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PROBLEMS OF EVIL: MORE ADVICE TO CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHERS¹

Marilyn McCord Adams

The argument that

- (1) God exists, and is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good

and

- (2) Evil exists

are logically incompatible, can be construed aporetically (as generating a puzzle and posing the constructive challenge of finding a solution that displays their compatibility) or atheologically (as a positive proof of the non-existence of God). I note that analytic philosophers of religion over the last thirty years or so have focused on the atheological deployment of the argument from evil, and have met its onslaughts from the posture of defense. I take Nelson Pike (in his article "Hume on Evil") and Alvin Plantinga (in *The Nature of Necessity*, "Self-Profile," and other pieces) as paradigm defenders, analyse their approaches, and try to make explicit parameters and assumptions within which these defenses have been conducted. In particular, both writers seem to attempt a reply within the parameters of a religion-neutral value theory and on the assumption that God has obligations to do one thing rather than another in creation—both of which conspire to defend God as a producer of global goods and shift attention off the more pressing question of His agent-centered goodness. I then argue that value-theory pluralism explodes the myth of shared values, and so complicates the structure of fair-minded debate about the problem of evil as to significantly limit the utility of defense. I invite Christian philosophers to approach the problem aporetically, and to exhibit the compossibility of (1) and (2) by formulating their own beliefs about how God is solving the problem of evil using the valuables within a Christian value theory to defeat evils. After sketching a strategy for doing this, I answer the objection that my recommendation conflates Christian philosophy and theology, and try to show how it affords a continuity between the so-called philosophical and existential problems of evil.

Introduction

"If God exists, how can evils be explained? For an omnipotent, being would have the power to prevent any and all evils if it wanted to; an omniscient being would know all about them; and a perfectly good being would want to prevent/eliminate all the evils it could. Thus, it seems, if God existed, and were omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, there would be no evils."²



When, in history of philosophy, a number of *prima facie* plausible premisses seem to generate a problematic conclusion, the resultant argument can be said to formulate a problem, which can be dealt with in various ways. One can simply accept the argument as sound and its surprising conclusion as true. Alternatively, one may remain confident that the conclusion is false but see the argument as creating a difficulty for anyone who rejects it: that of explaining how the *prima facie* plausible premisses are not all so acceptable, the inferences not so evident, as they seem. To respond the latter way is to take the argument aporetically, as generating a puzzle. What is important to note is that the same argument can be taken in both directions. Sometimes consensus gathers around one reading—as when most philosophers took Zeno’s paradoxes and Parmenides’ arguments against the possibility of change as aporetic. In other cases, both usages persist, but one predominates—as in the case of sceptical arguments about the existence of other minds and/or a physical world, about the possibility of knowledge, etc.

The traditional problem of evil stated above participates in this ambiguity. I want to examine how the different ways of taking it generate contrasting methodologies and chart how focus on one is limiting our progress. I want then to suggest how Christian philosophers might best approach it, to maximize their contributions to this deepest of religious problems.

1. *The Aporetic Version:*

Understood aporetically, the traditional problem of evil gives crisp focus to a difficulty in understanding the relationship between God and evil. In particular, there is a *prima facie* obstacle to consistently maintaining both

(1) God exists, and is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good

and

(2) Evil exists,

not because there is an explicit logical contradiction between them,³ but because our pre-analytic understandings of ‘omnipotent’ and ‘perfectly good’ construe the maximizations straightforwardly, in such a way as to render

(P1) A perfectly good being would always eliminate evil so far as it could,

and

(P2) There are *no limits* to what an omnipotent being can do

plausibly true. (1), (2), (P1), and (P2) seem to constitute an inconsistent quartet,

so that there is a valid inference from the conjunction of the last three to the denial of the first. When taken aporetically, the challenge of this argument is constructive: it is an invitation to probe more deeply into the logical relations among these propositions, to offer more rigorous and subtle analyses of the divine perfections. (P1) and (P2) are not held to have anything more than *prima facie* plausibility in their favor. And the aporetic argument serves a positive function of structuring the discussion and enabling one to pinpoint and contrast various resolutions in a precise way.

Notice, even those who (like many of the great medieval philosophers) accepted (2) as empirically obvious and held (1) as demonstrable *a priori* or as a non-negotiable item of faith, could recognize a problem of understanding how (1) and (2) are compossible—of *articulating* (1), (2), and one's understanding of the divine attributes in such a way as to *exhibit* their compossibility.

2. *The Atheistic Argument from Evil*

In the modern period, however, David Hume started a trend of using such an argument from evil to give a positive disproof of divine existence.⁴ In "Evil and Omnipotence" (first published in 1955), that neo-Humean J. L. Mackie sets out to establish, "not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are *positively irrational*" by showing that "the several parts of the *essential* theological doctrine"—*viz.*, (1) and (2)—"are inconsistent with each other."⁵ Once again, Mackie recognizes that (1) and (2) are not explicitly contradictory; one needs "some additional premisses, or perhaps some quasi-logical rules connecting the terms 'good,' 'evil,' and 'omnipotent'." But, to his mind, these are readily supplied by (P1) and (P2) above.⁶ To be sure, Mackie admits, a theologian might try to rebut his atheistic argument from evil by making "a minor modification of one or more of the constituent propositions [*viz.*, (1), (2), (P1), and/or (P2)], which would, however, still satisfy all the essential requirements of ordinary theism."⁷ But on Mackie's deployment of the argument, (P1) and (P2) are now advanced, not as pre-analytic guesses as to what is meant by 'omnipotence' and 'perfect goodness,' but as principles having presumption in their favor. Mackie now talks as if the burden of proof is very much on the theologian to show that some revision of (P1) and/or (P2) is still both reasonable and true to ordinary religious belief.⁸

3. *Pike's Clarification:*

In his model article, "Hume on Evil" (first published in 1963),⁹ Nelson Pike examines the Humean atheistic argument from evil, and first discovers that it requires reformulation. For, Pike contends, (P1) does not accurately reflect *our*

ordinary moral intuitions, according to which we do not always blame a person for permitting (not preventing) evil if it was within his power to prevent.

“As a general statement, a being who permits (or brings about) an instance of suffering might be perfectly good providing only that there is a morally sufficient reason for his action.”¹⁰

If God had a *morally sufficient reason* for permitting (bringing about) instances of suffering, then His non-prevention of such evils would not count against His perfect goodness. To generate a logical contradiction from (1) and (2), one would have to maintain

(P3) It is logically impossible for an omniscient, omnipotent being to have a morally sufficient reason for permitting (bringing about) evils,

a premiss which derives some plausibility from the fact that, ordinarily, morally sufficient reasons for permitting (bringing about) evils arise from some ignorance or weakness in the agent thus excused.

Pike’s reformulation brings to the surface two assumptions implicit in the Humean atheistic argument from evil: (i) that ‘goodness’ is to be understood in terms, not of metaphysical or natural goodness, but rather of moral goodness; and (ii) that God is understood to be a moral agent whose creative activities are governed by moral obligations.¹¹ Accordingly, (iii) to say that God is *perfectly* good is to imply that He fully lives up to those obligations in creation. That is why, assuming (P1), the existence of evil seems to count against it.

Moreover, following J. S. Mill, Pike understands ‘moral goodness’ here in the ordinary sense. Expanding on (i), Mill does not deny that there is such a thing as metaphysical or natural goodness, which might be possessed in infinite degree by “the Absolute” or God and be a property that pertains to God as He is in Himself. However that may be, Mill insists that to count as worthy of worship, a being must be perfectly good in the ordinary sense of that term, a sense which is “relational” in that it implies that its possessor would deal with the world and treat created persons in certain ways and not others. Mill chides those who move to cut off such implications by equivocating on ‘perfect goodness’ as being almost so misleading as to lie.¹²

Finally, in the article “Hume on Evil,” Pike assumes the perfections—omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect [moral] goodness in the ordinary sense—to be *essential* to God, at least in the sense that ‘for all x , if x is God, then x is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good’ is analytic. That is how the conjunction of (2) with (P1 & P2) or with (P3) is supposed to imply that God does not exist, rather than that God exists but lacks one or more of these perfections.

Having thus clarified and fortified the atheistic argument from evil, Pike offers

the believer what I shall call “an *Epistemic Defense*” against it. Assuming that (2) refers not merely to some evil or other but to evils in the amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world, Pike rules out as unpromising the piece-work approach of arguing that this sort of evil could be logically connected with this sort of good (e.g., injury with forgiveness) and that sort with some other sort of good (e.g., danger with courage). Just as the atheologian cannot prove (P3) by enumerating putative excuses for permitting (bringing about) evils and rejecting them one by one, because he “could never claim to have examined all the possibilities”¹³; so also it is hopeless to catalog the evils and display logically necessary connections with great enough particular goods. We may fare better, however, if we look for a single good that could at once provide a “general” morally sufficient reason for the permission of all the evils.¹⁴ He turns for materials to the Best of All Possible Worlds Theodicy, which asserts

(P4) God, being a perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent being,
would create the best of all possible worlds,

and

(P5) The best of all possible worlds contains instances of suffering as
logically indispensable components.

Pike reasons that if (P4) and (P5) were true, they would state a morally sufficient reason—*viz.*, the aim of creating the Best of All Possible Worlds (=BPW)—that even an omniscient and omnipotent being could have for permitting (bringing about) evils. Thus, the junction of (P4) and (P5) entails the falsity of (P3); just as the conjunction of (1) with (P4 & P5) entails (2).¹⁵

If we could know (P4) and (P5) to be true, or even possible, we would thus be able not only to defeat the above atheistic argument from evil (by showing (P3) to be false), but also to demonstrate the compossibility of (1) and (2) (let us call this “a *Demonstrative Defense*”). Unfortunately, (P5) seems to be a proposition which is possible if and only if necessary. And Pike concedes that he sees no way to establish (P5) apart from (P4) and an *a priori* proof for the existence of God (such as Leibniz thought he had). Consequently, Pike does not think his borrowings from the Best of All Possible Worlds Theodicy put us in a position to make the positive assertion that (1) and (2) are compossible. But since the atheist is in no better position to show (P5) false than the theist is to prove it true, Pike concludes that the atheist is not entitled to his claim of inconsistency either. For since, for all he or the theist knows (P5) is true, for all he or the theist knows (P3) is false, and a Scottish verdict of “not proven” must be rendered.¹⁶

4. Plantinga's *Defensive Apologetics*:

In his numerous writings on the problem of evil, Alvin Plantinga has concentrated on formulating a Demonstrative Defense against "atheological arguments" such as we have been discussing (in sections 2 and 3 above).¹⁷ Reviewing the logical structure of a defense, Plantinga writes,

"One way to show that *P* and *Q* are consistent is to find some other proposition *R* such that *P* and *R* together entail *Q* . . ." ¹⁸

In the special case of the atheistic argument from evil, what is wanted is some proposition *R* which (i) is itself logically possible, (ii) is logically consistent with (1), and (iii) either alone or together with (1) entails (2). Plantinga emphasizes that it is *not* necessary in addition that *R* be (iv) true, (v) probable, (vi) plausible, or (vii) believed by either the atheist or the theist.¹⁹ On the other hand, conditions (i)-(iii) would be trivially satisfied by some *R* for any pair of propositions that is logically consistent. Since Plantinga aims to *convince* the atheologian of the consistency of (1) and (2) by locating an appropriate *R*, he elsewhere indicates that *R* must satisfy the following additional conditions: both (viii) its logical possibility and (ix) its compossibility with (1) must be fairly clear.²⁰ But if "the *R* you propose has to fit the audience you mean to address,"²¹ it would be too polemical to present an *R* that the defender himself does not regard as meeting conditions (i) and (ii).²²

Assuming, once again, that (2) asserts not merely the existence of some evils or other, but evils in the amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world, one might try to construct *R* piece-meal, as the conjunction of logically possible morally sufficient reasons for evils of each type found here below. Like Pike, Plantinga thinks it would be a mistake to try to "get specific" about morally sufficient reasons this way. For the actual world contains certain kinds of evils, so appalling and so horrifying—e.g., the lingering death by leukemia or cancer of young children or their mothers, the ironic evils of a father's accidentally running over his beloved child, and the demonic evils of the death camps in which a mother is forced to choose which of her children will live—that we not only do not know *why* God permits them, we cannot even conceive of any plausible candidate-reasons. Instead, we have to proceed "on a quite general level."²³

Focusing on the other principal response to the problem of evil, the Free Will Defense, Plantinga constructs his actual candidate for *R* with an eye on Mackie's main objection to it—*viz.*, that if God existed and were going to create free creatures, He could have and therefore should have created only sinless ones.

Thus, Plantinga proposes

*R**: God has actualized a possible world *A* containing significantly free creatures (angels, human beings, other kinds, what have you) with respect to whose actions there is a balance of good over evil (so that *A* is on balance a very good world); some of these creatures are responsible for moral and natural evil; and it was not within God's power to create significantly free creatures with respect to whose actions there would be a better balance of good over evil than that displayed in *A*.

The (i) possibility of *R** and (ii) its compossibility with (1) rest on highly subtle understandings of divine goodness and power (alternative to (P1) and (P2)). Thus, in *The Nature of Necessity*,²⁴ Plantinga argues at some length that there are some possible worlds that not even an omnipotent God can strongly actualize (contrary to (P2)). And he assumes (contrary to (P1)) that a perfectly good God might well accept evils (in amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world) as the price of goods related to free creatures. *R**'s entailment of (2) is obvious.

5. *Defense within Religion-Neutral Value Theory:*

Our reviews of Pike and Plantinga serve to illustrate how the attempt to mount a defense (whether Epistemic or Demonstrative) against the atheological deployment of the argument from evil, drives the defender to *exhibit* the compossibility of (1) and (2) in terms of (a) generic and global values drawn from (b) a religion-neutral value theory, acceptable to the atheologian.

5.1. *Pike and "Ordinary-Sense" Moral Goodness:* Pike seems perfectly at ease with the notion of a religion-neutral value theory, common to atheologian and believer. In his anthology, he consistently draws on "ordinary" moral intuitions and seconds Mill's insistence that unless God is perfectly good in the ordinary sense of moral goodness applied to human beings, He is not worthy of worship (see section 3 above).

No doubt, Pike is influenced here by the fairly wide-ranging agreement (even within our pluralistic society) about the sorts of acts that are morally wrong and/or praiseworthy, the character traits that count as virtuous or vicious, and the individuals who are saints and heroes. Such extensional agreement underlies the government of pluralistic society by common laws, its entertainment by common literature and dramatic fare, etc.

More than that, Pike wrote "Hume on Evil" at Cornell in the early '60's, when the Philosophy Department there was still in the grip of "ordinary language philosophy." Recall that according to this methodology, philosophers who want to find out truths about mind and body, morals, etc. should not go about inventing philosophical theories, but should set about to analyze the concepts of mind,

body, moral goodness, etc. implicit in our ordinary use of language. Insofar as meaning is a matter of social convention, the philosopher proceeds to examine linguistic usage with a view to making those conventions explicit.

5.2. *The Myth of Shared Values*: Many, perhaps most, analytic philosophers have abandoned the ideals of “ordinary language philosophy” (and rightly so, in my judgment) and resumed the traditional activity of theory-construction. Once theorizing begins, however, the hope of universal agreement in value-theory is shattered, the wide-ranging extensional overlaps notwithstanding. Witness, for example, the divide in secular ethics between consequentialists and deontologists, whose principles reflect deeply contrasting moral intuitions and lead to varied extensions.

If such disagreements in moral theory arise among philosophers who share a common ontology, how much more should they diverge where ontological commitments are significantly different. (a) An ontology that holds, roughly, that “what you see is what you get” may recognize such valuables as sensory pleasures, the beauty of nature and cultural artifacts, the joy of creativity, and loving personal intimacy. But it will be less rich than those which posit a Transcendent Good (e.g., the Form of the Good, in Platonism, or God, the infinite being and Supremely Valuable Object, in Christianity). Insofar as the highest human happiness is usually conceived of as involving some relation to the best good(s), and moral precepts direct humans to their individual and collective ends, different ontologies will produce different accounts of the human good and varying moral precepts.

(b) Moreover, we should expect moral theories to differ with respect to the origin and structure of personal obligations, depending upon whether all the persons recognized by the ontology share a common ontological status—in particular, whether all the persons are human—or instead there are supra-human persons. Whereas atheistic value-theories assign all persons a common ontological status as humans, and find it natural to see all persons as woven into a common web of rights and mutual obligations, medieval Christian thinkers saw the divine persons as free from any such entanglements. (i) Anselm argued that obligation was correlated with ontological dependence, freedom from obligation with ontological independence. Consequently, God the Creator, who exists by the necessity of His nature, has no obligations to creatures, who nevertheless have unconditional obligations to Him. (ii) Others (e.g., John Duns Scotus and William Ockham) argued that since God is the most valuable being, right reason would dictate that He ought to be loved above all and for His own sake. Since God is personal, that dictum implies another: that created persons have an unconditional obligation to obey God’s commands. On the other hand, God has no unconditional obligation to love any finite good and so has no obligations to created persons.

(c) Of crucial importance for the present discussion is the fact that different ontological commitments with their different stores of valuables widen or narrow the range of options for defeating evils with goods. Secular value theories can offer only packages of immanent goods; some religious theories posit an infinite transcendent goodness and invite relationship to it; while Christianity believes the infinite good to be personal, and locates the happiness of finite persons in loving personal intimacy with the divine persons.

5.3. *Vagueness in Pike's Epistemic Defense*: We have already noted how Pike (i) works within the parameters of common-ground "ordinary" moral intuitions, and (ii) seeks to provide (what for all we know may be) a morally sufficient reason for divine permission of evils in terms of a generic and global good—*viz.*, the Best of All Possible Worlds. In effect, his candidate for *R* would be

*R***: God created the Best of All Possible Worlds, and the Best of All Possible Worlds contains evils as logically indispensable constituents.

If the second conjunct could be known possible, Pike thinks, *R*** would be the basis for a Demonstrative Defense. Failing that, since *R*** cannot be known to be impossible, it provides an Epistemic Defense. Underlying these claims is the assumed (for all we know) legitimacy of such theses as the Principle of Organic Unity, with its consequence

(P6) that a significantly smaller, negatively valued part can contribute to a greater over-all positive value in the whole,

and

(P7) a craftsman is morally permitted to make the best product he can

and/or

(P8) an agent is always morally permitted to bring about the morally best state of affairs he can,

any and all of which could be found in a secular or religion-neutral value theory.

This account justifies God's choice in terms of a global good, because being "Best Possible" is a feature of the world as a whole; it is generic, because it is at once justification of each and every one of the evils that the world in question contains. The further point I wish to make is that this putative morally justifying reason is thereby *vague*, twice-over: (i) First, there is the point acknowledged by Pike, that it eschews any attempt to say *how* any given piece or specific type of evil might "fit in" or contribute to making a given possible world the best.

(ii) But by the same token, Pike does not tell us which sorts of goods contribute to that result either. Insofar as Pike has followed the atheologian in focusing on a moral evaluation of God's productive activity, he would seem to suggest that divine permission of evils could be excusable if such evils were suitably ordered into a package of merely immanent (created) goods of the sort recognized by the religion-neutral value theory. On this reading, Pike would be appealing to the epistemic possibility that evils (in the amounts and of the kinds found in this world) be defeated by some appropriate combination of created goods. On the other hand, Pike never denies that God, the being a greater than which is necessary for the defeat of evils. Pike's Epistemic Defense based on R^{**} is thus vague, as to whether the permission of evils is to be exonerated in relation to the immanent goods of secular value theory, or whether appeal must be made to the transcendent good.

5.4. *Plantinga's Double-Aspect Principles*: Plantinga is explicit that a full-blown Christian value-theory will diverge considerably from a merely secular one with regard to the range of valuables it includes. In a moving passage, he draws on the Heidelberg catechism to suggest how God, the supreme good, relates Himself to the evil of created suffering:

“As the Christian sees things, God does not stand idly by, coolly observing the suffering of his creatures. He enters into and shares our suffering. He endures the anguish of seeing his son, the second person of the Trinity, consigned to the bitterly cruel and shameful death of the cross. Some theologians claim that God cannot suffer. I believe they are wrong. God's capacity for suffering, I believe, is proportional to his greatness; it exceeds our capacity for suffering in the same measure as his capacity for knowledge exceeds ours. Christ was prepared to endure the agonies of hell itself; and God, the Lord of the universe, was prepared to endure the suffering consequent upon his son's humiliation and death. He was prepared to accept this suffering in order to overcome sin, and death, and the evils that afflict our world, and to confer on us a life more glorious than we can imagine . . .”²⁵

But so far as the project of Demonstrative Defense is concerned, Plantinga wishes to find an R that both he and the atheist can agree on as logically possible, compatible with (1), and (whetheralone or together with (1)) entailing (2). And so Plantinga's R^* , like Pike's R^{**} , is generic and explicitly appeals only to global goods—the existence of significantly free creatures, whose actions collectively yield a favorable balance of moral good over moral evil—which could be recognized within an atheologian's value-theory.

Since Plantinga aims at persuasion, one might expect that those *explicitly*

mentioned good-making features are supposed to suffice, by themselves, to convince the atheologian that God could be morally in the clear in choosing a possible world containing evils (in the amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world). In recent correspondence, however, Plantinga makes clear that he does *not* intend that these features by themselves would constitute a morally sufficient reason for divine permission of evils. On the contrary, he writes,

“What *would* be the morally sufficient reason for allowing the devils to perpetrate moral evil is *the good of the entire possible world God could thus actualize*, a good as great or greater than any he could achieve if he didn’t permit the devils to carry on their evil ways. But of course the good in question would not be the mere exercise of free will on the part of the fallen angels; that would be a minuscule part of it. The good in question would consist instead in such things as freely done good actions on the parts of angels, human beings, and no doubt personal creatures of other kinds, *of the natural good of the whole world*, and *of the unthinkable great good of the incarnation and the redemption.*”

[Italics mine.]²⁶

This thought was prefigured in his earlier paper, “The Probabilistic Argument from Evil,” where he writes that theist and atheist

“may differ, for example, with respect to the proportions of good and evil in the universe at large; the Christian theist will no doubt concur with St. Paul: ‘For I reckon that the sufferings we now endure bear no comparison with the spendor, as yet unrevealed, which is in store for us’. (*Romans* 8: 18) They may also disagree as to the *extent* or *amount* of good the universe contains. From a Christian point of view, there is immortality and the expectation of a better world; and, towering above all, the unthinkable spendor of God’s gift to mankind in the suffering and death and resurrection of His Son . . .”²⁷

In another letter,²⁸ Plantinga suggests that the supernatural good of God’s existence might combine with the natural and moral goodness of the world to outweigh evils (in the amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world), even apart from the Incarnation and Atonement. Admittedly, the natural goodness of the world and the supernatural goodness of divine existence and/or the Incarnation and Redemption are not *explicitly mentioned* in Plantinga’s *R**; but they aren’t explicitly excluded either. It is because *R** is compatible with these further goods, that Plantinga recognizes *R** as satisfying conditions (i)-(iii) above.

But then we may ask how *R** is supposed to serve its function? For either the atheologian will accept the explicit list—the good of created freedom and the favorable balance of moral good over evil (a better than which God could not

ensure)—as sufficient to establish R^* 's satisfaction of conditions (i)-(iii) above, or he will not. If he does not, it would seem that Plantinga cannot hope to convince without making explicit additions. If the atheologian does, but Plantinga does not, proffering R^* as it stands seems misleading and unacceptably polemical (by Plantinga's own lights).

In recent correspondence, Plantinga explains that R^* is not designed "to exhibit the main types of goods that outweigh the evils those worlds contain; rather, I refer to the goods connected with free creatures because these are the goods such that possibly God may have to put up with evil in order to actualize them."²⁹

Insofar as the atheologian has conceded (for his own reasons) that a world would be good enough for God to make but for feature F (in Mackie's case, the sins of free persons other than God), R^* thereby wins neutral ground: the atheologian will accept R^* for his reasons (supplementing the explicit list of goods one way), while Plantinga underwrites it for other reasons (filling out the list in a Christian way). Put otherwise, R^* is an abstract general proposition picking out an infinite family of possible worlds. The atheologian looks at one branch, finds God and evil there, and feels satisfied about the compossibility of (1) and (2). So far as the aims of the Free Will Defense are concerned, Plantinga will be thus satisfied.³⁰

5.5. *The Snares of Equivocation*: Plantinga may be satisfied, but I am not. For the truce just described between believer and atheologian feels disturbingly similar to the agreement between Jones and Smith that reptiles are not extinct in Los Angeles (where Jones believes the only reptiles left are snakes, while Smith thinks only the lizards remain). Unfortunately, it is worse than that. Given the above-mentioned pluralism in value-theory (see section 5.2 above), disagreements between Christians and atheologians about whether and what sorts of goods could defeat evils are bound to emerge. But these differences will yield varying, non-equivalent notions of 'perfect goodness' and contrasting evaluations of evils, and so lead to *equivocal* interpretations of our original propositions (1) and (2). Indeed, insofar as these perfections are analytically predicated of 'God,' such variations in the notion of 'perfect goodness' beget different concepts of God; insofar as they are regarded as non-essential predications of relative goodness, these differences yield widely divergent ascriptions of character. The upshot is that the *structure* of any fair-minded debate about the problem of evil will be much more complicated than literature in analytic philosophy of religion over the last thirty years has made it to seem.

For suppose we take the atheologian like Mackie at his word, that the problem he has in mind in alleging the inconsistency of (1) and (2) is "a logical problem, the problem of clarifying and reconciling a number of beliefs."³¹ We must ask,

“Whose beliefs?” and “according to whose interpretations?” Mackie has deployed the problem of evil as a disproof for the existence of God, in the hope of showing the religious beliefs of others contradictory and irrational. If he simply construes (1) and (2) and the range of possible morally sufficient reasons, from the presumptive standpoint of his own value-theory, it would be a brilliant defensive maneuver for the believer to show how the compossibility of (1) and (2) follows even within the atheologian’s point of view. But this would be a mere preliminary to making explicit their disagreements in value-theory, and how they yield two different problems of evil: the question of whether (1) and (2) are compossible on the atheologian’s reading, and whether they can stand together on the believer’s rendering. Insofar as Mackie wished to show the *believer’s* view contradictory and irrational, he must take an interest in whether (1) and (2) can be understood as compossible on the believer’s construal of those claims. Likewise, it would be a hollow victory for the believer to stop with showing that the God (essentially omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good in Mackie’s senses) that Mackie doesn’t believe in could coexist with evils, if that God is not the one the believer confesses.

Once we appreciate how value-theory pluralism complicates discussions of the problem of evil, however, we begin to see what a small place defense can helpfully play in sorting matters out. The real philosophical work lies in articulating and charting the implications of the contrasting positions. Assuming both parties are genuinely interested in the issues, each will be drawn into the project of deeper understanding to which the aporetic treatment of the problem of evil invites us.

5.6. *The Distortions of Defensiveness*: Over the last thirty years, analytical philosophers have treated the problem of evil primarily under its aspect as an argument against the existence of God, and understood its resolutions primarily in terms of defense. Perhaps this was all the climate of those times allowed; the world of analytical philosophy has been hostile to theism, much less to Christianity. Further, much has been learned from these discussions, so lucidly epitomized in the writings of Pike and Plantinga. Nevertheless, the nearly exclusive preoccupation with defense on the part of Christian philosophers has inadvertently contributed to an obscuring of Christian views of the matter on several key points.

(1) The first is *the metaphysical and moral stature of the divine persons*. I have noted how atheologians appear to take for granted what Pike makes explicit: *viz.*, that God, as personal, has obligations to do one thing rather than another in creation. God, if He exists, is the chief manager of the universe and is morally responsible for what goes on in it; the existence of evil would cast doubt on His character and competence; the question is whether it would be possible to excuse such a person for evils of the sort the actual world contains. H. J. McCloskey

brings this out when he argues that God couldn't exist in a world with *unnecessary* evils.³² Such assumptions are plausible within a value-theory whose ontology contains persons all of whom are on an ontological par with each other. But Christians do not view God this way. On the contrary, mainstream medieval theologians argued that because of God's unique status in the ontology (as necessarily existent Creator) and value-theory (as Supremely Valuable object), the divine persons are not drawn down into the network of rights and obligations among created persons (see section 5.2 above). Christian reticence on this matter in discussions of the problem of evil has given the philosophical reading public the wrong impression.

(2) The second is *the dimension of divine goodness most fundamentally at stake*. The distortion in (1), which produced a defensive search for morally sufficient reasons for divine permission of evils, created the impression that to solve the logical problem of evil one must say *why* God would permit (bring about) evils. And the attempt to satisfy this demand within the province of religion-neutral value-theory led Pike and Plantinga to focus on *global* values—that a given possible world is the Best, that a given possible world includes the existence of significantly free created persons whose actions yield a favorable balance of moral good over moral evil (a balance a better than which God is powerless to ensure). If successful, such defenses would vindicate divine goodness and power along the dimension “producer of global goods.”

To be sure, Biblical religion does attribute to God the will, the wisdom, and the power to produce a very good world (cf. Genesis 1), and the history of theology celebrates divine resourcefulness in imposing a marvellous order on the whole, given what created persons come up with.

Nevertheless, the Christian characterization of divine goodness centers on God's *goodness to* and *love of* persons, both individually and collectively as the people of God. Those very horrific types of evil—the seemingly senseless, ironic, and/or demonic deaths of the relatively innocent—that perplex Plantinga the most and that prompted his shift to generic and global reason-giving, pose a challenge to God's ability to win some global goods, because at a more fundamental level they radically call into question His love for and ability to benefit the victims. Moreover, this latter problem is in no way met by pointing to good-making features possessed by the world as a whole—whether it be some “higher harmony,” or the existence of valuable kinds of things (such as created free persons, Mozart symphonies, natural beauty, etc.), or even an over-all balance of retributive justice.

This limitation has not been lost on atheologians and rebels. Indeed, it forms the basis of Ivan Karamazov's eloquent objection.³³ Mackie, too, notes that an appeal exclusively to the greater goodness of the universe as a whole, seems to imply “that God is not in our sense benevolent or sympathetic” “which might

be a disturbing conclusion for some theists.”³⁴ Perhaps, too, this is the legitimate point to be taken away from J. S. Mill’s warnings not to depart from ordinary-sense moral goodness: *viz.*, that we should not divert our attention away from the issue of God’s agent-centered goodness by concentrating solely on His role as producer of global goods.

(3) The third consequence is *the resultant apparent underestimation of the depth of evils*. Insofar as the *explicitly* offered morally sufficient reasons for divine permission of evils have been drawn from a religion-neutral value-theory (which, by definition, does not include divine being among its valuables), one is invited to believe that evils (in the amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world) are commensurate with some package of merely non-transcendent goods. If Pike thinks that such evils as are found in this world could be defeated only by the infinite (and incommensurate) goodness of God, he nowhere says so in his writings. In only one of his published articles does Plantinga make explicit his conviction that God’s own goodness and redemptive acts are essential to the balance.³⁵ Elsewhere the reader is left to believe that the existence of free creatures whose actions yield a favorable balance of moral good over moral evils is enough, or else to supplement these features with whatever other (compatible) good-making features he believes in.

Yet, this apparent underestimation of evils serves neither the project of defense nor the aim of Christian understanding. Atheists and rebels (such as Camus or Ivan Karamazov) who focus on the enormous worth of individual persons and how cruelly “life” treats them, find it morally outrageous. Moreover, it contradicts Christian belief that only the goodness of God can defeat the power of Evil, and the sense that horrific suffering by individuals is met only in the deeper sufferings of God in Christ.

6. An Aporetic Approach to Christian Understanding:

How can Christian philosophers now best contribute to the solution of the problem of evil? (I) My first recommendation is that we give up our focus on defense, and its attempt to operate within religion-neutral value-theory, in favor of an aporetic approach to the problem. It is time to devote ourselves to understanding and articulating our own beliefs about the relationship between God and evil.

(II) Moreover, within this attempt, I think we should focus on God’s agent-centered goodness—the very dimension rendered so baffling in the face of horrific individual sufferings.

One might well ask whether we would not be fools to rush in where the last generation of analytic philosophers of religion has feared to tread. My belief is that we will not be, because our (aporetic) focus will be on *understanding*

consistency rather than on *defense*. Concentration on the latter led Pike and Plantinga to ask *why* God permits (brings about) evils and to search for logically possible morally sufficient reasons. But to understand the *logical compossibility* of (1) and (2), it is not necessary to know (even in a general way) *why* God permits child torture or the ravages of cancer, if we can see *how* (at least in a general way) God can be *good enough* to the individual sufferers nonetheless.

Ivan Karamazov contends that the latter project is likewise impossible, because there is no possible way for God to make it up to such victims: the higher harmony won't do, nor will the retributive suffering of the perpetrators, nor the exposure of the truth, nor the higher eventual happiness of mankind. For Ivan, it is God's justice to the individuals that must be vindicated; once the injustice is permitted, there is no way it can be erased.³⁶

I beg to differ. Following Robert Adams, could we not construe divine *goodness to* individuals in terms of His ensuring for each individual a life that (a) is a great good to him on the whole, and (b) includes no deep suffering that is unredeemed or meaningless.³⁷ Moreover, could we not defensibly regard both conditions as met, not primarily in terms of justice to the individual, but rather of the individual's relationships to great-enough goods? If so, our general answer to the question of how God could be good enough to individual victims of horrific sufferings, would be "by appropriately relating it to an incommensurate good." Identifying this good and such relationships, would lead us to developments first in Christian metaphysics and value-theory, and then into Christian soteriology.

(III) In my judgment, only religious value-theories contain anything valuable enough to defeat the evil of horrific individual suffering. Following medieval Christian philosophers, we could identify that valuable with God Himself. Distinguishing the good that God *is* in Himself, His essential metaphysical or natural goodness from those *relative* properties of God that characterize His behavior towards others, medievals identified the divine essence as the infinite being and therefore the infinite (immeasurable) good, the Supremely Valuable Object. On the basis of such a value-theory, one could maintain that a face-to-face vision of God is an immeasurable good for individual created persons, enough by itself to guarantee that condition (a) is satisfied for any individual who has it.³⁸ Moreover, if we assume (as Plantinga does, see section 5.4 above) that God Himself suffers, sufferings in the amounts and of the kinds found in this present life could be given meaning as points of intimacy with God, so that condition (b) could likewise be met.³⁹

(IV) If Christian metaphysics and value-theory has the resources to defeat horrific evils, Christian soteriology charts God's general policy in distributing these goods and hence describes God's relative goodness towards created persons. Since Scripture and ecclesiastical pronouncements underdetermine doctrine, our efforts will include attempted formulations, which will have, among other things,

to be tested for their power to explain how (1) could be compossible with (2). Failures would identify more precisely how evil is a theoretical problem for Christians. Successes might have the apologetic value of clarifying what Christians really believe and advertising God as a character worthy of worship. Even if the unbeliever denied the ontological commitments of Christian value-theory, he might at least come to appreciate the internal coherence of the Christian position, and withdraw his charge of irrationality.

7. *Christian Philosophy or Christian Theology?*

The approach I have been advocating is not so far removed from certain general advice offered by Plantinga himself in his inaugural address of 1984:

“. . . the Christian philosophical community need not devote all of its efforts to attempting to refute opposing claims and/or to arguing for its own claims, in each case from premises accepted by the bulk of the philosophical community at large. It ought to do this; but it ought to do more. For if it does only this, it will neglect a pressing philosophical task: systematizing, deepening, clarifying Christian thought on these topics.”⁴⁰

Whereas Plantinga’s own treatments of evil have concentrated on the project of Demonstrative Defense, I urge that we now shift the lion’s share of our energies away from defense and instead explain consistency via “systematizing, deepening, and clarifying Christian thought” about God and evil.

To the extent that I embrace this project, however, I fall heir to the objection raised by John Wippel, that such methodology fails properly to observe the boundaries between philosophy, on the one hand, and theology, on the other. Sketching a Thomistic perspective, Wippel notes Aquinas’ distinction between

- [i] “certain truths concerning God and divine things which natural reason can discover, truths such as God’s existence, or God’s unity, and others of this kind . . . ”

and

- [ii] . . . another kind of truth concerning divine things which completely surpasses human understanding . . . revealed mysteries, such as the Trinity or Incarnation. These could never be discovered by unaided natural or philosophical means . . . ”⁴¹

He then outlines the relationship between these “two sources of truth” along three parameters: (a) Revealed truths provide a negative test of philosophical accuracy. Since “there can be no real contradiction between the truth which

natural reason or philosophy can discover and that truth which has been revealed to man by God . . . ” “if anything is found in the sayings of the philosophers which is contrary to religious belief, this is not philosophy but rather an abuse or misuse of philosophy resulting from the weakness of human reason.”⁴² (b) Positive Proof: If a philosopher purports to demonstrate anything inconsistent with the faith about a matter capable of rational demonstration, then it should be possible to demonstrate the error of that philosopher. (c) Epistemic Defense: If a philosopher claims or purports to demonstrate something that is not capable of rational demonstration, then it should be possible to show that the alleged philosophical conclusion has not in fact been demonstrated.⁴³ As for whether

“an intricate philosophical discussion of the relationship between the divine persons within the Trinity, or a similar discussion of the distinction between nature and person as applied to the mystery of the Incarnation”

counts as philosophical properly speaking, or as Christian philosophy, or “only as straight theology,” Wippel responds with a dilemma; where

“the philosophical inquiry itself presupposes the truth of religious beliefs . . . and there is no conceivable way in which such a truth or truths can be demonstrated philosophically . . . one is in fact practicing speculative theology, not pure philosophy, and not Christian philosophy.”⁴⁴

On the other hand, where

“one’s philosophical investigation is directed to articles of religious belief . . . that cannot be demonstrated philosophically . . . but in such a way that philosophical inquiry does not rest upon or presuppose in any way that the articles of faith are true . . . ”

Wippel contends that “this kind of inquiry could be undertaken by the nonbeliever as well as by the believer” and so would not count as Christian philosophy either.⁴⁵

Wippel’s principal focus is on whether the *truth* of various propositions can be *known, proved, or demonstrated* by unaided natural reason, or whether it has to be supernaturally revealed. Following Aquinas, Wippel rests this contrast on the assumption of classical foundationalism in epistemology, according to which there are some premisses to which all rational people would agree and from which at least some interesting metaphysical conclusions can be drawn (e.g., the existence and unity of God).

For my part, I reject classical foundationalism in favor of sceptical realism. I am a realist about philosophical/theological theories in that I believe there is some fact of the matter, independently of what we think, believe, or conceive of in our theories. I am a sceptic, however, because I believe that the defense

of any well-formulated philosophical position will eventually involve premisses which are fundamentally controversial and so unable to command the assent of all reasonable persons. Given this outlook, I conceive of the task of philosophy as that of mapping the problems by formulating the alternative positions as fully as possible. This task will involve conceptual analysis and argumentation to clarify the inter-relations among the various claims, and the costs and benefits of alternative approaches. Each philosopher will have a certain set of intuitions that draw him in the direction of one premiss set or another, and he will have a particular commitment to develop that particular theoretical outlook so thoroughly and rigorously as to exhibit it as a viable competitor in the theoretical market place. But demonstrative proofs and disproofs—e.g., that idealism is true and materialism false—will not be in the offing.

Given my more modest expectations of the philosophical project, I think it is inevitable that a Christian philosopher who attempts to formulate *his own* intuitions about philosophical matters should end up integrating his religious beliefs into his philosophical theories. As more and more of us follow Plantinga's inaugural advice and enter into the aims of the Society of Christian philosophers, the philosophical profession should not be surprised to find us mounting theological theories of necessary truth, moral value and the human good, the ontological status of properties, etc.

Wippel might reply that I have avoided the first horn of his dilemma only by impaling myself on the second. Just as an idealist can (and should) anticipate the materialist's responses to idealistic arguments, and work to see how the materialist position could be developed in its strongest form; so no religious commitment is required for analysing the content of religious beliefs, testing them for consistency, drawing out their implications, etc. Hence, there is nothing specifically Christian about this activity.

I agree with this to a point. On my view, understanding a philosophical problem involves sympathetically entering into opposing positions to determine their logical structure, their theoretical advantages and disadvantages. Insofar as atheologians such as Mackie have contributed to the clarification of religious belief, Christian philosophers are in their debt. On the other hand, insofar as a significant part of theory-formulation involves articulating of inchoate intuitions, it may be that the philosopher whose intuitions they are is in a better position than others to make them rationally accessible. At any rate, from a Christian point of view, he will have a special vocation to do so, insofar as they are *his* intuitions and part of God's gift to him in calling him to philosophize. Hence, my recommendation that we Christian philosophers now devote special attention to formulating our Christian understanding of the relation between God and evil.

8. *The Existential versus the Philosophical Problem of Evil:*

It has been customary, in the literature, to contrast a “theoretical” (philosophical or theological) problem about the logical compossibility of (1) and (2) with the “existential” problem of how to cope with life in the face of evils many and great. Plantinga sharply distinguishes the former from the latter in *The Nature of Necessity*:

“. . . there is no good atheological argument from evil. The existence of God is neither precluded nor rendered improbable by the existence of evil. Of course suffering and misfortune may none the less constitute a *problem* for one who believes in God; but the problem is not that presented by holding beliefs that are logically or probabilistically incompatible. He may find a *religious* problem in evil; in the presence of his own suffering or that of someone near to him, he may fail to maintain a right attitude towards God. Faced with great personal suffering or misfortune, he may be tempted to rebel against God, to shake his fist in God’s face, to curse God. He may despair of God’s goodness, or even give up belief in God altogether . . . ”⁴⁶

As Plantinga characterizes it, the spiritual problem resolves into the deontic fact that there are certain attitudes it is not *right* to have towards God, and the psychological difficulty of avoiding these attitudes in the face of horrific evils. Surviving defense as it does, this predicament “calls for pastoral rather than philosophical counsel.”⁴⁷ Ten years later, Plantinga traces the obstacle to appropriate attitudes to our ignorance of why God permits horrific evils:

“A Christian must admit that he doesn’t know why God permits the evils this world displays. This can be deeply perplexing and deeply disturbing. It can lead a believer to take towards God an attitude he himself deplors; it can tempt him to be angry with God, to mistrust God, to adopt an attitude of bitterness and rebellion.”⁴⁸

Confronted with this, he agrees, his own arguments—that evils do not tell logically or probabilistically against the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good God—offer “cold and abstract comfort.”⁴⁹

Once again, I think Plantinga’s focus on defense obscures genuine continuities between theoretical and practical problems of evil. The Best of All Possible Worlds or Free Will Defenses are “cold and abstract comfort,” because they vindicate divine goodness and power only along the dimension “producer of global goods” and not that of “agent-centered goodness.” Personal and proximate experience of horrific evils gives one *prima facie* reason to doubt the latter, even where their compossibility with the former has been assured. The Jews in Auschwitz had reason to doubt whether God’s plan included goodness *to them*,

and this contributed to their psychological difficulty in maintaining an attitude of trust towards God.

An aporetic approach to the problem of evil, which focuses on understanding how God's agent-centered goodness could be compossible with horrific evils, treats the theoretical in such a way as to have a more direct bearing on the practical. To be sure, the "why-questions" will find their resolution, not in philosophical journals (see section 6, suggestion (II) above), but in the individual's Job-like fight with God. Yet, insofar as a Christian understanding of evil successfully sketches a plot-line, following which God can make meaningful the darkest sufferings and wonderful the total life experience of the death-camp victims, it defeats *the reason* to doubt which horrific suffering provides, and contributes cognitive and hence some psychological resistance to bitterness and rebellion. I agree with Plantinga that genuine comfort will match created suffering with the suffering of God Himself. But according to the approach I recommend, philosophical and religious counsel can be the same.

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NOTES

1. This paper was originally delivered on April 10, 1987, under the title "The Problem of Evil: A Christian Starting Point" as the first annual Baker-Thompson Lecture on Christian Philosophy, sponsored by the Department of Philosophy of the University of Dayton, and given in conjunction with the Eastern Division Regional Meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers. The series of annual lectures is named in honor of Richard R. Baker, Ph.D., who taught Philosophy at the University of Dayton for 40 years and in memory of Professor John Thompson who taught Philosophy at the University of Dayton for 20 years. Both professors have spent their academic careers promoting the study of Christian Philosophy.

2. Cf. Pike, "Introduction," *God and Evil*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964, p. 1.

3. Cf. Alvin Plantinga, "Self-Profile," in *Alvin Plantinga*, edited by James E. Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen, D. Reidel Publishing Company (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster, 1985), 38.

4. Pike, "Introduction," *God and Evil*, p. 4.

5. J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* LXIV no. 254 (1955); reprinted in Pike, *God and Evil*, pp. 46-60; cf. 46-47. Italics mine.

6. Mackie, *ibid.*, 47.

7. Mackie, *ibid.*, p. 49.

8. Thus, Mackie notes, as if it were a disadvantage, that the metaphysical contention 'Good cannot exist without evil' resolves the contradiction between (1) and (2) "only by qualifying some of the propositions that constitute the problem" (*ibid.*, p. 50).

9. Nelson Pike, "Hume on Evil," *Philosophical Review* LXXII no. 2 (1963); reprinted in Pike,

God and Evil, pp. 85-102.

10. Pike, "Hume on Evil," *ibid.*, p. 88.

11. Although Plantinga is far from explicit about this in his published writings, he suggests that he agrees with this account of God as subject of moral obligations regarding the conduct of creation, in his letter January 23, 1987 to Marilyn Adams: He complains that Scotus' principle "that God has no obligations to creatures to will one thing rather than another" "isn't at all obviously true" but rather "seems *to me* questionable at best" [italics mine].

12. Pike, "Introduction," *God and Evil*, p. 3. Cf. J. S. Mill, "Mr. Mansel on the Limits of Religious Thought," in Pike, *God and Evil*, pp. 37-45.

13. Pike, "Hume on Evil," *God and Evil*, p. 89.

14. Pike made these points in undergraduate lectures on the philosophy of religion given at Cornell University in the Falls of 1964 and 1965.

15. Pike, "Hume on Evil," *God and Evil*, pp. 93-95.

16. Pike, "Hume on Evil," *God and Evil*, pp. 95-97.

17. By his own self-description in "Self-Profile" in *Alvin Plantinga*, p. 37; cf. *God and Other Minds*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell U. Press, 1967), pp. 115-54; *The Nature of Necessity*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), ch. IX, 164-95.

18. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," *Alvin Plantinga*, pp. 42-43.

19. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," *Alvin Plantinga*, pp. 43-44; cf. *The Nature of Necessity*, ch. IX, p. 165.

20. Once again, this comes out in correspondence, in his letter to Marilyn Adams of January 23, 1987.

21. See Plantinga's unpublished letter to Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, of February 23, 1987.

22. See Plantinga's unpublished letter of February 27, 1987, to Marilyn Adams.

23. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," *Alvin Plantinga*, pp. 34-35.

24. *The Nature of Necessity*, pp. 164-93.

25. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," *Alvin Plantinga*, p. 36.

26. Plantinga's letter of February 23, 1987, to Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump.

27. Plantinga, "The Probabilistic Argument from Evil," *Philosophical Studies* 35 (1979), pp. 1-53; esp. pp. 46-47.

28. Plantinga's letter of June 12, 1987 to Marilyn Adams.

29. Plantinga's letter of June 12, 1987 to Marilyn Adams.

30. It seems to me highly unlikely that Mackie intended to be so generous in his concessions. Assuming that 'evil' in (2) refers to evils of the amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world, *R** can do its job only if the world *A* referred to contains evils of the amounts and kinds featured in the actual world, *and nevertheless* combines significantly free creatures with a favorable balance of good over evil a greater than which God cannot obtain in any possible world it is within His power to weakly actualize. I would expect Mackie to press Plantinga on the vagueness of "A is on balance a very good world," to query whether a world containing evils in the amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world *could* be a world good enough for God to make, to suggest that the burden of proof is on Plantinga to explain how this could be, and to conclude that—without further argument to the contrary—it is more plausible to suppose the opposite: *viz.*, that if God cannot create significantly free creatures without getting evils in the amounts and of the kinds found in the actual world, He should forego making them altogether and rest content with the beauty of the mountains,

etc. Plantinga's actual defense of the compossibility of R^* with (1) focuses on the scope of God's power; a full defense would require him to explore the value question of whether and how horrific evils could be defeated.

31. J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *God and Evil*, p. 47.
32. H. J. McCloskey, "God and Evil," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. X, no. 39 (1960); reprinted in Pike, *God and Evil*, pp. 61-84; esp. p. 84.
33. Feodor Dostoevski, "Rebellion," from *The Brothers Karamazov*; reprinted in Pike, *God and Evil*, pp. 6-16.
34. J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *God and Evil*, p. 54. Cf. H. J. McCloskey, who simply takes for granted an interpretation of 'perfect goodness' in terms of 'benevolence' in "God and Evil," *God and Evil*, p. 84.
35. Plantinga, "The Probabilistic Argument from Evil," *Philosophical Studies* 35 (1979), pp. 46-47.
36. Dostoevski, "Rebellion," *God and Evil*, pp. 14-16.
37. Robert Adams emphasizes condition (a) in "Must God Create the Best?" and condition (b) in "Existence, Self-interest, and the Problem of Evil," both reprinted in *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology*, New York/Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 51-64, 65-76.
38. I have examined this claim a little in my articles, "Redemptive Suffering: A Christian Solution to the Problem of Evil," in *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright, Cornell University Press, 1986, 248-67, and "Duns Scotus and the Goodness of God," in *Faith and Philosophy*, October, 1987, pp. 486-505.
39. I develop this idea somewhat in "Redemptive Suffering: A Christian Solution to the Problem of Evil," *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 264-65.
40. Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1984), pp. 253-71; esp. p. 268.
41. John Wippel, "The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy: A Thomistic Perspective," *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1984), pp. 272-90; esp. p. 275.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-76.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-77.
44. Wippel, *ibid.*, p. 283.
45. Wippel, *ibid.*, pp. 283-84.
46. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, ch. IX, p. 195.
47. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, ch. IX, p. 195.
48. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," *Alvin Plantinga*, p. 35.
49. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," *Alvin Plantinga*, p. 35.