

Gavin Umrarong

11/16/09

PHIL 497 Paper

The Mystery of Evil & the Existence of God

I. Introduction

Pain and suffering is no doubt evident in our world. We cannot escape this reality no matter how desperately we try. If there is a God out there, why would He allow the creatures He created to suffer so much pain? In other words, how can there be moral justification for evil? Events like murder, rape, the holocaust, Katrina, and 9/11, causes people to bring into question if the existence of evil is contradictory to God's very nature/essence. To put it another way, if God is all-Good and completely Sovereign, why does He permit evil and suffering to occur in the world? Shouldn't God stop evil if He is all those things He claims to be? In order to begin to address these questions, I must declare my position on the argument. Also, I must set the religious grounds in which I will argue when I mention the word 'God'. From a Christian standpoint, I will show that God can exist as a Righteous Being, and that there is justification Him to permit evil to exist at the same time.

This paper will consist of the following components: the biblical definitions of good and evil, some main theistic arguments against naturalism, finitism, and dualism, reasons why God permits the existence of evil, what it means for God to be Righteous and Merciful, and the biblical solution to the existential problem of evil.

II. Definition of Terms

Before I begin, I must set the presuppositions in which all my theistic arguments flow from. I believe the following: all the claims of the Christian Bible are true and the God of the Christian Bible exists. Therefore, I will be arguing within this context. As a side note, when I use the pronoun "He", I am referring to the Christian God. And when I use the word "evil", I will use the term synonymously as "doing bad" and "the absence of good." Also, I will define the terms "good" and "evil" from the biblical standpoint.

Good is defined as an action or deed which God performs. In the biblical context, “good” is God accurately displaying who He is (“making Himself known”) is the definition of “good”. What is meant for God to be righteous is for Him “to continue to display” who He is. That is how we determine whether God is Righteous or not. If God is not displaying Himself, His allegiance to that righteousness is put into question. But, God cannot act contrary to who He is: Righteous. God *must* continually to “do good”. If God did not, then He would be a liar. But God can’t contradict or deny Himself (Psalm 139). He is the very essence of Truth. The bible claims in Ephesians 3:9 that God created all things in the world so that He can display His goodness. According to one biblical scholar, Righteousness is “God’s unswerving and unwavering devotion to uphold the value of His name”.¹ In other words, righteousness is a continuation of God doing Good. In contrast, it can also be seen then that humans can do good, yet not be Righteous. For example, we can donate to charity and help the poor, but those acts or deeds don’t make us a Righteous person because we don’t continually do them.

In contrast, evil can be defined as not “doing” good and not being righteous. Evil is the absence of good. Evil is what “God has deemed not good.” The bible describes *Evil as sin*. Specifically, sin means “to not achieve the standard by which good is set.” For example, you know the right thing to do but you choose to do the opposite instead. Although one can say this is an instance of God permitting evil to exist, God Himself does not commit evil, only humans do. At the same time, God is still in full control of evil to every degree. One of the main claims of the bible is that “the human heart” is wicked and depraved (Jeremiah 17:9). By “human heart”, I mean it is the center in each person where all emotions, affections, and desires come from. The human heart reflects our attitude on various subjects. So in relation to God, the human heart, by nature, is hostile towards God. Did God originally create man this way? The answer to that is no. Instead, humans rebelled against Him. By the Bible’s claim, only God is “Good” and “Righteous”. And by definition, if we do not do what is deemed good by God’s standard, then we are the opposite, evil. Evil is doing what “humans deem good in their own eyes” (pride). The opposite of pride is humility, which was THE number one trait Christ exhibited

¹ (Piper 2003)

when He was on earth. In the next four sections, I will provide the opponent's views on the existence of God in relation to evil, and why they all fail to disprove the existence of God and account for the reality of evil.

III. The Argument Against Naturalism: Part 1

The first argument in the problem of evil is proposed by those who protest that *God cannot exist because there is too much evil evident in life.*² They see no logical contradiction within their system since they do not have to prove that evil coexists with a good Creator. Evil exists; therefore, the Creator does not. This is categorically stated. But here, Christianity provides a counterchallenge to remind the skeptics that they have not escaped the problem of contradiction. If evil exists, then one must assume that a moral law exists by which to measure good and evil. But if a moral law exists, must not one posit an ultimate source of moral, or at least an objective basis for a moral law?³ By an objective basis, I mean something that is transcendingly true at all times, regardless of whether I believe or not. This argument is very compelling and must be given due consideration by anyone who denies the existence of God but accepts the presence of evil.

According to C.S. Lewis' previous argument against God, he believed that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust.⁴ But, when he asked this question, he wondered how had he gotten this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. Or another example: if a man feels wet when he falls into water. He feels the wet because man is not a water animal. But for a fish, it would not feel wet. So back to Lewis argument: Lewis had tried to give up his idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of his own. But if he did that, then his argument against God collapsed too – for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please his interests.⁵ Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist –in other words, that the whole reality was senseless—Lewis found that he was forced to assume that one part of reality –namely his idea of justice –was full of sense. Consequently atheism turns out to be too simple. *If the whole universe has no meaning, we should*

² (Zacharias 2000, 112)

³ (*Ibid.*, 112)

⁴ (Lewis 1952, 38)

⁵ (*Ibid.*, 38)

never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark.⁶ Dark would be a work without meaning. Hence, if we claim that there is injustice and justice in the world, then you have to assume that there is a moral law by which to measure them. And if you assume a moral law, then you have to assume a moral law giver that is objective and transcendently true at all times. For the Christian, that moral law giver is God.

In contrast to the Christian's assertion that God is necessary in order to posit the notions of good and evil, the skeptic responds by asking, "Why cannot evolution explain our moral sense? In other words, naturalists want to seek to explain good and evil apart from God. The skeptic's questions can be broken up into three parts:⁷ First, *they deny causality as an argument to prove God's existence*. They would ask questions like, "Why do we have to have a cause? Why can't the universe just be?" Second, *they deny design as an argument for God's existence*. For example, "Why do we need a designer? Why could it not have all just come together with the appearance of design?" Third, *they deny morality as an argument for God's existence*. Why do we need to posit a moral or a moral law source? Why can't it just be a pragmatic reality? The skeptic wants a *cause* for suffering or a design for suffering, but *they have already denied that either of these is necessary to account for every effect*.

This attempt to deny God because of the presence of evil is so loaded with the illogical that one would wonder why skeptics would accept it. Not one proponent of evolutionary ethics has explained how an impersonal, amoral first cause through a nonmoral process has produced a moral basis of life, while at the same time denying any objective moral basis for good and evil.⁸ Does it not seem odd that of all the permutations and combinations that a random universe might afford we should end up with the ideas of the true, the good, and the beautiful?⁹ In reality, why call anything good or evil? Why not call it blue or green, like Bertrand

⁶ (*Ibid.*, 39)

⁷ (Zacharias 2000, 112)

⁸ (*Ibid.*, 113)

⁹ (*Ibid.*, 113)

Russell did? That way, we settle it as different preferences (p. 113).¹⁰ With colors, you differentiate blue and green by seeing. But when it comes to good and bad, how do you differentiate between the two? According to Russell, he believes it to be on the basis of feeling.¹¹ But one can argue that in some cultures, they love their neighbors, and in another one they eat them, both on the basis of feeling. Does Russell have a personal preference? This being said, good and evil cannot be differentiated on the basis of feeling; therefore, it must be on an objective moral basis.

The truth is that we cannot escape the existential side of pain by denying that a moral law exists. *Objective moral values exist only if God exists.* For example, would it be *just* for me to mutilate babies for entertainment? Or, if I took a child and killed him before his mother's eye, would I have done anything wrong? By the skeptics' claim, it would not be wrong because they had just denied that objective moral values exist.¹² Why do we even pose such questions about good and evil if there is no moral law? Every reasonable person would agree that it is wrong. We know that objective moral values like this example do exist; therefore, God must exist. Examining those premises and their validity presents a very strong argument. In fact, J.L. Mackie, an atheist who challenged the existence of God on the basis of the reality of evil, granted at least this logical connection when he said:¹³

“We might well argue...that objective intrinsically prescriptive features, supervenient upon natural ones, constitute so odd a cluster of qualities and relations that they are most unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary course of events, without an all-power God to create them.”

Therefore, the conclusion must be agreed upon that nothing can be intrinsically, prescriptively good unless there also exists a God who has fashioned the universe thus.¹⁴ But that is the very Being skeptics want to deny

¹⁰ (Zacharias 2007, 190)

¹¹ Bertrand Russell makes this argument in a BBC debate on the existence of God with Father Frederick Copleston in 1948. This debate can be found in *Bertrand Russell on God and Religion*, ed. Al Seckel (Buffalo, NO: Prometheus Books, 1986); see pages 138-139 for the relevant discussion. A transcript of this debate is also available online through several sources, such as <http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/p20.htm>; this conversation appears under the subtitle "The Moral Argument."

¹² (Zacharias 2000, 115)

¹³ (Mackie 1984, 14)

¹⁴ (Zacharias 2000, 113)

because of the existence of evil. Recognizing that if evil is admitted, then an objective moral law might need to be invoked, the skeptic needs to find another reason or give up the argument entirely.

IV. The Argument Against Naturalism: Part 2

A second approach skeptics try to use is by asking the question of *why God could not have made us to always choose good*. Alvin Plantinga of the University of Notre, in his book “Warrant and Proper Function”, has made a strong and compelling argument against this challenge of the skeptic. He argues that this option bears a false view of what God’s omnipotence means.¹⁵ Omnipotence does not mean “everything.” It only means that which is possible to do without making omnipotent to mean omnivolitional, meaning God can will anything. No, God cannot make square circles because the definitions lose their parameters in the process.¹⁶ We must realize that God cannot do that which is mutually exclusive and logically impossible. God cannot will himself into extinction. God cannot make a stone so large that he cannot lift it because the question poses a mutual exclusivity. The problem is not with God; the problem is with the question. If it were the case that God could do anything and everything, even that which is mutually exclusive, then he could also contradict his character, rendering the problem of evil unresolved. The very reason we raise the question is because we seek coherence.¹⁷ In the next section, I will discuss about the second argument posed by skeptics.

V. Is God a Limited Being? The Argument Against Finitism

Finite godism believes that God is beyond the universe but is not in supreme control of it (as opposed to theism).¹⁸ Basically, finite godism, while not denying either evil or the reality of God, denies the infinity of God. In other words, good lacks infinite power in its struggle with evil. God is either not infinite in love and

¹⁵ (Zacharias 2007, 191)

¹⁶ (Plantinga 1993)

¹⁷ (Zacharias 2007, 191)

¹⁸ (Geisler and Feinberg 1980, 271)

does not care to overcome evil (called sadism), or else He is not infinite in power and cannot overcome evil. So the basic argument for finitism is as follows: ¹⁹

- (1) God exists.
- (2) If God were all-powerful, He would destroy evil.
- (3) Evil is not destroyed.
- (4) Therefore, God (even if He desires to destroy evil – and most assume He does) is not all-powerful.

There are several problems in finite godism's response to evil. First it is not really a solution to evil. It leaves evil undefeated and the situation in perpetual conflict, The only real guarantee that evil will be defeated is if there is an infinitely loving and powerful God –the very premise finite godism has given up. Second, there is no need to despair about the power of God and give up His infinity simply because evil has not yet been destroyed. If there is an infinitely good and powerful God (as the theist claims), then He is the proof that evil will one day be destroyed just as the Bible predicts in the book of Revelation. Further, according to many theists, a finite god is not God at all. For if every finite being needs a cause, then there is a Cause of all finite beings which cannot itself be caused, that is, God. No finite, changing being can be uncaused, since as finite or limited it is dependent on something else for its existence (it is caused).

Evil and imperfection in the world does not prove God is finite. God may have some good purpose for evil, either (a) known to us, or (b) not known to us but known only to Himself. The only way one can refute this possibility is either (a) know the mind of God, or (b) prove there is no God. Since the antitheist has no access to the former and no success at the latter, one need not give up the belief in an infinite God. The theist may agree that this is not the best of all possible worlds, but he does insist that it is the best possible way to attain the best possible world. That is, it is possible that permitting evil may be the precondition for achieving the greatest good (as immediate pain is often the best way to permanent pleasure). ²⁰

VI. Is God Responsible for Evil? The Argument Against Dualism

¹⁹ (*Ibid.*, 331)

²⁰ (*Ibid.*, 286)

I shall now discuss the argument against the view that good and evil are in eternal opposition. Theist claims that Good and evil are opposites. But the dualist claim that nothing can be the source of its opposite; for example, evil cannot come from good. It follows then, that both good and evil must have existed eternally. That is, there is an eternal first principle (some say substance) at the basis of all good, and another first principle at the root of all evil.²¹ There are two reactions to this argument from a theistic perspective.

First, *good can give rise to evil, not essentially but incidentally*.²² Likewise, a good God can will that men be free to enjoy life and thereby incidentally given them the power to bring misery on themselves (through the God-given power of free choice). Second, not all opposites have first principles, especially not eternal first principles (or substances). For example, short and tall are opposites, but this does not mean that there is an eternal (and infinitely) tall being versus an eternal (and infinitely) short one.

For the second argument, dualists claim that the theist cannot escape the following conclusion:²³

- (1) God is the author of everything that exists.
- (2) Evil is the author that exists.
- (3) Therefore, God is the author of evil.

Since theists affirm God's sovereignty and creative power over all that exists, they cannot deny premise 1. Likewise, since theists do not, like pantheists, deny the reality of evil, they cannot deny premise 2. But this means theists seem stuck with an unwanted conclusion, since it makes God directly responsible for creating evil. Theists respond to both premises:

First, God is the author for some things only indirectly. For example, God created freedom, but He does not perform acts of evil Himself or through man's free choice. To state it another way, God does not create evil directly or essentially but only *incidentally*. God is directly responsible only for the *fact* of freedom, not for all the *acts* of freedom. Of course, God did create the *possibility* of evil when He made men free. God is indirectly responsible for evil in that He made evil possible. But the possibility of evil is actually a good – it is necessary

²¹ (*Ibid.*, 328)

²² (*Ibid.*, 329)

²³ (*Ibid.*, 329)

for human freedom. The power of free choice is a good power; the fact that men abuse freedom does not make freedom bad. For example, men abuse everything, including the water and air in their environment, but this obviously does not mean that water and air are bad.²⁴

Many theists also object to the second premise. Evil is not a “thing” (or substance). Evil is a *privation*, or absence of good. Evil exists in another entity (as rust exists in a car or rot exists in a tree), but does not exist in itself.²⁵ Nothing can be totally evil (in a metaphysical sense). One cannot have a *totally* rusted car or a totally moth-eaten garment. For if it was completely destroyed, then it would not exist at all. The Christian points to Scripture which says everything God made was “good” (Gen. 1:31); even today “every creature of God is good” (1 Tim. 4:11), and “nothing is unclean in itself” (Rom. 14:14). To be sure, the Bible teaches that men are totally depraved in a moral sense, since sin has extended to the whole man, including his mind and will (Rom. 3; Eph. 2) But total depravity is to be taken in an extensive sense (affecting the whole man), not in an intensive sense (destroying the very essence of man). When the theist says that evil is no “thing” (substance) he is not saying evil is “nothing” (that is, unreal). Evil is a *real* privation. For example, Blindness is real – it is the real privation of sight. Likewise it is *real* to be maimed – it is a genuine lack of limb or sense organ. Evil is not a mere absence, however. Arms and eyes are absent in stones, but we would not say that stones are *deprived* of arms and eyes. A privation is more than an absence; it is an absence of some form of perfection that *should be there* (by its very nature).²⁶

One further point should be made about dualism. It faces the following dilemma, both alternatives of which lead to theism:²⁷

- (1) Good and evil are either judged by a standard beyond themselves or they are judged by each other.
- (2) But if they are judged by a standard beyond themselves, then that is the one and only ultimate by which all is judged (which is actually the theistic definition of “God”).

²⁴ (*Ibid.*, 329)

²⁵ (*Ibid.*, 330)

²⁶ (*Ibid.*, 330)

²⁷ (*Ibid.*, 330)

- (3) If good is judged by evil, then evil is the single ultimate by which all else is measured.
- (4) If evil is judged by good, then good is the single ultimate by which all else is measured.
- (5) In both cases there is one, not two, ultimate standard (contrary to dualism).

Augustine noted that evil is measured by good and not the reverse. For when we take all that we call *evil* away from something, then what is left is better (for example, remove all rust from a car and one has a better car). But when we take all that is called *good* from something, then nothing is left. *Good*, therefore, is the positive and *evil* is the privation, or lack of good.²⁸

VII. Reasons why God Allows the Existence of Evil

Now, let us go back to the skeptic's next question: "why God couldn't make everyone good". In a world where love is the supreme ethic, freedom must be built in. *A love that is programmed or compelled is not love; it is merely a conditioned response or self-serving.*²⁹ Once again, even thinkers hostile to Christianity inadvertently assert truths that agree with Christian thought. For example, Jean Paul Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, says:

"The man who wants to be loved does not desire the enslavement of the beloved. He is not bent on becoming the object of passion, which flows forth mechanically. He does not want to possess an automation, and if we want to humiliate him, we need to try to only persuade him that the beloved's passion is the result of a psychological determinism. The lover will then feel that both his love and his being are cheapened... If the beloved is transformed into an automation, the lover finds himself alone."³⁰

From Sartre's quote, we can see that *Love compelled is a precursor to loneliness.*³¹ Sartre is absolutely right here. When love is a compelled state of mind enforced by design, it is not love and in fact with reasoning actually is a precursor to loneliness. *Love by choice within the parameter of the trust that is sacred is a guarantee of legitimate meaning.* To desire love without the freedom not to love is to ask for something other than human. It is been said that all of our human miseries are really a reflection of our grandeur.³² May I dare

²⁸ (*Ibid.*, 330)

²⁹ (Zacharias 2000, 118)

³⁰ (Sartre 1984, 478)

³¹ (Zacharias 2000, 118)

³² (Zacharias 2007, 192)

suggest that the very reason we ask the question of our miseries is because of our dignity, and that it is not the intrinsic custom of naturalism?

So, what good ends can come out of evil? The reason is that God uses evil in order to produce a greater good.³³ There are several elements of this theodicy. First, *God freely created the world, not because He had to, but because He wanted to do so.* That is the mystery that no one has the answer to. Second, *God created creatures like Himself who could freely love Him.* But such creatures could also hate Him. Third, *God desires all men to love Him, but will not force any against their will to love Him.* Forced love is not love. Finally, God's love is magnified when we return His love (since "He first" loved us) as well as when we do not. It shows how great He is that He will love even those who hate Him (Luke 23:34). Thus, in the end the greatest good will be achieved in several ways:³⁴

(1) God will have shared His love with all men (John 3:16).

(2) Throughout all God will be glorified in that (a) 'His sovereign will had prevailed; (b) His love is magnified whether it is accepted or rejected; (c) He has defeated evil by forgiving sin (through the cross) and by separating good from evil forever (through the final judgment); and (d) He has produced the best world achievable (where the most men possible are saved and secured from evil forever).

There are two very important aspects of this theodicy that should be stressed.³⁵ First, it is a "best-way" (versus a 'best-world) theodicy. That is, this present evil world is not the best world possible, but it is the best way to achieve the best world. *Permitting evil is a precondition of producing the best world.* For example, in the book of Genesis, Joseph said to his brothers who had sold him into slavery, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for Good" (Gen. 50:20). Because of God's plan for Joseph, Joseph was able to become the second commander in Egypt and save his family and the countries of Canaan and Egypt from a devastating famine.

VIII. The Righteousness of God

³³ (Geisler and Feinberg 1980, 333-4)

³⁴ (*Ibid.*, 334)

³⁵ (*Ibid.*, 334)

I will now discuss more on what it means for God to be “righteous”. To elaborate more on the character of God’s Righteousness, let me explain two things about God. First, *the God of the Bible reveals Himself as “the Author of life” and as “the Being in whom all goodness dwells”*.³⁶ God has the power to take life, and He has the power to restore it. The chasm between the skeptic and the Christian is huge, right from the start. God is not just good. This means that with reference to God we are dealing with more than moral issues of right and wrong, pleasure or pain. *We are dealing with a transcendent source of goodness that is opted for, not because it is “better in a hierarchy of options, but because it is the very basis from which all differences are made.*³⁷ Moral categories, for us, often move in comparisons and hierarchies. We talk in term of judging or feeling that one thing is better than another. Our culture is more advanced morally than someone else’s culture, at least so we may think. God’s existence changes those varying categories and moves us not into comparative categories but into a presentation of the very essence of what the word *goodness* is based upon: God is holy.

This difference is what makes the argument almost impossible for skeptics to grasp. Holiness is not merely goodness. “Why did God not create us to choose only good?” “Why do bad things happen to good people?” The reality is that opposite of evil, in degree, may be goodness. But the opposite of absolute evil, in kind, is absolute holiness. In the biblical context, the idea of holiness is the tremendous “otherness” of God Himself. Holy means “to be set apart from”. God does not just reveal Himself as good; He reveals Himself as holy. The holiness of God is like light in a dark world. *Holiness discloses what light itself is* – the source of discovering and liberating what the lie has ensnared. An example of this description can be found from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. He described his awe-stricken state when God revealed Himself to him. Isaiah, a morally good man, nevertheless fell on his face and immediately sensed that he was unfit to be in God’s presence. Why? Isaiah was not just in the presence of someone better than he was. *He was in the presence of the One by whom all purity finds its point of reference.*³⁸ That is why Isaiah was speechless.

³⁶ (Zacharias 2000, 123)

³⁷ (*Ibid.*, 124)

³⁸ (*Ibid.*, 124)

So if God is Holy, what are humans? According to the following passage from the Book of Romans in the New Testament, basically, it teaches that all of humanity is guilty of disobeying God:

THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,
 THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;
 THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,
 THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

[...]

¹⁸ THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES. ³⁹

So from this passage, we can clearly see that all mankind does not desire or will to know or understand God. By our very nature, humans do not have the moral capability to know God on their own. For example, when a man steals a horse, when does he become a horse thief? You don't become a horse thief when you steal a horse. The reason why he stole the horse is because he is a horse thief. Likewise, we are inherently evil. The book of Psalm, chapter 14, states that God has observed all of human history, and has found no one that practices "good". In other words, we are depraved and helpless people that cannot get right with God because our "so-called good deeds" are not satisfactory to God's expectations. His expectations are too high for mankind to meet; and mankind's attitude is too corrupted to care. God's demands a perfect sacrifice from man, but man does not have the sufficient means to provide it. They are just too many offenses on our record and humans continually keep making mistakes every day. So, it is impossible on our own to get right with God. No one is inherently good. Worth is only found in God, as the Bible claims. All humans are evil no matter who it is. In short, in God's eyes, humans deserve the wrath of God because they are the following: unrighteous, ignorant, straying, useless, and evil. Yet for now, God still has mercy on the world. The mystery is why He would have anything to do with us in the first place? ⁴⁰

IX. The Mystery of God's Benevolence

³⁹ (Macarthur 2006, 1664)

⁴⁰ This is a reference to the story of the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5-7. Here, Jesus speaks of the true demands of the law, that a man must be perfect in every way. He shows that this is Him, and that He liberates us from this demand of perfection by being perfect Himself.

Hence, *there is evil in the world because God has mercy on the whole human race, in varying degrees.*

Since humans have rebelled against God, all humans deserve God's Wrath because they could not keep God's Law of morality. Despite that fact, God gives all mankind what they do not deserve: the limited time on earth to live. Humans deserve worse than the condition that they are experiencing presently. If God were just Righteous, then he would have to destroy the human race, since that is what it means to be Righteous (good). *By God's very nature, God cannot be around sin.* Sin (evil) would be obliterated if it were around the presence of God. He absolutely hates it! According to the bible, God is Holy that no human can be around Him: "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" You can only approach God if you have a representative that both represent God and mankind. That mediator is Jesus Christ. For example, there is a canyon, where on one side God is standing, while on the opposite side, you are standing, and below the canyon is a lake of fire. Your goal is to try and reach God but you do not have a way across. But, graciously, God offers a bridge for you to cross over, that bridge is Jesus. Likewise, Jesus is the bridge that restores the relationship between God and mankind.

The ultimate solution the Bible offers is the gift of salvation. By this, I mean that God has already paid for the crimes that a person has committed against Him. By God's very nature, *God is not obligated to save humans.* God is like a judicial judge who cannot let a criminal go because the criminal has broken the law. The judge has to prosecute the person because it is the judge's job. And it is the duty of the judge to uphold the law to its fullest or else the judge would not be a fair judge. Likewise, God is Righteous, and He is free to leave us in the mess we made, and condemn us to everlasting torment. But since God loved the world, God has given the possibility of redemption to Himself despite our disobedient judgment by accepting his forgiveness (John 3:16).

But, *it is God who enables men to come to Him,* according to John 6:44. Man cannot come to God on his own will because man by nature is rebellious against God. Man can just respond to God's invitation if he or she has realized how evil and depraved they are, and how much they need the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. So, back to the original point: Why doesn't God save everyone? Like I mentioned earlier, God is not obligated to save humans. Yet, God has mercy on whomever He wants and wishes to save since He is the Creator and the

Righteous God, according to Romans 9:18. When a person becomes a Christian, God gives that person a completely new spiritual and moral capability that a mind apart from Christ could never achieve.⁴¹ In other words, apart from God imputing His Righteousness through Jesus Christ, by faith, onto us, humans are unrighteous in God's sight. Hence, we need a righteousness that is *alien* and apart from ourselves.

How has God been able to love the world so that He can spare the world from being condemned? God satisfied His Righteous wrath by transferring That Wrath onto His Son, whom was innocent of any crimes, on the cross. Why did he have to do it that way? Couldn't He just simply forgiven us and swept all the evil under the rug? The answer to that is – No. For by definition, The Righteous God demands an acceptable sacrifice or payment that is able to cover “all the crimes committed against Him.” And that *worthy sacrifice* is Jesus Christ, as the Bible claims. If Jesus did not die on the cross, then God's character of Righteousness would be put into question because He did not execute all of us. But because of Christ's death, God can be both Righteous and Merciful. Only in Christianity, can God be both of these attributes. That is why humanity needs Jesus Christ. It is because He is the only one that can change our wretched nature, and give us a new nature that can seek after God for help. Unless we realize our human condition, Christ's offer of forgiveness and transformation will mean nothing significant. That is why Jesus said in John 3:1-8, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” Likewise, only God can transform a wicked person into a good one.

X. Will God Allow Evil to Continue On?

So, going back to the original argument:

- (1) If God is all-powerful, He could destroy evil.
- (2) If God is all-good, He would destroy evil.
- (3) But evil exists.
- (4) Therefore, there is no such God.

⁴¹ (Macarthur 2006, 1779; see note 4:23)

The theist responds to this argument by first pointing out that *premise 3 places an unjustified time limit on God*.⁴² It says, in effect, that since God has not yet done anything to defeat evil we are absolutely sure He never will. But this cannot be known for certain by any finite mind. It is possible that God will yet defeat evil in the future. This is indeed what Christians believe, for it is predicted in the Bible in the book of Revelation, chapters twenty through twenty-two. God allows evil to exist because of God's gift of His *grace* to the human race. But according to the Book of Acts, Chapter 17, verse 31, God is defined as a Righteous Judge *who has already appointed a day when He will judge all the people of the earth that has ever lived*. According to the Christian view, God will separate those who have sought His forgiveness through God's Son, Jesus Christ, and those that have rejected His offer and have continued to rebel against Him. Meaning, *freedom to respond* will one day be taken away. Those who love God and seek forgiveness through Jesus Christ will spend eternity with Him, while those who hate God will spend eternity completely separated from His mercy, but fully subjected to His Righteous Wrath. No one can judge another person's heart, but God will judge the living and the dead. He knows whether we had acceptance or rebellion in our hearts, and welcomes us or separates us from him— all based on our own hearts choosing. God puts us where we chose to be put, based on that inner self allotment. To illustrate my point better, let me mention a passage from C.S. Lewis on why God does not immediately destroy evil:⁴³

Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in disguise and starting a sort of secret society to undermine the devil? Why is He not landing in force, invading it? Is it that He is not strong enough? Well, Christians believe He is going to land in force; we do not know when. But we can guess why He is delaying. He wants to give us the chance of joining His side freely. God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. *When that happens, it is the end of the world*. [The end of all who are of the world of sin, but the beginning of those that are of God's goodness.]

When the author [of life] walks on the stage, the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream or something else – something it never entered your head to conceive –comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left?

For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying

⁴² (Geisler and Feinberg 1980, 274)

⁴³ (Lewis 1952, 65)

you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it.

So, going back to why God can not yet destroy evil. God cannot destroy evil because if He did, then that would mean man's limited freedom would have to be destroyed as well. It may be that the only way God could eliminate evil, strictly speaking, would be to make robots out of men. But if men were reduced to machines, there no longer would be a *moral* world. For a moral world is possible only where there are moral (personal) beings. Without a moral world there would be no *moral* problem of evil. The theist points out that if we grant the existence of the theistic God we automatically have an answer to the problem of evil. The argument may be stated as follows:⁴⁴

- (1) Since God is all-good, He has the *will* to defeat evil.
- (2) Since God is all powerful, He has the *power* to defeat evil.
- (3) Evil is not *yet* defeated.
- (4) Therefore, evil *will* one day be defeated.

The very nature of the theistic God demands that He will do whatever good is possible to be done about the situation. If it does not now *seem* to men as finite beings that this is so, it is because we cannot see the "whole picture" or the "final end".⁴⁵ We, as humans, only see a part of a picture, due to our limited finite minds.

XI. Closing Thoughts

From what you can see, the problem of evil appears to be better positioned as a mystery than as a problem. Gabriel Marcel, the French philosopher and Christian existentialist, defined mystery as a problem that encroaches on its own data.⁴⁶ The problem of pain and suffering is real and individually experienced. Not only is the problem real and felt, *pain and suffering is also universal*. But if there is the reality of it and the

⁴⁴ (Geisler and Feinberg 1980, 274)

⁴⁵ (*Ibid.*, 275)

⁴⁶ (Marcel 1995, 19)

universality of it, there is also the complexity of it. In summary, the two approaches skeptics try to take fails. You cannot posit evil without a transcendent moral law, which the evolutionary ethics cannot sustain. And you cannot gain the highest ethic “love” without the possibility of freedom. The first approach sends us into lives of contradiction. The second demands a contradiction of God, which is impossible because God cannot deny himself of His nature: Righteous. In striking contrast, the Christian message recognizes the horror of evil and seeks to offer a morally justifiable reason for God to allow suffering.

So from my paper, you see that the problem of evil from the Christian standpoint is: humans. We are the cause of all injustice in the world because we have rebelled against a Holy, Merciful and Righteous God. Our human hearts is corrupt and full of all kinds of wicked thoughts. The existence of evil does not disprove the existence of God. Instead, it shows that God does exist and He has a plan for evil to coexist alongside His nature of Righteousness. Also, if God didn't exist, how would you know that something is evil or good if you didn't have the other counterpart to contrast it with? God can exist without the existence of evil, but humans are a different story. For if God did not allow evil to co-exist, then the choice to respond to God would not be love, but mechanical. God realizes the existential problem of pain and He will one day solve the problem, but *only* for those that have made the decision to follow Him entirely by believing in the Christ, so that our being abides in His perfect, sinless being.

Bibliography

- Geisler, Norman L. and Feinberg, Paul D. 1980. INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE. MICHIGAN: Baker Academic.
- Lewis, C.S. 1952. MERE CHRISTIANITY. NEW YORK: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Macarthur, John. 2006. The MACARTHUR STUDY BIBLE: New American Standard Bible Updated Edition. California: The Lockman Foundation.
- Mackie, J.L. quoted by Moreland, J.P. 1984. "Reflections on Meaning in Life without God." The Trinity Journal, 9NS, 14.
- Marcel, Gabriel. 1995 The Philosophy of Existentialism, Harari. Manyan, trans. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 19.
- Piper, John. 2003. Desiring God. Resource Library: The Fame of His Name and the Freedom of Mercy. http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/2003/123_The_Fame_of_His_Name_and_the_Freedom_of_Mercy [accessed November 14, 2009].
- Plantinga, Alvin. 1993. Warrant and Proper Function. New York: Oxford University Press, and his essay "Naturalism Defeated," available at <http://www.homestead.com/philofreligion/files/alspaper.htm>
- Sartre, Jean Paul. 1984. Being and Nothingness. New York: Pocket Books, 478.
- Zacharias, Ravi. 2007. BEYOND OPINION: LIVING THE FAITH WE DEFEND. Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.
- Zacharias, Ravi. 2000. JESUS AMONG OTHER GODS: THE ABSOLUTE CLAIMS OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE. Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.