MARK DRISCOLL
MINISTRIES

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A Nobody Trying to Tell Everybody About Somebody,

Pastor Mark Driscoll

If God is Good Why is There Evil?
Research brief prepared by a research team

How can evil or suffering be reconciled with the Christian affirmation of the goodness and power of the God who created the world? The problem of evil is three-legged stool: 1) God is all powerful, 2) God is good, and 3) evil really does exist.

Various attempts to deal with evil do away with one of these three and "explain evil away" or reduce the problem. Perhaps God is not all-powerful, or maybe God is not good, or maybe evil is an illusion or we need a "bigger picture" (we are too close). We need to face evil in its radicality. In facing it we can know the real options available.

Definitions of evil

   Augustine said evil was a flaw, a lack of deficiency in something inherently good. Evil is that which deprives a being of some good that is proper to that being. But we need to make a distinction between evil and badness, or moral evil and natural evil. Moral evil is the result of choices of a responsible agent, whether intentional or negligence. Natural evil is suffering that occurs without a moral agent involved (hurricanes, floods, earthquakes). Humans make no (or very few) actions causing natural evils.

Basic Christian response

   God did not created evil and is not culpable for evil because God created a good world. God decided that it was better to have freedom than to have robots. Freedom is the ability to act in its own nature. Humans abused their freedom and sinned, thus introducing evil. This explains moral evil but not natural evil. Natural evil results from collisions that deprive another being of good.

Theologians on Evil

Irenaeus' view

   Humans were created with certain capacities for growth toward maturity. That capacity for Godward movement requires contact with and experience of good and evil, if truly informed decisions are to be made. The world is a for "soul-making." An encounter with evil is seen as a necessary prerequisite for spiritual growth and development.

   Human beings are created incomplete. In order for them to become what God intended them to be, they must participate in the world. God did not create humans as automatons, but individuals who are capable of responding freely to God. Good and evil are necessary presences within the world, in order that informed and meaningful human development may take place.

   This view is attractive to many because it emphasizes human freedom. An objection is that it appears to lend dignity to evil, by allocating it a positive role in the purpose of God. And evil seems necessary. Also, if suffering is seen simply as a means of advancing the spiritual developments of humanity, what are we to make of those events (Auschwitz, Rwanda, Sudan)

that destroy those who encounter them? This approach seems to make room for the presence of evil without giving any moral direction or stimulus to resist or overcome it.

Augustine's view

The dualists had an explanation for evil, which was the matter was inherently evil and the goal of salvation was to save humans from the evil material world and transfer us to a spiritual realm that is not contaminated by matter. Gnostics had a creator that molded eternally existing matter and a redeeming God that redeemed us from matter.

Augustine did not separate creation from redemption. He found it impossible to ascribe the existence of evil to creation, for this only transferred blame to God. For Augustine, God created the world good—it was free from the contamination of evil. So, where does evil come from? Evil is the direct consequence of the misuse of human freedom. God created humans with the freedom to choose good or evil. Sadly, humanity chose evil and as a result the world is contaminated by evil.

He knew this did not solve the problem of evil. How could humans choose evil, if there was no evil to choose? Evil had to be an option if it were to be accessible to human choice. Augustine located the origin of evil in satanic temptation, by which Satan lured Adam and Eve away from their creator. In this way God is not culpable for evil.

Where did Satan come from if God created the world good? A traces it back one more step. Satan was a fallen angel, who was originally created good. Lucifer was tempted to be like God and assumed authority that was not his. As a result he rebelled against God and spread that rebellion to the world.

Aquinas's view

Good does not will or cause evil, but he permits evil. He permits it because He can draw good out of evil. For Aquinas, we know God exists and is all-good, -powerful, -knowing from the nature of the world as contingent, good, and intelligible. Given that God exists, if there is evil, it must be that God is so powerful as to bring good even from evil.

See attached on Aquinas and evil.

Karl Barth's view

He called for complete rethinking of the issue. Barth argues that there was been an incorrect understanding of the omnipotence of God. He said that the idea of the omnipotence of God needs to be understood in the light of God's self-revelation in Jesus. He rejected starting with speculative notions of God's power and wanted to start with the belief in the triumph of God's grace over evil and suffering. Confidence in the ultimate triumph of grace enables believers to maintain hope and morale in the face of a world that is seemingly dominated by evil.

Biblical Overview of Evil by Henri Blocher

"**Introduction:** Every language contains words for 'evil' – that which ought not to be. A distinction is sometimes made between physical/metaphysical evil (misfortune, woe) and moral evil (offence, wrong), and the Bible includes terms for both kinds. The Hebrew *ra* occurs about

640 times, and 40 per cent of these cases refer to some calamity. There are many other words both for mishaps and for moral fault or sin. In NT Greek, the word *kakos* has a wide application: it is used to denote Lazarus' poverty and sores (Luke 16:25), the harm caused by a venomous snake-bite (Acts 28:5), and the moral evil of which Jesus and Paul are innocent (Mark 15:14; Acts 23:9) and which issues from the human heart (Mark 7:21); the word and its cognates occur 121 times. The other common NT words for evil are *ponēros* and *ponēria* (derived from *ponos*, toil or pain, Col. 4:13; Rev. 16:10–11), which occur 85 times; these refer to physical evil, to the bad condition of the eye (Matt. 6:23) and to pain resulting from plague (Rev. 16:2), but more often to that which is wicked and worthless, the store from which men and women, being evil, draw the evil things they do and say (in Matt. 12:35 *ponēros* is used three times; cf. v. 34). In classical Greek, *ponēros* may have been the stronger term, suggesting hardened malignity, but in the NT, while it is used more frequently than *kakos* to refer to moral evil, the latter is an equally strong word (Mark 7:21 and the parallel Matt. 15:19). Lexical studies are illuminating; however, the Bible's treatment of the theme is distinctive.

Biblical Contrasts: The biblical view of evil is finely balanced between pessimism and optimism. Several intriguing contrasts may be noted.

Essential good and real evil: The Bible powerfully affirms the goodness of all that exists. The refrain in the prologue (Gen. 1), 'and God saw that it was good', is heard seven times, with a concluding superlative (v. 31). Scripture contains countless songs of praise and (from the wisdom writers) commendations of cosmic orderliness, summed up in Paul's statement that 'Everything God created is good' (1 Tim. 4:4; cf. Titus 1:15a). Since in biblical monotheism only God and his creatures exist, this means that everything is good. At the same time, the Bible stands out among sacred texts for its preoccupation (some might say 'obsession') with evil. From Genesis 3 (the Fall) to Revelation 22 it repeatedly denounces human unrighteousness (see Rev. 22:11, 15, 18; cf. Mic. 3:8). Prophetic and apocalyptic discourse overflows with descriptions and predictions of calamities, bloodshed and destruction. People of God shudder at the pervasive nature of evil: 'The whole world is under the control of the evil one' (1 John 5:19); this age is 'the present evil age' (Gal. 1:4). The Lord's declaration 'that every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil (*raq ra*) all the time' (Gen. 6:5) proves to be true in every generation (Ps. 14:1–3; Rom. 3:9–18; Matt. 12:34, 39). And at the centre of the biblical narrative is the horrendous instrument of torture invented by Rome for its slaves, the cross.

God both hates and causes evil: This second contrast is almost a formal contradiction. Evil, in biblical theology, is totally alien to God: his 'eyes are too pure to look on evil' (Hab. 1:13); he is perfectly upright (Deut. 32:4); he 'is light; in him there is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5); 'God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone' (Jas. 1:13). On the other hand, this God claims to 'form the light and create darkness', to 'bring prosperity and create disaster (*ra*)' (Is. 45:7). Amos 3:3–8 denounces the shortsightedness of those who do not perceive the origin of devastating blows: 'When disaster (*rāâ*) comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?' (v. 6). Isaiah ironically reminds diplomats that the Lord 'too is wise and can bring disaster (*ra*)' (Is. 31:2). The King James Version translates Genesis 22:1 as 'God did tempt Abraham'. 2 Samuel 24:1 plainly states that the Lord 'incited David against [Israel], saying, "Go and take a census"', i.e. to commit a grievous sin, though 1 Chronicles 21:1 attributes that temptation to Satan.

Ezekiel 14:9 says, 'If the prophet is enticed to utter a [false] prophecy, I the Lord have enticed that prophet.' Other passages make similar points.

Does Scripture contain conflicting theologies? The evidence rules out this facile solution. The very texts that portray God as the author of evil also declare his indignation against evil: 2 Samuel 24 depicts the plague that God sent as punishment for David's sin (and thus agrees with 1 Chr. 21); the second part of Ezekiel 14:9 emphasizes that God holds the enticed prophet liable to capital punishment. Biblical writers employ paradox to signify mystery.

The Nature of Evil: It is important to define evil. Two biblical insights are relevant here: 1. evil has no independent existence but is a perversion of what is good; 2. sin is the greatest of evils, the root of all evil.

Evil as perversion: If only God and his creatures exist, and they are good, it follows that evil has no independent existence. This view, taught by Origen and by Augustine after he broke from Manichaeism (in which evil is an eternal substance), is firmly grounded in Scripture. Several Hebrew terms relating to evil connote nothingness or vacuousness, e.g. the four words in Zechariah 10:2 translated 'deceit', 'lie', 'false' and 'vain' in NIV. The first of these, *āwen* (fraud, vanity) was linked to *ayin* ('there is not'), by Gesenius' etymology, and is paired with it in the parallel of Isaiah 41:24 and 29. The gods of heathenism are "worthless nothings" (Ps. 96:5), not "a god" or "gods." In Greek, the prefix a- is negative (*adikia, anomia*, etc.), as are the common symbols of evil: darkness; disease; destruction.

To view evil as the loss or absence of good yields no ground to minimizing theories. Evil is no optical illusion, no mere local imperfection that promotes universal harmony. Evil is real, drawing its reality from created things; it is the perversion and corruption of the good. This makes it more heinous than it would be if it had independent existence. The monstrous and, in a sense, positive fact of a malicious and perverted human will is still not, in itself, a substance. It is the perversion of something inherently and in God's intention good, namely a human being. Biblical evidence supports this theory (by key words, metaphors and statements, e.g. in Eccles. 7:29; Deut. 32:5, 'a warped and crooked generation', echoed in Phil. 2:15). This analysis of evil corresponds to the biblical account of its appearance in history. The Genesis narrative separates the origin of evil from the act of creation: evil entered the world later, as a 'foreign body' and parasite; it was not present in the beginning. Evil entered history in the abuse of created freedom (Matt. 19:8; Rom. 5:12).

Sin as radical evil: If evil is perversion, its original locus is the perversion of freedom: the primary evil is sin. Genesis 3 traces life's ills to humankind's disobedience: shame and fear (vv. 7, 10); pain in childbearing and the distortion of male–female relationships (v. 16, see Adam and Eve, Man and woman); the painful relationship between humans and the ground; and finally death (vv. 17–19). Paul agrees that death entered the world through sin (Rom. 5:12), and declares that everything has been made subject to frustration (*mataiotēs*, Rom. 8:20). Scripture does not encourage speculation regarding the changes that followed the fall. Only human death is mentioned as a direct consequence. The curse on the ground resulted from human exploitation. Nowhere is there any hint of prodigious mutations among the animals, e.g. that only then were they given fangs and claws; on the contrary, God's creation order included the lions' seeking

their food from God (Ps. 104:21; cf. Job 38:39–41; 39:27–30) and the terrifying features of the beasts of prey (Job 41). Original human powers, as long as they remained attuned to the Lord's will, were presumably sufficient to protect people from earthquakes or viruses.

Evil and Divine Government: Assertions that God is the cause of evil fall into two categories.

Evil as punishment: Some of the most frightening biblical calamities are attributed to God's judgment. Judgment itself is not evil, but a necessary expression of goodness. 'Penal evil' is evil only in a restricted sense, in comparison with the well-being and fulfilment of creatures as defined in creation. Since sin entered the world, justice demands punishment, which restores God's holy order and glorifies his holy name (Lev. 10:3; Ezek. 38:16); its infliction is good in itself and for the person involved. Even reprobates will acknowledge this at the last.

Evil as divine permission: One form of punishment is the giving over of a sinner to more vile sins (Rom. 1:21, 24, 26), e.g. in cases of 'hardening' (1 Sam. 2:25). However, this model does not fit all the biblical statements which make God the cause of moral evil. The intention of these statements is to magnify divine sovereignty (see Providence) and rule out creaturely independence. Evil does not proceed from God but does depend on his decrees. Theologians speak of God's (sovereign) permission: when humans do what is evil, God is not at work in them to will and to act according to what is good (Phil. 2:13). Thus, for example, God 'left' Hezekiah to test him (2 Chr. 32:31). To label God's relationship to evil as 'permission' is to highlight the asymmetry of good and evil; it is not to resolve the mystery. The book of Job and Romans 9:19–24 offer no hope of a complete solution to the 'problem of evil'.

The Ultimate Agents of Evil: Scripture reveals that evil appeared in heaven before it entered the world (2 Cor. 11:3; John 8:44; Rev. 12:9; 20:3). One called the Devil, Satan or the Evil One apostatized and tempted Adam and Eve. However, his role does not explain the fall, for Adam and Eve had no reason to yield, and his own fall from integrity is shrouded in mystery (though Jude 6 proves that the idea is biblical). With the spirits that followed him, the powers of darkness, Satan has set up an empire of evil; evil has dimensions beyond those of the individual human will. The power of Satan will express itself supremely in 'the coming (parousia) of the lawless one' (2 Thess. 2:9), who may be identified with the final Antichrist (1 John 2:18) and the first beast of Revelation (Rev. 13). His forerunners, present-day antichrists, appear as teachers of pseudo-Christianity (1 John 2:18–23). 'Antichristianity', the Devil's lie in Christian disguise, is the most pernicious evil conceivable.

Conclusion: The gospel declares that the powers of evil have been defeated by the blood of Christ's cross (Rev. 12:11; Col. 2:15). For God's people the burden of guilt is lifted and the bondage of sin broken. On Calvary faith beholds both God's hatred of sin (radical evil) and his sovereignty over it, which issues in victory. Evil, having entered history, is overcome in history by perfect goodness."[1]

The Problem of Divine Government and Evil

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[1] Henri Blocher, "Evil," in T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 465-7.

"The question of God's government over history raises a number of vexing questions. Is the world genuinely open to more than one possibility, or is its future precisely determined? Is providence to be regarded as a determining power? It is within this context that the question of the relationship of God's activity to human agency and the problem of providence and evil arise most sharply in the biblical account. Demanding exegetical, hermeneutical and philosophical issues arise in connection with these questions. We must confine ourselves to a broad description of the biblical parameters within which theology should operate.

The OT narrative, from the account of Abraham's calling to the return from exile, certainly on the face of it encourages the belief that history is genuinely open, according to whether people obey or disobey God. For example, when Moses (Deut. 30:15–18) and Joshua (Josh. 24:14–24) set alternatives before the people, they appear to be free to follow alternative courses of action; history is presented as a theatre of genuinely alternative possibilities. In the very passage where Jeremiah likens God to the potter molding the clay of Israel, he affirms that the execution of divine judgment or blessing is contingent on the disobedience or obedience of the people (Jer. 18:1–12). Divine declarations of what is to be often contain a tacit or an explicit condition, as in the account of the perpetuation of the Davidic kingdom through Solomon (1 Chr. 28:6–7). Further, God seems to change his mind in response to petition (2 Kgs. 20) and to acknowledge alternative futures (1 Sam. 23:9–13). However, this must all be integrated into a wider picture.

First, human actions do not take place independently of God even when those actions are wicked. This fact emerges early in the Bible, both in the story of Joseph in Genesis 37–45 and in the accounts of the hardening of Pharoah's heart (Exod. 7–11). While the ways in which God is active may vary according to the evil or good in the human heart, biblical language signifies at the very least an active concurrence of divine and human action, not complete human autonomy. Yet while evildoers are responsible for their deeds, believers depend on God for their obedient actions (Phil. 2:13).

Second, God knows in advance what humans will do. As soon and as certainly as the fact of choice is established at a crucial juncture in Israel's history, so is the divine knowledge of what that choice will be (Deut. 31:16–18). The reduction or limitation of this principle cannot be justified on purely biblical grounds. (Philosophical arguments are beyond our scope here.) The prophetic literature, such as that of Isaiah, not only appears to suppose that divine foreknowledge is involved in the very logic of prophecy, but also exults in a God whose power is expressed in such foreknowledge (Is. 40ff.). In contrast to this, it is sometimes argued that statements in which God expresses ignorance, disappointment, regret or hope more or less strongly imply that some human actions are not foreknown by God and are even judged by him to be unlikely. The issue here is hermeneutical. Not only is it appropriate to read the biblical narrative in light of the progressive self-disclosure of God, but where such self-disclosure takes place, as in the high points of prophecy and apocalyptic in Isaiah and Daniel, the comprehensive scope of God's knowledge becomes increasingly clear. The account of Jesus' mission in the NT, in its eschatological context, militates against a view of God as one who takes risks with an unknown and unknowable future.

Thirdly, the future is sometimes described as not just known to God but decreed by him. Certainly the Bible does not describe this decree in a monochrome way, as something which is always immutably antecedent to and independent of what humans decide to do. Nevertheless, the active responsibility for bringing history to its destiny lies with God and God's active decisions about what will or will not be. This raises the question of predestination, which is best approached in connection with the wider question of the providential government of world history.

The history of theology is littered with attempts to harmonize these and other biblical data, and even the very broad description of God's government set out above will be judged by some to be misleading and tendentious. But a comprehensive resolution is not necessary. Biblical theology is thoroughly practical; it emphasizes the application of its various truths to life more than their systematic relation to each other. The Christian's practice of adoration, trust, obedience, repentance, faith and perseverance does not depend on an understanding of how different theological ideas are to be woven together. Further, despite the perplexities involved, the dominant impression imparted by Scripture is that of a rich, if systematically elusive, coherence, not of a dismaying problem. God understands everything that is happening and directs history to its destiny with literally matchless power. The appearance of his actions varies according to their purpose and the relationships involved; he decides to act before he sees or when he sees or whatever he sees or according to what he sees, and in this respect is portrayed as the living and personal God that he is. But he is not caught out in ignorance or error, or prevented by human action from carrying out what he has determined, or manipulated by human entreaty into doing the unwise, the unjust or the unholy, and in this respect he is portrayed as the good and powerful God that he is.

Many passages illuminate divine providence. For example, the insight of Proverbs that 'In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps' (16:9) suggests that at the level of intention humans bear some responsibility, but whether or not intention comes to fruition is the decision of the Lord. It offers a way of discerning how evil acts are encompassed by an active providence and yet humans are accountable for them. Evil is radically mysterious, in the biblical account, right from its anomalous appearance in Eden. Where God's commands are flouted, the evil belongs to humans or to Satan. Scripture does not so much explain evil as assure readers that evil is intrusive in God's world and will finally be defeated. If, however, it is a matter of divine decision whether or not an evil deed is done, but the evil disposition is the responsibility of humans, then the divine decision is to enable the evil intention formed in the heart to be actively expressed. The freedom to will and the freedom to act are not the same thing (and freedom itself is not a transparent or undifferentiated notion). A person is rendered morally responsible not by a deed alone, but by its relation to the preceding nexus of will and intent. God is ultimately responsible in that evil occurs in a world over which he has power, although his disposal of it is in salient respects mysterious.

While faith seeks understanding, it does not live by understanding the providential ways of God. The confidence of the believer is born of the conviction that God is utterly trustworthy in character and promise, and this generates deep humility. Christians' relationship to providence becomes clearer when we consider prayer. According to the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9–13) God knows what we need before we ask him; he is our Father; we depend on him for our bread; we

ask forgiveness when we fail; we petition him for the will and strength to do what he wants us to do and avoid what he wants us to avoid. In turn, the humility of the believer can issue in further confidence on the basis of the relationship of providence to world history as described in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. It is decided by God that the rebellion of kings and of beasts against his rule shall terminate; that the nations will be beneficiaries of healing justice and mercy; that the decisive proof of his providence shall be the reappearance of Jesus Christ and the transformation of the world order. That God has determined all this does not eliminate the problems and tragedies from the story; it may even intensify them. But it means that providence ultimately finds its appropriate response in praise."[2]

Key Definitions

The Nature of Evil: "The character of that which is opposed to good. Christians think of evil as what is opposed to the purposes of God. Most Christian theologians have held that evil is not a positive thing or substance but should be understood as a defect or damage to God's creation. Though evil is not a substance, it does have a positive, active character in that it is rooted in the actions of free agents. The question of its character is therefore closely linked to questions about the nature of personal freedom and the relations between such creatures and their Creator."[3]

The Problem of Evil: "Difficulty posed by the existence of evil (both moral evil and natural evil) in a world created by a God who is both completely good and all-powerful. Some atheists argue that if such a God existed, there would be no evil, since God would both want to eliminate evil and would be able to do so. An argument that evil is logically incompatible with God's reality forms the logical or deductive form of the problem. An argument that evil makes God's existence unlikely or less likely is called the evidential or probabilistic form of the problem. Responses to the problem include theodicies, which attempt to explain why God allows evil, usually by specifying some greater good that evil makes possible, and defenses, which argue that it is reasonable to believe that God is justified in allowing evil, even if we do not know what his reasons are."[4]

Free will defense: "Response to the problem of evil arguing that God may be justified in allowing evil because the possibility of evil is logically inherent in free will. If free will is a great good that makes possible other great goods, then these goods might provide a sufficient reason for God allowing evil. Since not even omnipotence can do what is logically impossible, God must accept the possibility of evil if he wishes to give some of his creatures free will."[5]

Theodicy: "An answer to the problem of evil that attempts to 'justify the ways of God to man' by explaining God's reasons for allowing evil. Two of the more important theodicies are the

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[2] S.N. Williams, "Providence" in T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 713-15.
[3] C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 42.
[4] C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 42.
[5] C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 47.

'soul-making theodicy,' which argues that God allows evil so as to make it possible for humans to develop certain desirable virtues, and the 'free will theodicy,' which argues that God had to allow for the possibility of evil if he wished to give humans (and angelic beings) free will. Theodicies are often distinguished from defenses, which argue that it is reasonable to believe that God has reasons for allowing evil even if we do not know what those reasons are."[6]

J. I. Packer on Theodicy
The Word "theodicy" comes from Gk. *theos*, 'God', and the root *dik*, 'just'). Theodicies seek to justify the ways of God to man, showing that God is in the right and is glorious and worthy of praise despite contrary appearances. Theodicy asks how we can believe that God is both good and sovereign in face of the world's evil—bad people; bad deeds, defying God and injuring people; harmful (bad) circumstances, events, experiences and states of mind, which waste, thwart, or destroy value, actual or potential, in and for humankind; in short, all facts, physical and moral, that prompt the feeling, 'This ought not to be'.

All theodicies view evil as making for a good greater than is attainable without it. Thus, Leibniz (who coined the word 'theodicy' in 1710) argued that a world containing moral and physical evil is better, because metaphysically richer, than one containing good only, and that God must have created the best of all possible worlds. Hegel, a closet pantheist, held that all apparent evil is really good in the making; it looks and feels bad only because its character as good is as yet incomplete. Process theologians picture their finite God struggling against evil in hope of mastering it some day. Biblical theists, however, reason differently. Affirming with Augustine that evil is a lack of good, or a good thing gone wrong, they begin by agreeing that:

1. Pain, though it hurts, is often not really evil. The stab of pain acts as an alarm, and living with pain can purge, refine, and ennoble character. Pain may thus be a gift and a mercy.

2. Virtue (choosing good) is only possible where vice (choosing evil) is also possible. An automaton's programmed performance is not virtue, and lacks the value of virtue. In making man capable of choosing the path of grateful obedience, God made him capable of not doing so. Though not sin's author, God created a possibility of sin by creating the possibility of righteousness.

3. Moral growth and maturity are only possible when the consequences of action are calculable. Since God means this world to be a school for moral growth, he gave it physical regularity so that consequences might be foreseen. Frustrations through miscalculation, and natural events called disasters because they damage humans, are therefore inevitable. Unfallen man would have experienced them. In fact, we mature morally through coping with them.

Beyond this point in theodicy, speculations intrude. John Hick posits universal salvation, arguing that nothing less can justify all the evil that God for soul-building purposes permits in his world. Advocates of the 'free-will defence' (of God, against the charge of being the source of evil) speculate that God cannot prevent humans from sinning without destroying their humanity—

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[6] C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 114.

which would mean that glorified saints, being still human, may sin. Some Calvinists envisage God permissively decreeing sin for the purpose of self-display in justly saving some from their sin and justly damning others for and in their sin. But none of this is biblically certain. The safest way in theodicy is to leave God's permission of sin and moral evil as a mystery, and to reason from the good achieved in redemption, perhaps as follows:

a. In this fallen world where all have turned from God and deserve hell, God has taken responsibility for saving individuals and renewing the cosmos, at the cost to himself of the death of Jesus Christ his Son. The cross shows how much he loves sinners (Rom. 5:8; 8:32; 1 Jn. 4:8–10), and induces responsive love in all whom he calls to faith. b. God enables believers, as forgiven sinners, to relate to all evil (bad circumstances, bad health, bad treatment, even their own bad past) in a way that brings forth good—moral and spiritual growth and wisdom, benefit to others by example and encouragement, and thanksgiving to God; so that facing evil becomes for them a value-creating way of life. c. In heaven, where the full fruit of Christ's redemption will be enjoyed, earth's evils will in retrospect seem trivial (Rom. 8:18), and remembering them will only increase our joy (Rev. 7:9–17). Thus through God's sovereign goodness evil is overcome; not theoretically, so much as practically, in human lives.

This unspeculative, confessional, pastoral theodicy leaves with God the secret things (cf. Dt. 29:29), justifies and glorifies God for what is revealed, calls forth wonder and worship, and resolves the feeling, 'This ought not to be,' into the contented cry, 'He does all things well!'—which is a supremely positive declaration that God is in the right, and is to be praised. Meantime, logic declares it possible, and faith, reasoning as above, thinks it certain, that the final state of things will demonstrably be better than anything God could have achieved by taking a different course at any stage."[7]

Overview of the Problem of Evil by Norman Geisler

"The apparent contradiction in the coexistence of evil and a good God is perhaps the commonest charge levelled by critics against theism. A number of philosophical systems have tried to resolve this dilemma by offering a different view of either the nature of evil or the nature of God. Some forms of pantheism claim that evil is not real, or at least, 'less than real'. One form of dualism contends that evil is eternal, like its perpetual war with the good. Those who try to settle the issue by their definition of God assert that God is either not all-good, or not all-powerful, or both. The classical theist, however, cannot resolve the problem of evil by denying or limiting either the reality of evil or the goodness and power of God.

The nature of evil: One of the difficulties faced by the theistic explanation of the problem of evil is that, according to theism, God is the author of everything. Therefore if evil is something, it follows that God is its author. While theists do not reject the first premise, they challenge the premise that evil is something. The reality of evil does not necessarily imply that it is a substance or a thing. Evil could be a real privation or lack of some good thing (as Augustine maintained).

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[7] J.I. Packer, "Theodicy," in Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, c1988), 679.

Accordingly, evil could exist in a good thing as an imperfection in it, like a hole in a piece of wood. Hence, it does not follow that God is the author of something evil.

The origin of evil: Yet, if God is the perfect author of all things, everything he makes has to be perfect. How, then, can his creatures (e.g. Adam the perfect man) be the origin of evil? Classical theists agree that God is the perfect Creator. In fact, one of the perfect things God created was free creatures. Without free choice, neither good nor evil could be chosen. Hence, if man is ever to choose the good, he must have the freedom to choose evil as well. Therefore, since free will is the cause of evil, imperfection (evil) can arise from the perfect (not directly, but indirectly, through freedom). In other words, whereas God created the fact of freedom, man performs the acts of freedom. God made evil possible; creatures make it actual.

The persistence of evil: In the 17th century, Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) formulated the following argument: If God were all-good, he would destroy evil. If God were all-powerful, he could destroy evil. But evil is not destroyed. Hence, there is no such God. The first theistic objection to Bayle is that evil cannot be 'destroyed' without the destruction of freedom. Love, for example, is impossible without freedom. The same is true of other moral goods such as mercy, kindness, and compassion. And so, contrary to Bayle's argument, to destroy freedom would not be the greatest good, for it would destroy the greatest goods. However, theists insist that evil will be defeated without the destruction of free choice. If God is all-powerful, he can defeat evil. If God is all-good, he will defeat evil. Thus, since evil is not yet defeated, the very nature of the all-powerful, all-good theistic God is the guarantee that evil will eventually be defeated.

The purpose of evil: Even with the explanation based on free will and its role in the presence of evil, what of those who apparently had no choice in the suffering they endured? It seems that there is no good purpose in much suffering. An all-good being (God) must have a good purpose for everything. Hence, it is argued that there cannot be an all-good God. However, it is logical to assume that, since God's mind is infinite and man's mind is finite, man will never fully comprehend the divine intellect. So even if we do not know God's purpose, he may still have a good purpose for evil. Moreover, we do know some good purposes for evil: to warn us of greater evil; to keep us from self-destruction; to help bring about greater goods; and to defeat evil. If a finite mind can discover some good purposes for evil, surely an infinite good and wise God has a good purpose for all suffering. The crucifixion of Jesus may be said to bear this out.

The avoidability of evil: Some critics have argued that they can propose morally more attractive options for the present world that an all-knowing God supposedly made. If God is omniscient, then he knew evil would occur when he created the world. God had several other non-evil possibilities, such as: 1. not to create anything; 2. not to create anything free; 3. to create free creatures that would not sin; 4. to create free creatures who would sin, but would all be saved in the end.

Briefly, all of these alternatives are poor substitutes for the real thing. Option 1 wrongly implies that nothing is better than something. Every comparison assumes a point of similarity. But how can one compare nonbeing with being? Option 2 makes the same error, since it wrongly assumes that a non-free world can be compared to a free one. But a non-moral world has nothing morally in common with a moral one.

And while option 3 is logically possible, it may be that it is actually unachievable and morally less desirable. To put it another way, option 3 may be workable on a blackboard, but not in real life. It is possible that options 3 and 4 would never come about freely. But God cannot force freedom, for coercing a free choice is a contradiction in terms. Moreover, option 3 may also be morally less desirable. The possibility and reality of evil provide occasions where the highest virtues can be achieved. Without trials, patience cannot be produced (cf. Job). Without the fear of real evil, courage could not be realized.

In short, the classical theist does not have to claim that this world is 'the best of all possible worlds'. Surely this world could be morally better than it is with one fewer rape or murder. However, this world may be the best possible way to the best possible world, i.e. where moral creatures are given the maximal moral good in accordance with their free choice, including the moral good of mercy for the repentant and the moral good of just punishment for the impenitent."[8]

Suffering

"The reality of suffering, especially that of the helpless or innocent, is a problem for anyone who posits the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent Deity. The Bible, however, says little about suffering as an intellectual conundrum. Gn. 1–3 shows that evil entered the world through sin. The first sufferings, which were emotional and the immediate consequence of disobedience, were followed by God's curse (Gn. 3:16–19), which promised pain, toil and death. Although suffering results from sin (a moral evil), it is not itself a moral but a physical (or material) evil, for God is frequently presented in Scripture as its dispenser (e.g. Jos. 23:15; Jb. 2:10; Is. 45:7; Je. 25:29; Mi. 2:3), sending it either as punishment of individuals and nations (both historically and eschatologically) or as chastisement of his people.

While Scripture says very little about the sufferings of humanity generally, it does speak extensively about the suffering of God's people, and it is in respect to the latter only that a theology of suffering may be formulated. Suffering assumes a distinctly negative character in much of the OT owing to the nature of the Mosaic covenant, which stipulated for the children of Israel health, prosperity and success for obedience and a variety of afflictions for disobedience (e.g. Ex. 15:25, 26; 23:25, 26; Lv. 26; Dt. 28–30). The corporate and material nature of the Mosaic covenant gives to its blessings and cursings a quality distinct from that of any prosperity or suffering that does not have as its ultimate cause a covenantal relationship contingent upon covenantal faithfulness. Hence the suffering that was the consequence of violating the Mosaic covenant was devoid of mystery. In spite of this apparent clarity of cause and effect, however, the wicked within Israel often prospered and afflicted the righteous, causing the latter's consternation regarding God's purposes (e.g. Pss. 37; 73). God's judgment of national apostasy was often withheld for a time, and when it came both the wicked and the righteous were swept away by the same calamities. This evoked a feeling of helpless frustration (e.g. Ps. 44).

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[8] Norman Geisler, "Evil," in Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, c1988), 241.

Even during periods of national faithfulness, God's people were still sinners who could benefit from discipline. God told Abraham that his descendants' sojourn in Egypt would be a time of discipline (Gn. 15:13–16; cf. 5:15; 26:5–9). After reminding the people that the Lord had humbled and tested them in the wilderness, Moses says, 'Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you' (Dt. 8:5; cf. Pr. 3:11–12; for individual examples, see Pss. 94:12; 119:67, 71, 75).

At other times the afflicted are perplexed by their suffering since they can find no explanation for it. The OT only gradually developed the concept of suffering as a mystery, as God's people were slowly weaned from the temporal to the eternal, from the material to the spiritual. Even the most spiritually sensitive and mature believers in the OT, though they saw the Lord as their ultimate reward, did not see tribulations as experiences in which they should exult. It was not until after the resurrection of the Suffering Servant that those in close communion with God could grasp fully that as co-heirs with him they were to share his sufferings as a prerequisite to sharing his glory.

That this lesson was not part of the Jewish consciousness at the time of Christ is well illustrated by the tendency to view specific sin as the immediate cause of suffering (e.g. Lk. 13:1–5; Jn. 9:1–12) and by the persistent failure of Jesus' disciples to understand the redemptive nature of his mission (e.g. Mt. 16:21; 17:12; Lk. 17:25; 22:15; Jn. 2:19–22). Not until after his resurrection did his followers grasp the necessity of the Lord's atoning suffering (see especially Lk. 24:13–35). Once understood, his suffering became the focal point of apostolic evangelism (e.g. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 17:3; 26:22–23) and a frequent emphasis in the epistles (e.g. 1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 1:10–11, 9; 3:18). While the OT promised prosperity for obedience, Christ expected affliction (e.g. Mt. 5:10–12; 10:24–25; Mk. 10:28–30; Jn. 15:20), as did the apostles (e.g. Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17–18; 2 Cor. 1:3–7; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 12:5–11; Jas. 1:2–4; 1 Pet. 4:1–2, 12–16).

The sufferings that Christians experience can be divided into two categories. 1. Suffering can be the direct result of grace. Only Christians can experience the civil war of spirit and flesh, described by Paul in Gal. 5:17, and graphically personalized in Rom 7:14–25. Furthermore, when Christians are persecuted for Christ's sake, they are experiencing a type of suffering that in its cause and purpose is distinct from anything that the unregenerate suffer.
2. Christians also suffer as a consequence of sharing in a fallen humanity in a fallen world. Here their suffering does not differ qualitatively from that of the unregenerate. They too can bring suffering on themselves by their own errors. They also experience sorrow, poverty, sickness and death. Christians are saved in such suffering and not from it. They share with all mankind the experience of and vulnerability to it. The vital and spectacular difference is God's use of it and their response to it. Heb. 12:5 admonishes Christians not to be indifferent to affliction or discouraged by it, because God's purpose in disciplining his children is to refine them and to equip them for kingdom service.

The suffering Christian is sustained by the fact that Christ not only suffered for his people but also suffers with them (e.g. Acts 9:4–5; 1 Cor. 12:26–27). He is their High Priest who can sympathize with their weaknesses (Heb. 4:15; cf. 2:18) as they also share his sufferings (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Heb. 13:13; 1 Pet. 4:13). Thus to suffer with Christ is a prerequisite to being

glorified with him (Rom. 8:16; cf. 1 Pet. 1:16–17; 4:13; 5:10). Hence Christians can rejoice in afflictions (Acts 5:41; Rom. 5:3; 1 Thes. 1:6; Jas. 1:2).

While the suffering to which believers respond aright contributes to their spiritual growth and fellowship with Christ, it is also a form of witness—to each sufferer of his own salvation; to the unsaved for their conviction; to fellow Christians for their edification, encouragement and comfort; to principalities and powers in accordance with God's mysterious purposes. Thus, suffering 'produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it' (Heb. 12:11). The Christian's capacity to receive the comfort of the Holy Spirit in the midst of suffering is commensurate with an appreciation of the paternal sovereignty of God, who is the ultimate cause of a bewilderingly diverse variety of proximate causes that can impinge upon their lives, until God 'will wipe every tear from their eyes' (Rev. 21:4)."[9]

General Overview of Bible and Suffering

"In the Bible suffering is regarded as an intrusion into this created world. Creation was made good (Gn. 1:31). When sin entered, suffering also entered in the form of conflict, pain, corruption, drudgery and death (Gn. 3:15-19). In the new heaven and earth suffering has been finally abolished (Rev. 21:4; Is. 65:17ff.). The work of Christ is to deliver man from suffering, corruption and death (Rom. 8:21; 1 Cor. 15:26), as well as from sin (Mt. 1:21). Though Satan is regarded as having power to make men suffer (2 Cor. 12:7; Jb. 1:12; 2:6), they suffer only in the hand of God, and it is God who controls and sends suffering (Am. 3:6; Is. 45:7; Mt. 26:39; Acts 2:23).

The burden of suffering was always keenly felt by God's people (Gn. 47:9; 2 Sa. 14:14). Its presence often became a problem, since it was regarded as sent by God (Ps. 39:9), and thus had to be related to the fact of God's love and righteousness (Ps. 73). Therefore, in the midst of suffering, man was forced to decide how far he could live by faith, and resist the demand for a rational explanation. The problem was not so acute at times when the sense of solidarity within the community was strong, and the individual, as a responsible member of his tribe or family in all circumstances, was able to accept the judgment and suffering that fell on his people as his own responsibility (Jos. 7). But the problem became more urgent as the responsible relation of each individual to God was emphasized (Je. 31:29; Ezk. 18:2-4).

True faith, wrestling with the problem and burden of suffering, does not require an immediate and complete justification of God. It can wait in the darkness (Hab. 2:2-4). It finds in the reality of God's presence and goodness a more decisive factor in the present situation than even the bitterness of pain (Ps. 73:21-23), and is willing to set against the distorted shape of things present the perfect new order of things in the kingdom of God, of which it has already received a foretaste (Ps. 73:24-26; Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18). But the man of faith is not insensitive to the baffling nature of the problem. The book of Job shows him experiencing in an extreme degree the bitterness and perplexity of unexplained suffering, refusing to acquiesce in rational theories that make God's ways subject to simple human calculation, temporarily losing his balance, but

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[9] D.W. Amundsen, "Suffering," in Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, c1988), 667.

able ultimately to recover, and finally, through an overwhelming vision of God himself, reaching a certainty in which he can triumph over all his difficulties even though he is not yet, and knows he never will be, able to provide a rational explanation for all circumstances in this life.

Though it is thus asserted that such solutions are inadequate when applied generally, yet sometimes definite understandable reasons are given for instances of suffering (cf. Ps. 37), and several lines of thought on the problem appear and converge. Suffering can be the harvest of sin (Ho. 8:7; Lk. 13:1-5; Gal. 6:8), both for the individual (Ps. 1) and for the community and nation (Am. 1-2). It can be regarded at times as a punishment administered by God, or a chastisement designed to correct the ways of his people (Pr. 3:12; Jdg. 2:22-3:6), or a means whereby men are tested or purified (Ps. 66:10; Jas. 1:3, 12; 1 Pet. 1:7; Rom. 5:3) or brought closer to God in a new relationship of dependence and fellowship (Ps. 119:67; Rom. 8:35-37). Thus suffering can be for good (Rom. 8:28f.), or it can have the opposite effect (Mt. 13:21).

In bearing their witness to the sufferings of the coming Messiah (1 Pet. 1:10-12) the OT writers are taught how God can give a new meaning to suffering. Their own experience of serving God in his redemptive purposes in Israel taught them that the love of God must involve itself in sharing the affliction and shame of, and in bearing reproach from, those he was seeking to redeem (Ho. 1-3; Je. 9:1-2; 20:7-10; Is. 63:9). Therefore his true Servant, who will perfectly fulfil his redeeming will, will be a suffering Servant. Such suffering will not simply arise as a result of faithfulness to God in pursuing his vocation, but will indeed constitute the very vocation he must fulfil (Is. 53). A new vicarious meaning and purpose is now seen in such unique suffering in which One can suffer in the place of, and as the inclusive representative of, all. Suffering can have a new meaning for those who are members of the body of Christ.

They can share in the sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. 1:5ff.; Mk. 10:39; Rom. 8:17), and regard themselves as pledged to a career or vocation of suffering (Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 4:1-2), since the members of the body must be conformed to the Head in this respect (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 8:29) as well as in respect of his glory. Whatever form the suffering of a Christian takes it can be regarded as a cross which may be taken up in following Christ in the way of his cross (Mt. 16:24; Rom. 8:28-29). Such suffering is indeed the inevitable way that leads to resurrection and glory (Rom. 8:18; Heb. 12:1-2; Mt. 5:10; 2 Cor. 4:17f.). It is by tribulation that men enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22; Jn. 16:21). The coming of the new age is preceded by birth pangs on earth, in which the church has its decisive share (Mt. 24:21-22; Rev. 12:1-2, 13-17; cf., e.g., Dn. 12:1; Mi. 4:9-10; 5:2-4). Since the sufferings of Christ are sufficient in themselves to set all men free (Is. 53:4-6; Heb. 10:14), it is entirely by grace, and not in any way by necessity, that the sufferings in which his people participate with him can be spoken of as filling up what is lacking in his affliction (Col. 1:24), and as giving fellowship in his vicarious and redemptive suffering."[10]

A Biblical Overview of Satan

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[10] R.S. Wallace, "Suffering," in D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1136.

"The name of the prince of evil means basically 'adversary' (the word is so rendered, e.g., in Nu. 22:22). In the first two chapters of Job we read of 'the Satan' as presenting himself before God among 'the sons of God'. It is sometimes said that in such passages Satan is not thought of as especially evil, but as simply one among the heavenly hosts. Admittedly we have not yet the fully developed doctrine, but the activities of 'the Satan' are certainly inimical to Job. The OT references to Satan are few, but he is consistently engaged in activities against the best interests of men. He moves David to number the people (1 Ch. 21:1). He stands at the right hand of Joshua the high priest 'to accuse him', thus drawing down the Lord's rebuke (Zc. 3:1f.). The psalmist thinks it a calamity to have Satan stand at one's right hand (Ps. 109:6, av, but cf. rv 'an adversary', rsv 'an accuser'). John tells us that 'the devil sinned from the beginning' (1 Jn. 3:8), and the OT references to him bear this out.

Most of our information, however, comes from the NT, where the supremely evil being is referred to as Satan or as 'the devil' (*ho diabolos*) indifferently, with Beelzebub (or Beelzeboul, or Beezeboul) also employed on occasion (Mt. 10:25; 12:24, 27). Other expressions, such as 'the ruler of this world' (Jn. 14:30) or 'the prince of the power of the air' (Eph. 2:2), also occur. He is always depicted as hostile to God, and as working to overthrow the purposes of God. Matthew and Luke tell us that at the beginning of his ministry Jesus had a severe time of testing when Satan tempted him to go about his work in the wrong spirit (Mt. 4; Lk. 4; see also Mk. 1:13). When this period was completed the devil left him 'until an opportune time', which implies that the contest was later resumed. This is clear also from the statement that he 'in every respect has been tempted as we are' (Heb. 4:15). This conflict is not incidental. The express purpose of the coming of Jesus into the world was 'to destroy the works of the devil' (1 Jn. 3:8; cf. Heb. 2:14). Everywhere the NT sees a great conflict between the forces of God and of good, on the one hand, and those of evil led by Satan, on the other. This is not the conception of one writer or another, but is common ground.

There is no doubting the severity of the conflict. Peter stresses the ferocious opposition by saying that the devil 'prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour' (1 Pet. 5:8). Paul thinks rather of the cunning employed by the evil one. 'Satan disguises himself as an angel of light' (2 Cor. 11:14), so that it is small wonder if his minions appear in an attractive guise. The Ephesians are exhorted to put on 'the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil' (Eph. 6:11), and there are references to 'the snare of the devil' (1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 2:26). The effect of such passages is to emphasize that Christians (and even archangels, Jude 9) are engaged in a conflict that is both relentlessly and cunningly waged. They are not in a position to retire from the conflict. Nor can they simply assume that evil will always be obviously evil. There is need for the exercise of discrimination as well as stout-heartedness. But determined opposition will always succeed. Peter urges his readers to resist the devil 'firm in your faith' (1 Pet. 5:9), and James says, 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you' (Jas. 4:7). Paul exhorts 'give no opportunity to the devil' (Eph. 4:27), and the implication of putting on the whole armor of God is that thereby the believer will be able to resist anything the evil one does (Eph. 6:11, 13). Paul puts his trust in the faithfulness of God. 'God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape' (1 Cor. 10:13). He is well aware of the resourcefulness of Satan, and that he is always seeking to 'gain the advantage over us'. But he can add 'we are not ignorant of his designs' (or, as F. J. Rae translates, 'I am up to his tricks') (2 Cor. 2:11).

Satan is continually opposed to the gospel, as we see throughout the Lord's ministry. He worked through Jesus' followers, as when Peter rejected the thought of the cross and was met with the rebuke 'Get behind me, Satan' (Mt. 16:23). Satan had further designs on Peter, but the Lord prayed for him (Lk. 22:31f.). He worked also in the enemies of Jesus, for Jesus could speak of those who opposed him as being 'of your father the devil' (Jn. 8:44). All this comes to a climax in the passion. The work of Judas is ascribed to the activity of the evil one. Satan 'entered into' Judas (Lk. 22:3; Jn. 13:27). He 'put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him' (Jn. 13:2). With the cross in prospect Jesus can say 'the ruler of this world is coming' (Jn. 14:30).

Satan continues to tempt men (1 Cor. 7:5). We read of him at work in a professed believer, Ananias ('why has Satan filled your heart … ?', Acts 5:3), and in an avowed opponent of the Christian way, Elymas ('You son of the devil', Acts 13:10). The general principle is given in 1 Jn. 3:8, 'He who commits sin is of the devil'. Men may so give themselves over to Satan that they in effect belong to him. They become his 'children' (1 Jn. 3:10). Thus we read of 'a synagogue of Satan' (Rev. 2:9; 3:9), and of men who dwell 'where Satan's throne is' (Rev. 2:13). Satan hinders the work of missionaries (1 Thes. 2:18). He takes away the good seed sown in the hearts of men (Mk. 4:15). He sows 'the sons of the evil one' in the field that is the world (Mt. 13:38f.). His activity may produce physical effects (Lk. 13:16). Always he is pictured as resourceful and active.

But the NT is sure of his limitations and defeat. His power is derivative (Lk. 4:6). He can exercise his activity only within the limits that God lays down (Jb. 1:12; 2:6; 1 Cor. 10:13; Rev. 20:2, 7). He may even be used to set forward the cause of right (1 Cor. 5:5; cf. 2 Cor. 12:7). Jesus saw a preliminary victory in the mission of the Seventy (Lk. 10:18). Our Lord thought of 'eternal fire' as 'prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt. 25:41), and John sees this come to pass (Rev. 20:10). We have already noticed that the conflict with Satan comes to a head in the passion. There Jesus speaks of him as 'cast out' (Jn. 12:31), and as 'judged' (Jn. 16:11). The victory is explicitly alluded to in Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8. The work of preachers is to turn men 'from the power of Satan unto God' (Acts 26:18). Paul can say confidently, 'the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet' (Rom. 16:20).

The witness of the NT then is clear. Satan is a malignant reality, always hostile to God and to God's people. But he has already been defeated in Christ's life and death and resurrection, and this defeat will become obvious and complete in the end of the age."[11]

Devil and Demons
"In Christian theology the idea of a devil has its origins in the OT notion of an 'adversary': as people opposing each other (2 Sa. 19:22), as God using people to oppose someone (1 Ki. 11:14), or as a supernatural agent sent by God (Nu. 22:22). The OT has few references to creatures that have been taken to be demons. The satyrs/'hairy ones' (Lv. 17:7; 2 Ch. 11:15; Is. 13:21; 34:14); the šēʹîm (Dt. 32:17; Ps. 106:37); the horse-leech or vampire (Pr. 30:15); Azazel (Lv. 16:8, 10,

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[11] Leon Morris, "Satan," in D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1064.

26; cf. Ethiopic Enoch 10:8) and Lilith (rsv = night hag, Is. 34:14), an Akkadian demon thought to be found in desolate places with the unclean owl and kite, may all have been understood to be demons. Protection from them was sought (Ps. 91) but Is. 6:2 and 6 show that these beings (śerāphîm) could also perform positive functions for God (see Angels). There is also the belief in the OT that the evil spirits are under Yahweh's control (1 Sa. 16:14–23). Only in a few places did the lxx use the word 'demon'—often as a description of the heathen gods: i.e. Dt. 32:17; Pss. 91:6; 96:5; 106:37; Is. 13:21; 34:14; 65:3, 11. Probably under Persian influence Satan appears as man's accuser in the heavenly court (Jb. 1–2). There is speculation on the origin of demons (Jubilees 4:22; Ethiopic Enoch 6f.) and Satan becomes the chief of an army of demons over against God and his angels (1 QS 3:19ff.).

Outside soteriology, the NT writers are little interested in demonology. They believed demons were Satan's minions (Mk. 3:22); inhabited water (Mt. 8:32) as well as waterless places (Mt. 12:43); were potential objects of worship (1 Cor. 10:20–21; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 9:20); could speak through those they possessed (Mk. 1:34); could also possess animals (Mk. 5:12); could cause suffering (Mt. 12:22–24; Mk. 1:21–28; 5:1–20; 7:24–30; 9:14–29) and grant superhuman strength (Mk. 5:3–5); could deceive Christians (1 Jn. 4:1, 3, 6); and needed to be withstood by Christians (Eph. 6:12). Paul sometimes uses the phrase 'principalities and powers' to describe evil spiritual beings which oppose God and, potentially, are able to separate the Christian from God (Rom. 8:38–39; 1 Cor. 15:24; Col. 2:8–15). Paul also associates idols with demons (1 Cor. 10:20–22). Jesus saw his ministry, particularly of exorcism, as the first of a two-stage defeat of Satan (Mt. 12:22–30; cf. Lk. 10:18). In Paul and Johannine theology, the cross was the focus of the defeat (Col. 2:15; Jn. 12:31). Jesus believed that the final defeat would be at the end of the age (Mt. 13:24–30), a view shared by early Christians (Rev. 20).

In the patristic period, speculation abounded. Ethiopic Enoch was particularly influential. In thinking that demons, who also became the gods of the pagan world, were the sons of the fallen angels and human women in Gn. 6, the Clementine Homilies were widely representative of the thought of the period. Origen did not accept either the influence of Ethiopic Enoch or that the heavenly powers fell because of envy (cf. Wisdom 2:24). He equated Lucifer (Is. 14:12–15) with Satan who, with the powers, revolted and fell from heaven because of pride. Augustine followed Origen, but not in thinking that the devil could be reconciled to God. Over against Anselm, Abelard believed that the atonement had nothing to do with the devil. Thomas Aquinas held that the devil, who is the cause of all sin, was once probably the very highest angel who, through pride, fell immediately after creation, seducing those who followed him to become his subjects.

Calvin refuted those 'who babble of devils as nothing else than evil emotions' by pointing to texts where the reality of Satan and the devils is assured. The devil was an angel whose malice came as a result of his revolt and fall. The little Scripture tells us is to arouse us 'to take precaution against their stratagems.' 19th-century theologians expressed little interest in demonology. For example, Schleiermacher questioned the conception of a fall among good angels and said that Jesus did not associate the devil with the plan of salvation; rather, Jesus and his disciples drew their demonology from the common life of the period rather than from Scripture, so that the conception of Satan is not a permanent element in Christian doctrine. In contemporary theological enquiry Bultmann still sums up the prevailing view: 'It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical

discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of daemons and spirits'
E. L. Mascall represents a significant minority of theologians who believe that there are, in our
human situation and experience, signals and dimensions of evil and sickness that are best
accounted for by accepting the existence of some form of evil agency legitimately characterized
'devil' and 'demons'."[12]

Images of Satan
"The popular image of Satan as the devil dressed in red with a long tail and a pitchfork is
archetypal. While the details of this portrayal of Satan are largely a figment of the popular
imagination, the identification of Satan as a demonic figure and archenemy of God does have a
basis in the NT. There Satan is the devil, who stands diametrically opposed to God and human
well-being. In the OT, however, the figure of Satan is more ambiguous and less clearly
associated with evil.

Satanic Figures in the Old Testament: Contrary to what we might expect, Satan does not play a
large role in the OT. Used in only a handful of passages, the Hebrew noun sātān is often
employed to describe the character of an action or the role of the individual performing it, rather
than as a proper name for the character performing an act. Thus the word satan is employed to
describe actions of obstruction, opposition and accusation. Where it is used to refer to a celestial
being, the actions of that being are usually ambiguous and open to interpretation. To understand
the OT portrayal of a celestial satanic figure, which is our primary interest in this article, we
must refer to the common ancient Near Eastern image of a divine council or assembly of the
gods. The gods would meet in council to discuss important issues, to settle disputes among
themselves and to determine the fate of the cosmos. Intrigue and subterfuge were characteristic
of the members of the council as they jockeyed for positions of influence and settled various
scores with one another. In this worldview the human world was caught up in the conflicts
amongst the gods.

Within biblical literature the divine assembly appears explicitly on a number of occasions (1
Kings 22:19–23; Job 1–2; Is 6). The council appears to have been a forum for deliberations about
divine plans. The Israelites adapted the imagery of the divine assembly to their own beliefs so
that Yahweh, Israel's God, was the supreme deity presiding over the council. The other members
of the council, who were summoned to the presence of Yahweh, served the purposes of Yahweh
and showed varying degrees of autonomy. But within Israelite texts none of the lesser beings
could mount an effective challenge to Yahweh's sovereignty. The monotheistic tendencies of
Israelite religion prevented such serious challenges.

The most extensive portrayal of a satanic figure in the OT is found in Job 1–2. The satanic figure
of the book of Job takes a place among the "sons of God" or heavenly beings who present
themselves before God as members of the divine assembly. Here the satanic figure is referred to
as "the satan," with the definite article, indicating that the term is understood not as a proper
name but rather as a title or office held by the individual. The role of the satan is that of an
investigator, tester or prosecuting attorney who seeks to probe the character of human beings. In

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[12] Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000,
c1988), 196.

Job the satan describes his activity as "going to and fro on the earth." When God raises the specter of Job's blameless character and unblemished devotion to God, the satan responds with doubt about Job's integrity and the motive for his piety. Then he proposes that Job's character be tested. An affirmative response from God sets Job's trial in motion as he is afflicted with a multitude of disasters. When Job maintains his piety after the first onslaught, the satan proposes for him yet another trial, more grievous than the first. After this second trial, which leads into the series of speeches that occupy the center of Job, the satan recedes into the background for the rest of the book.

In assessing the character of the satanic figure in Job, it is important to keep in mind that it is God who draws Job to the attention of the satan (Job 1:8). Furthermore, while the satan outlines the nature of the test of Job, it is approved by God and limits for the test are set by God (Job 1:12; 2:6). The satanic figure in Job clearly works within the parameters established by God. Is the satanic figure of Job inherently evil? While misfortune falls on Job from the activities of this figure, nevertheless there is no indication that we are dealing here with an archrival of God. Rather, the satan functions as one of the "sons of God" (Job 1:6) who present themselves to God and who receive their mandate from God. The satan in Job 1 does not present a serious challenge to God's sovereignty but works as a divine agent, testing the integrity of human beings like Job. Thus in Job the satan is an ambiguous figure who appears on the one hand to challenge God's assessment of Job's character, and yet on the other hand works within the parameters established by God.

Two other texts merit brief consideration. In Zechariah 3:1–2 the satan stands as the accuser of the high priest Joshua. This role is executed without any direct quotation of the words of the satan. Yahweh rebukes the satan, yet it is unclear whether the rebuke is a repudiation of the satan himself or of the satan's accusation against Joshua, although the latter appears more likely. Again, the character of the satan is ambiguous. In 1 Chronicles 21:1, Satan (this time without the definite article) appears as an individual who incites David to conduct a census of Israel. Of the three texts considered, this is the only one in which the term satan, without the definite article, is used to refer to a celestial being. This could indicate that we should understand the term as a proper name. But once again we find little indication that the satanic figure is an archrival of God.

To summarize, in the OT there is little indication that early Israel thought in terms of a personalized evil individual, Satan, who stood diametrically opposed to God as an archenemy. What we do find in the OT is an ambiguous figure, a member of the divine council, whose role appears to be that of testing and probing the character of human beings. However, it must be emphasized that this satanic figure works within the parameters established by God.
Satan in the New Testament. With the NT we find a significantly different symbolic world within which Satan functions. Building on the religious resources and thinking reflected in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings of the intertestamental period, early Christianity adopted a dualism that interpreted the world as a battlefield between God and Satan. Under many guises, Satan became the epitome of evil, who would work at cross-purposes with God and humanity at every opportunity. Satan was the sworn enemy of all humanity, especially those who would claim allegiance to God. The range of names given to Satan in the NT—the devil, the tempter, the evil one, the prince of demons, the dragon, the ancient serpent, Beelzebul, the

accuser, the enemy—is testimony to the richness of the early Christian experience and portrayal of evil. The ambiguity of the satanic figure in the OT is gone.Two related but distinct aspects of Satan's activities are identifiable in the NT: Satan's hostility toward humanity and his animosity toward God.

Hostility toward humanity: Satan's ill will toward humanity is summed up best in 1 Peter 5:8: "Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour" (NRSV). This statement can be elaborated by considering several of Satan's activities. Satan is portrayed not only as the tempter who tested persons to see whether they would succumb to evil, perhaps in a way comparable to the role of the satan in Job, but also as the one who drove humans to evil. At times the dividing line between these two activities may be blurred. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus was led into the desert where he would not only endure but also resist temptation by the devil (Mt 4:1–11; Mk 1:12–13; Lk 4:1–13). Similarly, after Peter's confession of Jesus' identity and the subsequent passion prediction, Peter's rebuke of Jesus is condemned as another temptation of Satan (Mt 16:23; Mk 8:33). In some instances, evil actions are attributed to the agency of Satan, who has inspired, or perhaps even possessed, individuals. Thus the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot is attributed to the entry of Satan into Judas (Lk 22:3; Jn 13:27). Elsewhere, Peter's denial of Jesus is attributed to the actions of Satan (Lk 22:31), who seeks to "sift" Peter. In Acts, Ananias' deceptive scheme is attributed to Satan, who has filled his heart (Acts 5:3).

Satan's hostility toward humans is also seen in his role as the author of misfortune, disaster and illness. In Luke 13:16 a woman who had been subject to physical afflictions for many years is said to have been bound by Satan. Paul describes his famous "thorn in the flesh" as a "messenger from Satan" (2 Cor 12:7 NRSV). Satan can also be said to hinder the actions of individuals as in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, where Paul asserts that his desire to return to Thessalonica has been thwarted by Satan.

Animosity toward God: As the opponent of God, Satan also seeks to thwart the advance of God's purposes and the Christian mission. The diametrical opposition between God and Satan is evidenced in Acts 26:17–18, where while recounting his vision of Jesus and his subsequent conversion, Paul cites Jesus as saying, "I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God" (NRSV). The association of Satan with darkness and God with light is characteristic of the broader images of darkness and light, evil and good, damnation and salvation. The important point here, however, is that this reflects the underlying antipathy between Satan and God.

The conflict between Satan and God comes to its most colorful expression in Revelation. Here we find explicit references to the struggle between Satan and God that had broken out in heaven and was fought on the terrestrial plane. The imagery is rich: "And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world-he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (Rev 12:7–9 NRSV). Here we find a rich assortment of images being employed to characterize the enemy of

God. The ancient serpent is a transparent reference to the serpent of Genesis 3 which, while not identified with Satan in the OT, came to be associated with Satan in Judaism and the writings of early Christianity. Similarly, the reference to Satan having been cast out of heaven appears to be an allusion to Isaiah 14:3–21, where the reference is directed toward the king of Babylon but here is applied to Satan. Finally, the reference to the dragon is a development of the OT references to a sea monster (Is 27:1; 51:9), which was seen as a challenger of the dominion of God. The effect of this coalescence of imagery is to enhance the place of Satan as the archrival of God.

The biblical imagery associated with Satan shows a definite development from the OT to the NT. In the OT, Satan functions as a member of the divine council under the sovereignty of God. However, in the NT, Satan has become the devil, the archenemy of God, who mounts a significant, but ultimately futile, challenge to God's authority. Especially in the NT there is a coalescence of images and designations for Satan as the archenemy of God."[13]

Satan, Evil Spiritual Powers, and Demons

"The primary concern of this article is the spiritual powers which, to varying degrees, came to be portrayed as over against God and his purposes. However, some reference is made to those which serve God. While the NT picture is more developed than that of the OT, there is significant continuity between the Testaments.

Spiritual Powers in the OT: The earlier literature takes for granted the existence of an array of spiritual beings alongside Yahweh, and makes little differentiation between good and evil powers. Although the earlier material is simpler and the latter more complex, it is not possible to plot a tidy development of the notion of spiritual powers in the OT. The reality of other gods is frequently denied (Deut. 4:32–40). At other times their existence is acknowledged (Exod. 15:11), but only as subordinate to God; thus the OT writers preserve their strong monotheism, albeit with a hint of henotheism. By the turn of the eras these gods (*elōhıˊm*) were regarded as God's angelic host; the LXX guards against polytheism by translating *elōhıˊm* as *angeloi* (Pss. 8:5; 97:7; 138:1 with LXX).

The Council of Yahweh: Like the literature of other cultures, and from its earlier (Exod. 15:11) to its later material (Dan. 7:9–14), the Hebrew Bible depicts a heavenly council (Jer. 23:18) of spiritual beings, which is most clearly described in the vision of Micaiah (1 Kgs. 22:19–23). Over these, who have various names (Deut. 33:2–3; 1 Kgs. 22:19; Pss. 29:1; 82:6; 89:6), the incomparable Yahweh (Ps. 89:6–7), who created them (Neh. 9:6), presides (Ps. 82:1), and is thus called 'the Lord of hosts' (Is. 47:4). Before this council prophets stand to hear God's word (Jer. 23:18, 22), and to his council God reveals his activities (Amos 3:7). The members of the heavenly assembly can be sent to execute God's will (Num. 22:32; Josh. 5:14; 1 Kgs. 22:19–23; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Dan. 10:13; 12:1), worship him (Pss. 29:1–2; 148:2; Is. 6), execute his wrath (Ps. 78:49), and act as his heavenly armies (Is. 45:12). Members of the council are sometimes ranked and depicted with specific roles: an adversary or satan; chief angels (perhaps derived

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[13] Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, Tremper Longman et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, c1998), 759.

from, e.g., Gen. 22:11–18; Exod. 23:20–21) such as Gabriel (Dan. 8:16) and Michael (Dan. 10:13–21). In Job 33:22–25 an angel acts as an advocate for the accused before the heavenly council (Zech. 3:1–5).

The angel of Yahweh: Of all the spiritual powers with divine commissions, the most distinctive is the angel of Yahweh, who has various functions (Gen. 24:7, 40; Exod. 3:2; Num. 22:22; Josh. 5:13–15; 2 Sam. 24 [par. 1 Chr. 21]; 1 Kgs. 19:7; 2 Kgs. 19:35; Ps. 35:4–6; Is. 63:9), especially that of communicating God's message, notably to his prophets (Zech. 1:9–6:5). In some accounts of divine interaction with human beings, Yahweh is not distinguished from his angel (Gen 16:7–14). This probably does not reflect an anthropomorphic view of God; rather, such passages provide a 'living portrayal of an encounter with God, which because of the dangers of an immediate theophany was also understood as having been mediated in some way'. In short, the angel of Yahweh, who appears throughout the OT, was understood as one of the means through which Yahweh acted in the human realm.

Leviathan: The parallels in other literature and between Isaiah 24:21 and 27:1 suggest that this mythical figure represents God's chief opponent among the spiritual powers. The name 'Leviathan' is mentioned only six times in the OT, and refers to a serpent-like sea monster, probably identical to the 'Rahab' of Job 26:12 and the dragon of Isaiah 51:9. In Job 3:8–9 Leviathan, associated with darkness, appears to stand in parallel to the rebellious seas that have been subjugated by God (26:12–13) but may be stirred by incantation. The most extensive description (Job 41:1, cf. 2–34) is of a fearless, single-headed crocodile-like creature who breathes fire, lives in the sea which boils as he passes through it, and cannot be defeated by humans. Leviathan is presented as God's most formidable and unequalled enemy, whom he holds in check (Job 7:12). However, in Psalm 74:13–14 Leviathan the sea dragon is multi-headed (seven-headed in Ugaritic literature) and has already been defeated; probably he is understood to have been involved in the act of creation and thus as a supernatural power. In Psalm 104:26 he is merely one of Yahweh's playthings for whom he cares. In Isaiah 27:1 the defeat of Leviathan represents Yahweh's defeat of evil, which is presented as an eschatological event. The author of this (proto)-apocalyptic text borrows Leviathan from a much earlier Canaanite mythology in order to symbolize earthly power. But the striking Ugaritic parallels and the eschatological character of the prophecy suggest that the writer has in mind not only the earthly enemies of God's people but also the evil spiritual powers they represent (*cf. Is. 24:21), powers that will be destroyed on the day of Yahweh.

Satan: Although not a prominent spiritual power, the satan (*śāṭān*, adversary) of the OT is important in providing the origins of the Satan more familiar from the NT. Sometimes humans perform the role of a satan (1 Sam. 29:4; 1 Kgs. 5:4; Ps. 109:6). A celestial satan figure is mentioned in four OT passages: Numbers 22:22, 32; 1 Chronicles 21:1 (in these two passages the word appears without the definite article and could be a reference to an unspecified member of the heavenly assembly acting as an adversary); Job 1:6–12; 2:1 and Zechariah 3:1–2. The use of the definite article (14 times in Job 1–2) may indicate that a specific son of God (see Job 1:6) is thought to hold the office of accuser. However, more probably any member of the royal court was able to assume the role of accuser (Ps 109:6), for neither in ancient Israel nor in the judicial terminology of Mesopotamia was there a legal office of accuser. It is possible to interpret 1 Chronicles 21:1 to mean that, in his anger, God permitted Satan to incite David; this suggests

that Satan is not always viewed in a favourable light by God. In the OT, Satan is a mere creature of God, acting at his command. The Satan (or satans) is portrayed both as a general adversary and as a legal accuser who tests the faithfulness of God's people. To him is ascribed responsibility for the supposedly evil acts that writers want to distance from God. By NT times direct responsibility for evil is ascribed to the archdemon or Satan.

The NT: The clearest statements about spiritual powers come from the Gospels, which portray the exorcisms of Jesus as the first stage of their defeat, and from the Pauline corpus, which refers to 'powers'. The NT shows little interest in spiritual powers apart from their soteriological implications. The Gospel writers use terms that reveal their belief in evil and good spiritual powers.

Angels in NT: The term *angelos* ('angel') can be used of humans, meaning 'messenger' (Luke 7:24; 9:52; cf. Mark 1:2), but it is generally used for spiritual powers or messengers which serve God and are associated with key events in the life of Jesus. The angel Gabriel, in announcing the birth of Jesus, brings a message from God (Luke 1:11–20). The angel that announces the birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:8–12) is accompanied by a multitude of heavenly hosts (Luke 2:13) who are presumably spiritual beings who attend God. In the temptation stories angels protect Jesus (Matt. 4:6; Luke 4:10) and serve him (Matt. 4:11; Mark 1:13), perhaps by feeding him (1 Kgs. 19:5–8) or strengthening him. In Luke 22:43–44 also Jesus is portrayed as being strengthened by angels (though this text is disputed). By saying that 'an angel of the Lord' rolled back the stone from Jesus' tomb, Matthew declares that God is involved in the resurrection (Matt. 28:2), which in the other Gospels the angels also announce (Matt. 28:5–6; cf. Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12–13). Finally, angels are portrayed as accompanying the Son of Man when he comes in glory to sit on his throne in judgment (Matt. 25:31), and at the end of the age will separate the righteous from the evildoers (Matt. 13:39; Mark 13:27) whom they will throw into the fiery furnace (Matt. 13:42). So while in some texts angels are ontological entities, they are more often a periphrasis for God – especially in John's Gospel, in which they are rarely mentioned (John 1:51; [5:4;] 12:29; 20:12) – and for his glorious and powerful presence.

Demons in NT: Portrayed as opposing Jesus and the inauguration of the kingdom of God (Matt. 13:39) is an army of spiritual powers called 'spirits' (*pneumata*), a designation sometimes qualified by *ponēros* ('evil', Matt. 12:45 [par. Luke 11:26, *ponēroteros*] or *akathartos* ('unclean', Mark 6:7) words which imply idolatrous (Ezek. 36:17; Jer. 32:34) connections or association with the dead (Matt. 23:27; Mark 5:2); hence their contaminating effect and distinction from the Holy Spirit. Jesus' exorcisms demonstrate his divine power and point to the continuing struggle between the holy God and that which contaminates his creation. The word *legiōn* ('legion', Mark 5:9) alludes to the multiform and infesting character of the spirits.

Satan in NT: In line with the developing cosmology of the period the evil spiritual powers appear to be led by a figure generally called the 'devil' (*diabolos*, Matt. 25:41; not used by Mark) or 'satan' (*satanas*), terms used interchangeably in the Gospels (Matt. 4:1, 5, 8, 11 and 4:10; Mark 4:15 and Luke 8:12). By using the term 'Satan', which the lxx used to translate *šaṭān*, the Gospel writers maintain the devil's OT role as a testing adversary (Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 22:31) and one who attempts to separate people from God (Mark 4:15).

Beelzeboul in NT: This puzzling composite term (first attested in Mark 3:22) may have been coined during a debate between Jesus and his critics (Mark 3:22). The combination of *Baal* ('lord'), used mostly to refer to local manifestations of the Canaanite fertility and storm god, the chief adversary of the Israelite religion (1 Kgs. 18; 2 Kgs. 1:2–16; Hos. 2:8), and *ze͟bul* ('exalted house' [1 Kgs. 8:13], 'temple' or 'heaven,' meaning 'lord of heaven' (*cf. Matt. 10:25), would have been readily understood as denoting Satan. Thus Satan and his angels are associated with God's enemies or pagan gods (Ps 96:5 where the lxx substitutes 'demons' for 'idols').

'The enemy' and 'the evil one' (Matt. 13:19, 38–39) insinuate the inherent nature of the leader of the spiritual powers; 'the tempter' (only in NT at Matt. 4:3 and 1 Thess. 3:5) implies that the role of the evil spiritual powers is to divert God's people from the way of righteousness; 'the ruler of the demons' (Matt. 9:34; 12:24), implies that the devil is responsible for and represented by the activities of demons. John uses 'ruler of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) to highlight the role of Jesus' death in the defeat of the devil. To equate 'the powers in the heavens' with the stars of heaven (Mark 13:25) is to imply that spiritual powers are identical with or related to the heavenly or cosmic bodies (Col. 2:8). The context shows that in the eschatological catastrophe they will be deprived of their power.

The idea of sinister world powers and their subjugation by Christ is built into the very fabric of Paul's thought, and some mention of them is found in every epistle except Philemon. The Greek term for 'devil' (*diabolos*) occurs only in Ephesians, twice (4:27; 6:11) and in the Pastoral Epistles, six times (1 Tim. 3:6–7, 11; 2 Tim. 2:26; 3:3; Titus 2:3), sometimes referring to slanderers. Paul uses his preferred term 'Satan' (*satanas*) in 1 Corinthians 7:5, where Satan is portrayed in one of his traditional roles of inciting people to sin, which in 2 Corinthians 2:11 is put in terms of his outwitting or taking advantage of people by his schemes, specifically by inspiring a lack of forgiveness and love in the church.

Part of Paul's eschatological hope is that the hostile spiritual powers will be 'crushed under foot' (Rom. 16:20, alluding to Gen. 3:15; cf. Ps 91:13; Testament of Simeon 6:6) and he assumes that Satan stands behind false teachers who cause dissensions and put obstacles in the way of believers (Rom 16:17). In 2 Corinthians 11:14 false apostles disguising themselves as apostles of Christ are said to parallel Satan's treacherous tactic of disguising himself as an angel of light. This deceitful activity is elaborated in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, where Satan is said to use 'all lying power, signs, and wonders' (Acts 2:22). Nevertheless, in 1 Corinthians 5:5 (1 Tim. 1:20) it seems to be assumed that Satan is able to destroy the body (presumably through death) but not the spirit, which is saved in the day of the Lord. Similarly, Satan's role as an agent of God's purposes (Job 2:6–7) is seen in 2 Corinthians 12:7, where a thorn – perhaps a physical illness – is said to have been given (by God; cf. Gal. 3:21) to keep Paul humble. In 1 Timothy 1:20 (echoing Job 2:6–12 and 1 Cor. 5:5) the author depicts Satan as an instrument of correction. In 1 Thessalonians 2:18 Satan is portrayed as an enemy of God's work. Paul says that his journey to the Thessalonians was blocked by Satan; perhaps he sees Satan behind the lawless (2 Thess. 2:9) rioting in Thessalonica which may have prevented his return (Acts 17:5, 9). The adversarial role of Satan is also seen in 1 Timothy 5:15 (cf. v. 14) where those who have turned away to sin, either unchastity or heresy, are said to follow Satan.

Angeloi ('angels') in Paul may be either good or evil spiritual beings as distinct from human beings (1 Cor. 4:9; 13:1). They are represented as the authority behind the state (*cf. Deut. 32:8; Dan. 10:13, 20) and behind human affairs and social order (1 Cor. 11:10). They are inferior in status to humans, even though they have knowledge of humans (1 Cor. 11:10; Gal 3:19; cf. Heb. 1:13–14). In some sense they are culpable, for they may separate believers from God (Rom. 8:38), and are to be judged by believers (1 Cor. 6:3). Not surprisingly, the writer of Colossians 2:18 censures the worship of angels as misplaced devotion.

The phrase *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* ('the elemental spirits of the world/universe', Gal. 4:3; Col. 2:8, 20; cf. Gal. 4:9) may refer to the rudiments of religious teaching associated with the immaturity of humanity prior to Christ, or to the physical elements (2 Pet. 3:10, 12) of the universe. However, Paul speaks of them in connection with personal beings or forces (Col. 2:10, 15). Most commentators therefore understand the phrase to denote spiritual beings or powers which are active within the physical and heavenly elements.

Even though in the LXX, in Josephus, and almost always in Philo, *archai* ('principalities' or 'rulers') denotes a human office (cf. Luke 20:20, 'jurisdiction'; Titus 3:1), in the Pauline letters (except in Rom. 8:38) the term is always associated with *exousia* ('authorities' or 'powers') in lists (1 Cor. 15:24; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15; cf. Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12), which shows that he takes these principalities to be spiritual powers. In 1 Corinthians 2:6, 8 *archontes* ('rulers') could refer to political figures. But the context suggests that the term embraces both human figures and spiritual powers operating through their offices (cf. Dan. 10:20–21; 12:1).

Included in the list of spiritual powers in Colossians 1:16 (cf. Eph. 1:21) are *kyriotēs* ('dominions'), and *thronoi* ('thrones'). It is possible that in the syncretistic teaching followed at Colossae these spiritual powers were thought to control the heavenly realm and access to the presence of God (Col. 2:8, 20). In order to obtain salvation and access to the divine presence one would have not only to acknowledge Christ as one intermediary, but also to subdue the flesh, and thereby have a vision of heaven and participate in the angelic liturgy. However, Colossians asserts that, despite their idolatry, rebellion and hostility to God, the spiritual powers were created in, through and for Christ to serve him. So, despite there being 'many gods and many lords', the believer recognizes only one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things exist (1 Cor. 8:5–6).

At least the first stage of the defeat of the hostile spiritual powers is envisaged as having taken place in the cross (Col. 2:13–14), in which God 'disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it' (Col. 2:15). As a result, believers have been rescued from the power of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13). Therefore the spiritual powers are not to be feared, even though they retain some power (Rom. 8:37–39) until they are destroyed at the end (1 Cor. 15:24–25). More is said about (spiritual) powers in Ephesians than in any other book in the canon (Eph. 1:10, 21; 2:2; 3:10, 15; 4:8, 27; 6:11–12, 16). The powers in Ephesians have been understood as the general spirit or attitude of nations or localities, as revealed in their institutions, or as both the state and spiritual powers, or as a hierarchy of supernatural cosmic forces, or as the angelic host surrounding the throne of God, or as both heavenly and earthly, divine and human, good and evil powers. The evidence suggests that the language of Ephesians was commonly used in Jewish and Hellenistic

circles to refer to evil spiritual beings that can be identified with heathen gods and that work in conjunction with the flesh and with sin to control human life.

Ephesians speaks of an ultimate power of evil behind the other powers. He is the ruler of the air (Eph. 2:2) or heavenly realm (Eph. 3:10; 6:12) who remains at work among the disobedient. In Ephesisans 4:27 he is the devil who may gain a foothold in the lives of believers through their anger; in 6:11 he is also the devil who subtly attacks believers; and in 6:16 he is the evil one firing flaming arrows. The powers listed in Ephesians 1:21 are certainly spiritual and subordinate to Christ in his exaltation, but they could be either good or evil. However, the powers mentioned in Ephesians 6:12 and 16 are clearly depicted as evil and as still retaining some power, for the believer is said to struggle against them (Eph. 2:2; 4:8–10). This notion of warfare with the spiritual powers is the distinctive element in Ephesians' treatment of the subject. But the spiritual powers are not to be feared; the readers are assured that they have access to armour supplied (or used, cf. Ps. 35:1–3) by God (Eph. 6:10–20) and that the powers can see that they have been devastatingly foiled by the emergence of the body of Christ, the church.

Hebrews mentions angels eleven times, giving rise to the speculation that the author is attacking excessive angel worship (cf. Col. 2:18). However, there is nothing to suggest that the recipients were enmeshed in such worship. Rather, the Son is portrayed as far superior to all heavenly beings who serve him. Hebrews also says that through his death Jesus destroyed (*katargeō*) the one who has the power of death, the devil (Heb. 2:14). This statement, probably based on Genesis 3 (cf. Wisdom of Solomon 2:23–24), implies that the devil is responsible for death and for introducing the fear of it (Heb. 2:15). Hebrews 2:14 may also imply that the devil is defeated in two stages; *katargeō* is best translated as 'to condemn to inactivity', and points to both the devil's continued activity in the present and his future complete destruction. The traditional title 'Father of spirits' does not refer in Hebrews 12:9 to spiritual powers, but to the spiritual or heavenly Father (see v. 7).

In 1 Peter 3:19 Jesus is said to have 'made a proclamation to the spirits in prison'. When the word is not qualified, 'spirit' in the NT always refers to spiritual beings, and usually to evil ones. Further, as there is a tradition that fallen angels were imprisoned by God (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), and 1 Peter 3:20 refers to the days of Noah when these angels were thought to have been disobedient, the spirits mentioned here are probably fallen, malevolent angels (Gen. 6:1–4; 1 Pet. 3:22). The prison for the evil spirits (2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 18:2; 20:3, 7) is probably in heaven, for the verb 'to go' (*poreutheis*) is also used in 1 Peter 3:22 of Christ's ascension. Therefore the most natural reading of 1 Peter 3:18–22 is that in his risen state, during or in his ascension, Christ went and preached to these spiritual beings, perhaps announcing that their final destruction was imminent (1 Pet. 4:7). This is the same event as his subjection of the spiritual powers to himself in his exaltation (1 Pet. 3:22).

1 John 4:1 directs the reader to test the 'spirits', on the grounds that many false prophets have gone out into the world. As 'spirits' is unlikely here to refer to human beings (see above), and as it was commonly thought that spiritual beings inspired prophets, the spirits mentioned are probably evil spiritual powers, children of the devil whose works the Son came to destroy (1 John 3:8). The activity of an evil spiritual power can be discerned; it inspires people to do what is not right or to be unloving towards other believers (1 John 3:10; 4:7–12). Jude 6–7 probably

reflects Genesis 6:1–4 in its reference to angels not keeping their proper position and being responsible for evil. Hence the Lord is said to have kept them in eternal chains until the day of judgment. In Jude 9 the 'archangel' (in the NT only here and in 1 Thess. 4:16) Michael (see above), the opponent of Satan (Rev. 12:7), is said to have disputed with the devil's attempt, in his role as accuser, to condemn Moses and deny him an honourable burial. Michael respects the principle that no one is a law unto him/herself by asking the Lord to rebuke the devil.

Revelation uses the term 'angel' (*angelos*) seventy-seven times, mostly of spiritual beings who mediate between God and his creation (Rev 7:1–2; 8). Sometimes the term refers to 'the angels of the seven churches' (Rev 1:20), who have been understood as 1. human officials of the churches (cf. Mal. 2:7, but there is no clear evidence of episcopacy in Rev.); 2. human messengers (but these are unlikely to be symbolized by stars, Rev. 1:20); 3. personifications of the churches (an interpretation consistent with the texts but not with the symbolism of Rev. 1:20); or, 4. guardian angels of the churches (Acts 12:15) (an interpretation consistent with biblical imagery but not with the fact that only a human may properly be held responsible for a church). This verse illustrates the difficulty of circumscribing the meaning of symbols. Similarly, the 'seven spirits' (of Rev. 3:1) have been understood as the Holy Spirit in all his fullness (Is. 11:2–3 [lxx]; 1 Enoch 61:11), as seven astral deities of ancient Near Eastern religion, or – more plausibly, as they are said to be before the throne of God (Rev. 1:4) – as angels.

Satan or the devil is mentioned more often in Revelation than in any other book in the canon. He is also called an 'angel' (Rev. 9:11) – and his followers 'angels' (12:7, 9) – who, by inspiring civil authorities (2:9; 13), emperor worship (2:13), immorality and idolatry (2:24), and some Jews (3:9), not only attacks the church (12:13–17), but also in his exercise of fearsome power attempts to thwart God's redemptive plan, effected in Jesus (12:1–3). However, in a possible allusion to the victory of the cross, Satan is said to be thrown down to the earth (12:7–12; cf. John 12:31; see above on 'Leviathan'). Just as his army is consumed by fire, so also Satan is finally bound and thrown into the lake of fire (2 Kgs. 1:10) to be tormented for ever (Rev. 20:1–3, 7–10). Readers can take encouragement from knowing that the various attacks on them inspired by evil spiritual powers will eventually be defeated.

Perhaps because of increased contact with other cultures, though not because God was increasingly distant, germinal ideas in the OT about spiritual powers came to full flower in the apocalyptic literature of Judaism from the middle of the second century bc, generally without compromising monotheism. The NT writers drew upon these ideas for their various references to spiritual powers in the heavenlies who stood behind human activity and institutions. Some contemporaries of the biblical writers resigned themselves to fate in their contention with hostile spiritual powers; sometimes incantations were used, some people sought initiation into the mystery cults. The message of both Testaments is that God is sovereign over his creation, including those spiritual powers which are now his enemies. Although their power is to be respected, they are not to be feared. They will be defeated in two stages (Is. 24:21–22). The second stage can be expected in the eschaton; the first takes place in the ministry of Jesus, either focused in his exorcisms (Matt. 12:28; par. Luke 11:20) or in the cross event (John 12:31), and is

then played out in the ministry of his followers (Luke 10:17–18), and in the very existence of the church (Eph. 3:10)."[14]

Docent Research Group

To: Pastor Mark Driscoll
From: Justin Holcomb
Date: March 13, 2009

RE: Debate on Evil and Satan

Ronald Nash's Summary of Alvin Plantinga on the Problem of Evil[15]

Since a contradictory set of beliefs is necessarily false, the deductive version of the problem of evil would—if sound—pose the most serious threat possible to Christian theism. It would mean that Christianity is not just possibly false, but necessarily false. Things can't get much worse than that.

The problem arises because of a supposed contradiction that lies in the following six propositions:

1. God exists.
2. God is omnipotent.
3. God is omniscient.
4. God is omnibenevolent.
5. God created the world.
6. The world contains evil.

Obviously this list lacks two contradictory propositions. While the list contains the proposition *the world contains evil*, the proponent of the deductive problem of evil must find a way to demonstrate that propositions 1 through 5 entail the claim that *the world does not contain evil*. That would then produce the desired contradiction, namely the conjunction of *the world contains evil* and *the world does not contain evil*. In other words, the advocate of the deductive version must find a way to get from propositions 1 through 5 to a new proposition, namely,

7. The world does not contain evil.

If this can be done, then our set of Christian beliefs (1-7) would indeed have a problem; the set would be logically inconsistent and thus necessarily false.

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[14] G. H. Twelftree, "Spiritual Powers," in T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 796-802.

[15] Ronald Nash, "The Problem of Evil," in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 214-6.

However, in order to make their case, the critics must find another proposition that in conjunction with statements 1 through 5 would imply proposition 7, the claim that the world does not contain evil. Only by supplying such a missing premise would the alleged contradiction become evident. While proponents of the deductive problem of evil tried every move possible, none of them succeeded. The new propositions they offered to educe the sought-for contradiction failed either because they were not true or because they were not claims that Christians embrace. For example, some anti-theists offered as the missing premise the claim that an omnipotent being can do absolutely anything, believing that when this proposition was added to our original list, it would entail proposition seven, the claim that the world does not contain evil. In this way, they sought to generate the contradiction that would presumably demonstrate that Christian theism does contain a logical inconsistency at its core.

But there was a major catch to this move. The claim that God can do absolutely anything is not true. Informed Christians have always recognized that an omnipotent being cannot do lots of things. For example, even the Bible declares that God cannot lie or swear by a being greater than himself. The end result of all the hoopla over the alleged contradiction existing at the heart of the Christian faith turned out this way: no proponent of the deductive problem of evil ever succeeded in supplying the missing proposition needed to reveal the presumed contradiction.

Obviously, it is one thing to demonstrate that no one has discovered the required missing premise up to this point. But what about the future? Philosopher Alvin Plantinga has provided a procedure by which Christians can demonstrate the logical consistency of their set of beliefs. This information demonstrates that no philosopher can ever do this in the future.

All that is required to prove our list of propositions is logically consistent (and thus forever immune to the possibility of being shown to be inconsistent) is to add a new proposition that is logically possible, which means simply that it does not describe a contradictory state of affairs. The new proposition must be consistent with the other propositions in the list, and, in conjunction with the other propositions, it must entail that evil exists in the world. Plantinga's proposition is the claim that *God creates a world that now contains evil and has a good reason for doing so.*

Telescoping our earlier list to save space, our new list of Christian beliefs looks like this:
1. God exists, is omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, and created the world.
2. God created a world that now contains evil and had a good reason for doing so.
3. Therefore, the world contains evil.

Numbers 1 and 2 taken together do, of course, entail 3. Therefore, the propositions from our original list of Christian beliefs that now appear in number 1 are logically consistent with the existence of evil. The only relevant question regarding proposition 2 is whether it is possibly true. Obviously it is, since it is not logically false (is not a contradiction). Therefore, our original list of Christian beliefs is shown to be logically consistent, from which it follows that the deductive problem of evil has been answered. The existence of evil in the world cannot be used to demonstrate a logical inconsistency at the heart of the Christian faith.

Nash goes on to show the problem of evil shifts from a logical problem to a moral problem. If Plantinga's claim that God has a reason for creating a world that now contains evil is logically

possible, then the discussion moves into the moral arena of "Why did God permit evil?" Once this question of morality comes up, then the Christian might offer a number of proposals (ie. 'greater good defense,' etc.). However at this point there must be an analysis of the opposition's basis or standard for morality.