘Will the faultfinder contend with the

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Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it” (40:1-2). Job got the message. In the end he acknowledged his pathetic limitations in light of God’s infinite splendor: “Then Job answered the LORD, and said, ‘I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know” (42:1-3). In his wisdom Job conceded that there was mystery that defied human comprehension.

Jesus also illustrates that not every query is legitimate. Some questions are veiled, insincere attacks on God Himself. The Christ-hating Pharisees routinely asked Jesus questions in public for the sole purpose of making Him look foolish. They were “testing Him” (Matthew 19:3; cf. John 8:5-6). Their ongoing strategy was to ask Him trick questions so “they might trap Him in what He said” (22:15). Not every religious

question is a legitimate question. “Jesus perceived their malice, and said, ‘Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?’” (22:18). Like Jesus, Paul was aware of illegitimate questions and gave Timothy this warning: “But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels” (2 Timothy 2:23).

Romans 9-11 is the New Testament answer to the problem of evil and God concludes the discussion by saying: “For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?” (11:32-34). God chose to create a world that allowed for sin, evil and suffering. He did so based on His “wisdom.” This passage says His wisdom is “unsearchable” and “unfathomable.” Ultimately, all the intricacies and

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questions about the problem of evil are incomprehensible to the finite, fallen, ignorant human mind. That's why the Christian is called to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). God Himself has decreed that "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

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THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN PERSPECTIVE

We need the proper perspective on the problem of evil. We saw that everyone seems to believe it is the greatest dilemma confronting the Christian faith, but in reality the problem of evil is the trumped-up concoction of the professed atheist. Atheists are the super-minority in the world...a very small contingent. And the Bible speaks directly to atheists: “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God”” (Psalm 14:1a). The word “fool” in Psalms refers to someone who immoral and hostile to God’s will. That’s why Psalm 14:1b goes on to call professing atheists “corrupt” and “abominable.” Their so-called problem of evil is not really an intellectual problem but a moral and

spiritual one. The Bible says atheists know God exists: “that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them” (Romans 1:19). In others words, God created them with an innate, God-validating conscience. They can’t run away from or obliterate their conscience. But they can pervert and distort their conscience through repeated actions of willful rebellion. And that is precisely what the atheist does. That is why Paul goes on in Romans to expose the atheists’ true heart condition, saying,

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools (1:21-22).

Not all atheists or agnostics are neutral, faith-seeking nice guys who just need a logical answer to remove intellectual roadblocks to religion. The

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highly popular, best-selling atheist author, Richard Dawkins is one mean customer and proud of it. He brags: “I am attacking God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been or will be invented.”¹ Similarly, the blasphemous best-selling author, Christopher Hitchens, declares war against God and Christianity in his book with these fighting words: “It has become necessary to know the enemy, and to prepare to fight it.”²

All this does not mean we become dismissive of the problem of evil. I take the issue very seriously, but not for the same reasons the traditional apologists do. Traditional apologists say we need to answer the problem of evil because it is a bona fide stumbling block impeding unbelievers from coming to Christ. Kelly James Clark says the problem of evil is a barrier “to religious belief” for the unbeliever that “needs to be removed before one can see the light” of the gospel.³ But that is not true. There

are no prerequisites of greasing the slide before presenting the gospel (Acts 17:30). The problem of evil is not a barrier to belief for the atheist. Rather, it is an excuse (Romans 1:20). Jesus rendered the authoritative verdict on the matter: “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:19-20). Being an atheist is evil. Atheists reject the light of the gospel because they love their sin, not because of intellectual barriers to belief.

The problem of evil is actually more of a real problem and stumbling block for believers, not unbelievers and atheists. The existence of evil and unexplainable tragedies are real threats and challenges to the believer’s faith. The people asking questions about the perplexing matters of the problem of evil in the Bible come primarily

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from believers, not atheists. Moses wrestled with God over the problem of evil as God's people were brutalized by slavery under the ruthless Pharaoh of Egypt. Moses asked God, "O LORD, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh...he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all" (Exodus 5:22-23; ESV). When God's people got slaughtered by the Philistines at Ebenezer, the elders of Israel asked in despair, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?" (1 Samuel 4:3). After Job's ten children were tragically killed and his own body was ravaged with loathsome tumors, he asked God, "Why did I not die at birth?" (3:11; 21:1-34). The sons of Korah argued with God saying, "you have rejected us and disgraced us and have not gone out with our armies...Awake! Why are you sleeping, O LORD?" (Psalm 44:9, 23). David, who loved God, asked, "Why, O LORD, do you

stand afar off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” (Psalm 10:1). Asaph honestly reflected on the problem of evil in his day and admitted, “when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task” (Psalm 73:16; ESV). The Apostle Paul was wracked by the problem of evil in his own being. He lamented, “For the good that I want, I do not do but I practice the very evil that I do not want...evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good....Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:19, 21, 24). And future tribulation saints who will get beheaded for believing in Jesus cry out, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 6:10; ESV).

The faith of believers needs to be protected, bolstered and encouraged. Protecting the sheep is the primary job of the pastor and the Church

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(Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 3:15). And God has given us His sufficient Word, the Scriptures, to fulfill that task (2 Timothy 3:16-17). That is what I do as a pastor. I am fully committed to apologetics—but not primarily as a means of convincing atheists to believe in God, but for proclaiming the gospel and encouraging the faith of Christians, protecting them from the constant barrage of heresy, worldly ideologies, demonic doctrines, secular scientific theories and philosophical dilemmas that threaten to weaken and undermine their faith.

You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet

One supposed insurmountable stumbling block presented by the problem of evil dilemma is the amount of evil present in the world. Traditional apologists routinely give credence to this allegation. Regarding pain and suffering, Geisler asks, “why does God allow *so much* of it to exist in the world?”⁴ Christian philosopher, Kelly Clark, sympathizes with the atheist here when he says,

“It is difficult to imagine that God could exist given the various kinds and amounts of evils that exist in the world today.”⁵ But the Bible clearly teaches why there is so much evil in the world and even says that evil will grow exponentially worse as history moves forward. If people are having a hard time reconciling God’s existence in light of the current evil in the world, then this will only be exacerbated in light of God’s diagnosis of the future. Evil is going to go from bad to worse.

Jesus predicted that at the end of the age, as world history winds up, “there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall” (Matthew 24:21). This will be a time of unprecedented, universal, worldwide evil, death, destruction, natural disasters and tragedy like the world has never seen. Jesus said, “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes” (24:7). Hatred, murder and brutality

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will abound at an epic level (24:9-12). Paul echoes Jesus' sobering diagnosis of the future when he says, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents...without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited" (2 Timothy 3:1-4).

This is what the whole book of Revelation is about. It's a prophecy delineating the details of the devastating Great Tribulation (7:14) that God will inflict on the whole world. John describes it as "the hour of trial, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test earth-dwellers" (Revelation 3:10; author's translation). At the beginning of the Tribulation one fourth of the people on earth will be killed—by today's number that is almost two billion people (6:8). There will be cataclysmic natural disasters like never before (6:12). A third of the earth will be burned up, a third of the seas will be turned to

blood and a third of all rivers will be poisoned from meteors smashing to earth (8:7-11).

An evil dictator will rise to power, ruling the whole world with a ruthless iron fist (Revelation 13). He will consolidate and wield political and military power like none before him. His influence will be universal and his evil tyranny will make Hitler and Stalin look like pesky gnats. He will kill, maim and behead all who resist his will. The Old Testament says he will be, “dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong,” devouring, trampling and crushing all in his path (Daniel 7:7). The New Testament calls him “the man of lawlessness” and “the son of destruction” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He will exercise the supernatural power of Satan, performing miracles and false wonders, effectively leading the whole world astray into unmitigated and unparalleled wickedness (2:9-12). There will be no peace on earth (Revelation 6:4). Out of sheer fear, countless people will pursue suicide as a means of

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escape (Revelation 6:16). If you think evil abounds in the world now, then you ain't seen nothing yet.

How can we explain this coming worldwide, universal, cosmic reign of terror? The Bible says God is the one who will bring all this evil to the world. God inflicts wrath (Romans 3:5). Revelation says it's the expression of "the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16). Paul says that God will enact the horrors of the Great Tribulation "in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12). Revelation says it is a time of God's righteous wrath purposing to "destroy those who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18). God will use evil, moral and natural, to display His righteous holy character to the entire creation.

The proper response of Christians in the face of skeptics who drum up the problem of evil to deflect accountability of the truth needs to be

straightforward. Believers can't water down the reality of evil, but rather need to accentuate it in stark detail as the Bible does, using it to persuade unbelievers to flee from the wrath to come.

This is the urgency with which John the Baptist confronted unbelievers when he warned, "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). Jesus used the problem of evil as a means of calling sinners to repentance: "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will likewise perish" (Luke 13:4-5). Paul was motivated by the problem of evil to evangelize the lost: "knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). God Himself is not willing for

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any to perish but desires all to come to
repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

~6~

MAN'S GREATEST EVIL, GOD'S
GREATEST GOOD

The greatest act of evil in the history of the world was used by God to accomplish the greatest good ever achieved. In fact, God was overseeing the most egregious act of injustice known to man. God planned it in eternity past, He predicted it in the Old Testament, He orchestrated all the events leading up to it in the New Testament, and He carried out its execution to the bitter end.

Mel Gibson's 2004 film, *The Passion of the Christ*, became a public scandal. Although it brought in over \$600,000,000 worldwide, it was boycotted by standard American distribution companies, Hollywood elites, and even by a few countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain.

The controversy was over the question: “Who was responsible for Jesus’ death?” In Gibson’s film it was the Jewish leadership that spearheaded Christ’s death. As a result, Gibson was branded an anti-Semite. All the pundits chimed in with their opinions. Most suggested it was either the Romans, or Pilate, or Judas or the Sanhedrin who killed Jesus. Few, if any, in the public arena were consulting the Bible for the answer. But the Bible is clear on who was responsible for killing Jesus. Those responsible include the following: (1) the Jewish Sanhedrin (John 11:47-53), (2) Judas (John 18:1-3), (3) Herod (Acts 4:27), (4) Pilate (John 19:16), (5) the Roman soldiers (John 19:17-18, 23) and all sinners, including you and me (Isaiah 53:5). Christ’s execution was a corporate act.

Amidst the furious debate at the time of Gibson’s movie, one candidate was entirely left out of the discussion regarding whom had Christ executed—and that was God the Father. God was never associated with the betrayal, arrest,

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torture and death of Christ, the greatest act of evil humanity has ever known. Yet Scripture teaches that God the Father was in charge every step of the way. God planned Jesus' death in eternity past: "blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:19-20; cf. Revelation 13:8). God announced 4,000 years before His death that Jesus would be "wounded" (Genesis 3:15). One thousand years before the crucifixion, God said Jesus would be pierced in the hands and the feet (Psalm 22:16). God predicted 700 years before Christ that Jesus would be murdered by evil men even though He, Himself, would be absolutely innocent (Isaiah 53:9).

Not only did the Father plan Jesus' death in eternity past and predict it in the Old Testament, the Father was active in the death of Christ and even punished Jesus, His own Son, while Christ hung on the cross for nearly six hours. Isaiah

clearly says that God the Father was the One who punished Jesus on the cross: “Smitten of God, and afflicted...the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief” (53:4, 10). Smitten, afflicted, crushed...by God the Father Himself! Some evangelicals blatantly deny this key truth about the atonement. Many others misplace the emphasis of Christ’s sufferings either by overemphasizing the physical pain He endured or by saying he was passively abandoned by the Father. Tim Keller says at the cross Jesus experienced “cosmic rejection and pain,” but never explicitly says it was the Father who punished Jesus.¹ Christian philosopher, Douglas Groothuis, says Jesus did not even really know why He was dying on the cross at the time of the crucifixion!² What made Christ’s death on the cross so horrendous was not just the physical pain as much as the invisible transaction that took place as the Father poured out His full fury of wrath and hatred toward sin on Christ as He

hung on the cross.

This is also the clear teaching of the New Testament: “O Lord...For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, who Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur” (Acts 4:24, 27-28). God predestined, or planned in eternity past, the death of Christ by means of evil wicked sinners to accomplish His perfect plan of salvation for the world. At the cross, God poured out His full fury of holy torment toward sin on Jesus. It was the cup of the Father’s wrath that Jesus would absorb (Mark 14:36). Jesus was punished by the Father as the perfect substitute for sinners and thus conquered Satan, subdued death, overcame the world and appeased God’s holy hatred of sin. The most heinous evil human act in history—the death of Christ—achieved the greatest good ever known—salvation for sinners.

Neither raw human logic, nor esoteric philosophy can answer the dilemma of the problem of evil. Only God can. And He has chosen to reveal what we need to know about it in the Bible. There is much about it that God has chosen not to reveal, and that is to His glory. In the end, with humility and faith, we must submit our hearts to God and solicit the prayer of Abraham who said to God: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” (Genesis 18:25).

~7~

CONCLUSION

The problem of evil is considered by many the strongest argument against the truth of Christianity and the Bible. Simply stated, the problem of evil asks, “If God is good and all powerful, then why is there evil and suffering in the world?” Historically, many Christians have attempted to answer this question from a philosophical and theoretical point of view instead of a biblical and theological one. As a result, typical answers offered are man-centered, Arminian, insufficient and even at times unbiblical. The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, or *sola Scriptura*, needs to be invoked on this matter.

Biblical truth needs to define and drive this discussion. The believer cannot allow the critics to frame the debate by granting them their sterile definition of evil and their myopic definition of who God is. Evil is what God says it is as revealed in Scripture—not what some atheist or evolutionist says it is, for they have no binding universal standard by which to define anything. God needs to define His nature—not the atheist. The atheists blasphemously define God with only two attributes—love (goodness) and power. They conveniently deny God His essential nature of holiness as revealed in His justice, wrath, jealousy, righteousness, glory and sovereignty.¹

The doctrine of God's sovereignty is typically neglected in discussions on the problem of evil. The Bible clearly reveals that God is absolutely sovereign, in control of all things including evil, pain and suffering, and has a plan for it all in His perfect timing for His glory. In addition, the reality of the Fall of man and God's resultant

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devastating curse on the earth and the human race is usually downplayed or ignored altogether in discussions of the problem of evil. Why is there pain and suffering and evil in the world? Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God and willfully sinned as rebels and God punished them with the curse as a result. Ever since then, all creation has been groaning in turmoil awaiting the redemption yet to come. This world is currently fallen and under God's judgment.

Jesus the Savior is the answer to the problem of evil. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He was all good and omnipotent, yet was subject to pain, suffering and the evil of others. He subjected Himself willingly to the most heinous evil act in the history of the universe—crucifixion—to accomplish the greatest good ever—salvation. All who believe in Him as Savior and Lord will have eternal life, eventually in heaven where all pain, suffering and evil will be banished forever. Those who reject

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Christ will live in the worst place of suffering, pain, and evil ever known—eternal hell, a real place which will exist for all eternity. And both heaven and hell will simultaneously reveal for all creation, for all time, the full, true, glorious nature of the one Almighty God of the universe. To Him alone be all the glory, forever and ever.

NOTES

Introduction: Christianity's Greatest Challenge

1. Victor J. Stenger, *God, the Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows that God Does Not Exist* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2007), 216. "German playwright Georg Büchner (1813-37) called the problem of evil 'the rock of atheism.' Atheists point to the problem of evil as proof that the God of the Bible doesn't exist. Every day the ancient argument gets raised in college philosophy classes, coffee shops, dinner discussions, e-mail exchanges, blogs, talk shows and best-selling books"; Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2009), 11.
2. E. J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 305.
3. John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1994), 149.

4. William Lane Craig, *Hard Questions, Real Answers* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 75.
5. Kelly James Clark, *Five Views On Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 251. Alcorn gives other examples of Christian writers who agree: Richard Swinburne says the problem of evil is “the most powerful objection to traditional atheism”; Ronald Nash says, “the most serious challenge to theism was, is, and will continue to be the problem of evil”; John Stott wrote, “The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith”; Alcorn, *If God is Good*, 11.
6. Doug Powell, *Holman Quick Source Guide to Christian Apologetics*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 336.
7. Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz, *Evidence for Faith: Understanding Apologetics in Plain Language* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 101.
8. N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 44-45.
9. R. C. Sproul, *Objections Answered* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, G/L Publications, 1978), 129.
10. Craig, *Hard Questions*, 91, 109.

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11. C. Stephen Evans and R. Zachary Manis, *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 167.
12. Jay Adams, *The Grand Demonstration: A Biblical Study of the So-Called Problem of Evil* (Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 1991), 15.
13. Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Avon, 1981), 84.
14. Stenger says three = omnibenevolence, omnipotence and omniscience, *God*, 216.

Chapter 1: Defining Evil

1. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Texarkana, TX: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 163-75.
2. Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations: Contemporary Answers to Crucial Questions about the Christian Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2001), 233.
3. Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 618.
4. Powell, *Holman Quick Source*, 334.
5. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 113.
6. J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian*

- Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 536.
7. Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, *Pocket Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 46-47.
 8. Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 158.
 9. Bickel and Jantz, *Evidence for Faith*, 177-95.
 10. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Pocket Handbook*, 46-47.
 11. Dean Hardy, *Stand Your Ground: An Introductory Text for Apologetics Students* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 106.
 12. Ibid.
 13. Hardy, *Stand Your Ground*, 106.
 14. Qur'an 4:3.
 15. Qur'an 4:34.
 16. Gordon Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, (Hobbs, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, 1995), 194-242.
 17. Craig, *Hard Questions*, 75-88.
 18. Evans and Manis, *Philosophy*, 156-82.

Chapter 3: Traditional Responses to the Problem of Evil

1. Winfried Corduan, *Reasonable Faith* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1993).
2. Craig, *Hard Questions*, 86-87.
3. Carl F. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999) VI: 282. Randy Alcorn is a welcomed

exception in tackling the problem of evil. He says up front in his book, “We need our worldview realigned by God’s inspired Word: ‘All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness’ (2 Timothy 3:16).

I quote Scripture frequently in this book because God promises that his Word ‘will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it’ (Isaiah 55:11). God never makes such a promise about my words or your words. I want this book to accomplish God’s purpose—and that will happen only if it remains faithful to his words”; *If God Is God: Faith In the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2009), 5.

4. Geisler and Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations*, 235.
5. *Ibid.*, 235.
6. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), 52-53.
7. Charles Colson, *Answers to Your Kid’s Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000), 22.
8. Powell, *Holman Quick Source*, 348.
9. John Feinberg, *Theologies and Evil* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), 125.

10. Hardy, *Stand Your Ground*, 107.
11. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Pocket Handbook*, 51.
12. Bickel and Janz, *Evidence for Faith*, 183.
13. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977).
14. Craig, *Hard Questions*, 83.
15. John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing), 164.
16. Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2003), 40.
17. Geisler and Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations*, 241.
18. Powel, *Holman Quick Source*, 336.
19. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1967), 160.

Chapter 4: The Reality and Severity of the Fall

1. Hardy, *Stand*, 108.
2. Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, 192.
3. Ibid., 190.
4. Ibid., 191.
5. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 272.
6. J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 220.

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7. Clark, *Five Views*, 281.
8. Tremper Longman,
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8Pk1vXL1WE>.
9. See *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, eds. (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009) where the whole Evangelical compromise is thoroughly catalogued.
10. Ibid., 252.
11. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 156.

Chapter 5: The Problem of Evil in Perspective

1. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 36.
2. Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Hachette, 2007).
3. Clark, *Five Views*, 273.
4. Geisler and Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations*, 241.
5. Clark, *Five Views*, 281.

Chapter 6: Man's Greatest Evil, God's Greatest Good

1. Tim Keller, *The Reason for God* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2008), 30.

2. He writes, “Nor did Jesus himself fully understand his own redemptive sufferings while he agonized on the cross. Otherwise he would not have cried out in dereliction, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27:46)”;
- Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 643. This is a ghastly interpretation from an evangelical on the true meaning of Jesus’ words here. Jesus knew full well why He was dying. He said, “My God, my God,” because He knew He was fulfilling every detailed prophecy about the crucifixion of the Messiah as stated in Psalm 22 that was written 1,000 years before Jesus’ death. Jesus was purposely quoting Psalm 22:1, thus declaring to everyone at the foot of the cross, and to the world, that He was indeed the promised Messiah and Suffering Servant, who was absorbing the Father’s wrath for the sins of the world by virtue of His death.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

1. Morely rightly observes that “love is not the only form of goodness. Justice is also goodness”; Brian Morley, *God in the Shadows: Evil in God’s World* (Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006), 241.

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