

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

LECTURE NOTES

JOB'S DEALING WITH EVIL

I. Introduction

- * Let's see what God teaches us about evil thru the life of Job

II. Scriptural Lesson

- A. God shows us that bad things can happen to good people.
 - * Note that this proves not all "affects" have a direct, rational "cause"
 - * Disproves those who say "there is no problem with evil... because everyone deserves hell from the onset... therefore when evil occurs it is a justifiable, rational consequence of our fallen (evil) nature."
- B. When Job questions God "why?"... God answers: "who are you to question me?!?"
 - * Romans 9 reiterates this point!
- C. Yet, God has given us a wiring that winches at the sight and application of evil... God has given us a moral compass
- D. Ironically, we fallen humans tend to use the wiring He gave us, to question and rate God
 - * We should praise God for His giving us a sense of justice, grief, sorrow,... and then giving us opportunities to test and develop our faith
- E. Job 11:3-6 tells us that "...He destroys both the blameless and the wicked."
 - * Not everything that happens is "deserved" according to rational standards
 - * The Bible lifts Job's life up as an example of this principle
 - * Consequently, by the world's standards... there really IS a "problem of evil"

III. God's message:

- A. God slams Job in 37: 5, 23... God purposely puts the tension and stress in our lives...
- B. Note: "watch how you council one another... there is not some karma system in play"
- C. God says there is real evil on this earth – not all bad things are related to karma!

THOMAS AQUINAS – “NO EVIL COMES FROM GOD”

I. Seminar Notes

- A. Aquinas' nickname = the dumb ox
- B. Typically would quote an ancient source and then creates debate
- C. The Summa = his book (key = only read Aquinas' "I answer that" statements)

II. Genius of Aquinas:

- A. He married Greek philosophy and Christian theology (Aristotle expert on Natural Law and its subsidiary – Human Law)
- B. Eternal Law is revealed thru Natural Law (which gives birth to Human Law) AND Divine Law (which gives birth to Canon Law)
 - 1. Telos = purpose... i.e. the telos of an acorn is to become an Oak tree
 - * Anything that breaks God's telos is wrong!
 - 2. There is an order to things in the universe
 - * "You don't so much brake the 10 commandments as much as you brake yourself on the 10 commandments" - Dr. Mark Coppenger
- C. General Revelation = Natural Law...
- D. Special Revelation = Divine Law...
- E. Reason (natural law) and the Bible (divine law) are friends!

III. Aquinas championed fact that General Rev. and Special Rev. ARE PERFECTLY COMPATIBLE

IV. Four Factors Affect All Things (per Aristotle but applied by Aquinas)

- A. Efficient Cause – the thing that brings about a result (i.e. the chisel)
- B. Formal Cause – the idea... the vision... (i.e. the sketch/blueprint)
- C. Material Cause – (i.e. the marble)
- D. Final Cause = PURPOSE

V. Article Summary

- A. Whether Good Can Be The Cause Of Evil
 - 1. Per Augustine... A good will cannot produce evil
 - 2. Good does not cause evil which is contrary to itself... but accidents happen...
- B. God (via telos) creates everything “good”
- C. Evil has no formal “cause” – evil is simply the absence of good
- D. The only reality is the “good” – what evil exists is a deprivation issue, not a validated entity
 - * Evil is NOT its own stand alone force/entity

*** AQUINAS FALLS SHORT IN THIS AREA... IT MINIMIZES THE REALITY OF SATAN AND HIS EVIL FORCES!!!

B. Is God the Cause of Evil

- 1. Augustine says God is not the author of evil (based on evil being the deprivation of good)
- 2. God cannot create the “absence of something”

C. Whether there is one supreme evil which is the cause of every evil

- 1. There is no “back and forth” or good vs. evil system in place
- 2. Assumes everything in its conception begins “good”
- 3. Satan is basically a good guy gone bad...
 - * If the devil hated all good (assuming he is sovereign), he would destroy reason... consequently, evil would consume itself... therefore, there can be no true evil

* Read C.S. Lewis’ “The Great Divorce” (a short, great read)

*** **AQUINAS’ BOTTOM LINE = Aquinas minimizes evil and says the only trouble we have comes from when we give evil too much credit, attention, and focus**

*** **Aquinas down played evil...**

DAVID HUME: EVIL AND THE GOD OF RELIGION

- Hume writes in the narrative (story telling)
- Hume is an 18th century Scotsman
- Hume is a GIANT (anti-Christian) in the debate...
- Cleanthes is the “good guy” (deistic world view) in Hume’s story

I. Hume’s Foundation

- A. Life is basically horrible
- B. Hume thinks that religious leaders preach sin and people instinctively reach up to some form of deity – a hopeless, irrational response...
- C. Hume says we’re all just kidding ourselves... any objective look at life, according to Hume, would have to conclude that life is a mosaic of misery!
- D. *“Not satisfied with life, afraid of death – this is the secret chain, say I, that holds us.”*

- E. How can anyone assume there is a “good God” given all the bad in the world?
 - F. Hume: “If God is all good and all powerful, the world would be a better place.”
 - G. Hume says that whenever we apply “attributes” (standards of measure) to God, we by definition identify God (god) as an infinite being
 - H. Hume advances the idea that the architect of any system that is flawed is himself flawed
 - I. Hume says that Christians are pretty good at “explaining away” evil under the guises of God’s reign... BUT, Hume says if we were to describe what we would expect a “good, omnipotent God” to build into a world – it wouldn’t look anything like what we have in reality – THEREFORE, there is no good, omnipotent God
 - J. Hume addresses the natural laws and their relationship to a good, omnipotent God...
 1. Why wouldn’t a good God make a kinder, gentler set of natural laws
 2. Why doesn’t God intervene more often (assuming He can) with miracles
 3. Why did God make such a rigid system that kills so many people (if He’s good)
- II. Hume Indicts God’s Creation
- A. Hume says the world is inherently evil
 - B. Hume is an atheist
- *** A good apologetic tool is to throw the “problem of good” at proponents of the problem of evil... the best way to do it is to show it vs. just telling people about it!
- C. Hume’s “pro-Christian” argument was weak... “there’s more good than evil” = a straw man argument that he then tears down

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY – REBELLION

- Tends to focus on children... which is compelling
- He covers some of the most evil of sins committed by man on man...
- He puts a sharp edge on the problem of evil...

ALBERT CAMUS – PHYSICAL SUFFERING & the JUSTICE of GOD

- Camus is an existentialist... (the school of “feeling”)
 - Opposite of existentialism = essentialism
 - Plato said our perceived reality is nothing more than shadows...
 - Plato says the only “true” reality happens in the world of ideas...
 - Existentialism is championed by Jean-Paul Sartre (Sart) who claims: “existence precedes essence”
 - Claims there is no overarching morality
- Existentialism = you have to invent yourself... the world is absurd... create your own reality/meaning
- Apologetic tool = challenge them to prove that the world is meaningless rather than assume the need to prove the world’s meaning
- These people tend to be dark and murky – they are not the upbeat, “anything goes” crowd
- Story = plague and a sick boy...

ELIE WIESEL – “NIGHT”

- Wiesel is just fed up with God...
- We need to be careful because you cannot “out sensitive” a sensitive argument against God
- He left God on the gallows in his story
- Story = Jews/SS and Concentration Camp horrors

Passages That Focus On The Question of What Happens When Children Die:

- David and Bathsheba... David says he will see his son on the other side of this life (argument = David simply admits he too will go the grave)
- Jesus uses children as a paradigm of heaven-bound people (argument = Jesus was just talking about a perspective of faith, not a ticket to heaven)
- Job 3:16-17 = still born babies “go to rest”
- The Holy Spirit entered John the Baptist while he was still in the womb
- “The Bible is incredibly quiet on the broader issues...”

J.L. MACKIE – EVIL AND OMNIPOTENCE

- The easy way out of the problem of evil would be to accept a finite god
- Evil is an illusion – this would be another way to address the problem
- Evil is the privation of the good... evil is not a stand alone entity, it is just a lack of something
- Reasons Mackie considers/debates to resolve the problem of evil: (HE REJECTS THEM ALL!!!)
 - Evil is a counterpart to good... without evil there would be no recognition of the good = one need only look to the purity of heaven’s proposed goodness to disprove the necessity of evil
 - Evil is a necessary means to the good = a weak God
 - Orders (levels) of evil... 1st order evil leads to 2nd order good... bad things happen “so that” good things can happen... the process can then be continued to 2nd order, 3rd order... the argument never ends... for every bad there is a good but for every corresponding good there comes another bad...
 - Free Will Defense – evil has to be a potential option if genuine freedom exists... Mackie contends a “real” omnipotent God could have made a world with freedom AND no evil...
 - Mackie introduces the Free Will/Compatibilistic/Determinism debate...
 - Compatibilism is the both/and answer
 - Read Romans 9, Job, Philippians 2:12-13
 - **Compatibilism says: I am free in that I do what I want to do... YET our wants flow out of our character, which is a determined aspect of our being (by God).**
 - Mackie says: why didn’t God just give us all the right character/”want to” list
 - God is the author/architect of each person’s character (i.e. Pharaoh & Esau)
- **T = Total Depravity**
- **U = Unconditional Election**
- **L = Limited Atonement**
- **I = Irresistible Grace**
- **P = Perseverance of the Saints** (once saved always saved)

ALVIN PLANTINGA – THE FREE WILL DEFENSE

- Plantinga lead the charge against the atheists and liberal Christians!
- Plantinga took on Mackie and the Problem of Evil:
 - First he questioned: “where is the contradiction...”
 - He established that if you start w/ a contradiction, you can prove anything...
 - Therefore, contradictions need to be avoided
 - If you disobey logic, you start speaking crazy...
- Plantinga and Hume are considered “Analytical Philosophers” (the detail oriented folks...
 - These guys make philosophy look like geometry
- Plantinga defends against the claims of contradiction...
 - Explicit Contradiction (p.104) has not been proven
 - Mackie needs to change and tweak the premise that God cannot coexist with a creation that has evil in it...
 - Plantinga says that not even God could make a square circle, or a pregnant woman un-pregnant at the same time... He cannot do what is logically impossible.
 - Plantinga offers a counter example (a great philosopher’s tool) to disprove the absolute claims of Mackie... all you have to do is present a valid counter to irrational claims of truth to disprove said claims...
- Plantinga says that Free Will must be defended as part of God’s plan
- There is an infinite number of “potential worlds/realities” but they are better recognized as “states of affairs”...
 - Transworld Depravity – assumes it is possible that one person has the potential to choose the bad in every possible world... if this is a real possibility, it would be possible that God could not make a “perfect” world

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

- I. Ontological Argument – that there is a being that is beyond which any other can be conceived
 - A. Plantinga champions this fight
 - B. Many people dismiss this argument as nothing more than a play on words...
 - C. “The ontological argument begins with the idea of God, who is defined as a being ‘greater than which nothing can be imagined.’ It then argues that the characteristic of existence must belong to such a being, since it is greater to exist than not to exist.” – Wayne Grudem (p.143)
- II. Cosmological Argument: (many versions)
 - A. The First Cause – the belief that every effect must have a previous cause
 - B. Contingent Beings – if we are all contingent (“depends upon”) beings... there must be a “necessary” being at the base of existence
 - C. “The C.A. considers the fact that every known thing in the universe has a cause. Therefore, it reasons, the universe itself must also have a cause, and the cause of such a great universe can only be God.” – Wayne Grudem (p.143)
- III. Teleological Argument (also called “Intelligent Design”)
 - A. Every watch needs a watch maker...
 - B. Anthropic Version = the universe is so beautifully aligned with our human needs... therefore there must be a God
 - * Those who don’t accept these claims (i.e. Darwin) say we have adapted to the universe vs. the universe having been designed for us

- C. **Anthropic/Aesthetic Argument** – the “anthropic” aspect of creation sustains us (and both the pro/con debate above rages on...) BUT, there is no “saving” or “sustaining” value in the beauty of creation... it cannot be explained by anything other than random chance.... OR God’s selection and the blessings that come from them
* Dr. Coppenger’s favorite argument!
- D. “The T.A. is really a subcategory of the cosmological argument. It focuses on the evidence of harmony, order, and design in the universe, and argues that its design gives evidence of an intelligent purpose... Since the universe appears to be designed with a purpose, there must be an intelligent and purposeful God who created it to function this way.” – Grudem (143)
- IV. Moral Law –
- A. Anyone who makes an excuse reveals an inherent belief in a moral law
- B. Even prisons have a unwritten moral code within their walls...
- C. “The M.A. begins from man’s sense of right and wrong, and of the need for justice to be done, and argues that there must be a God who is the source of right and wrong and who will someday mete out justice to all people.” – Grudem (p. 143)
- V. Wager Argument – Pascal’s “do you feel lucky...” “you have nothing to lose and everything to gain by believing in God... the converse is also true for not believing.”
- VI. Pragmatic Argument
- A. Most associated with an author named Mr. James today
- B. Even if some questions are left in a believer’s mind, they should still throw themselves into their faith 110%
- VII. Reformed Epistemology Argument
- A. Plantinga and others reject the notion that God must be proved
- B. The foundational truth is that God exists and a skeptic is charged with disproving Him
- C. The Bible says non-believers won’t get it... so don’t assume the responsibility of having to prove God exists,
- *** William Abraham: “Soft Rationalism” = at the end of the day both sides of the argument (theism and atheism) have to make some leap of faith... Abraham contends that the theistic, Christian World View holds together better than any other position

MICHAEL MARTIN – IS EVIL EVIDENCE AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF GOD?

DAVID BASINGER – EVIL AS EVIDENCE AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

- He puts the challenge back on the skeptic’s plate...
- He challenges skeptics to put together a world view/philosophical model of creation that better interprets the past, present, and future (as a plan)
- Ultimately, he defends the Christian worldview...
- His theme... “cherish your roots”

How To Process Things Ethically:

1. Start with a “case” (the question being asked)
2. Give a ruling = final result
3. Rules are to rest upon “principles”
4. Principles are “based” on “something”
5. The ultimate question is: “what is your base?”
6. Some choices for a base:

- Christian World View:
 - a. Divine Nature Theory – the Bible (its direct and indirect message)
 - b. Natural Law Theory – there is a created order to creation, per God
- Utilitarian (altruistic) – making the most pleasure is the guiding principle
- Hedonistic Egoism – what brings the individual the most pleasure
- Deontologist – the “ethically driven” approach (the black and white, right and wrong approach... with no sensitivity to circumstance or benefits)
- *** KEY ISSUE: we tend to use the same “glossary of terms” but with different lexicons defining each term...

Kohlberg – Moral Development Stages

- * “Convention” = societal norms
- * These are the things you treat as the “most important” things in life
- A. Pre-Conventional
 1. Pain avoidance
 2. Pleasure pursuit
- B. Conventional
 3. Nice boy/girl (being nice)
 4. Law and Order
- C. Post-Conventional
 5. Transcendent Ethic – even if there is no pleasure, even if people get upset, even if it hurts, even if it breaks the law (i.e. breaking the speed limit on the way to the hospital)... doing the right thing
 6. Transcendent Ethic – some things are good/right... even if they go against the grain of other, lower level standards of morals (pain avoidance, pleasure pursuit, niceness, law and order)

WILLIAM HASKER – ON REGRETTING THE EVILS OF THIS WORLD

- A. He seems to say that you have to have a certain view of the mind and body... (Descartes’ “Cartesian View”)
 1. Body:
 - a. Weight
 - b. Spatial
 2. Mind: (i.e. soul and idea)
 - a. Weightless
 - b. Non-spatial
- *** Descartes said the two realms interact in a particular gland in the body... known as “Cartesian Dualism”
 - Note: Materialists say “all that exists is matter”
- B. Epiphenomenalist
 1. Epi = head/top... emphasizes mind over matter
 2. Hasker says that epiphenomenalists will also agree with his position
- C. Not only are each person’s mind and body components intertwined... so is each person intertwined with the totality of a diverse history of creation..
- D. Therefore.... Everything is connected...
- E. Consequently, one has to either accept or condemn everything in a single package as Good Or Bad...

MARILYN ADAMS – REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING: A CHRISTIAN SOLUTION TO EVIL

- A. Read her work primarily as a “pastoral letter”
- B. She says: suffering is like a treasure at the center/heart of God’s economy (i.e. the cross)
 - 1. Cherish your suffering
 - 2. How you suffer can be an evangelistic tool
 - 3. Your persecutor may come to the Lord based on your suffering
 - 4. When you suffer, you are “playing Jesus” in life’s drama for lost people to see
- C. Regarding Hell: she does not see a traditional hell as consistent with a good God

AUGUSTINE – A GOOD CREATION’S CAPACITY FOR EVIL

- A. Augustine looks at creation like Steve Irwin (Croc Hunter) looks at killer crocs... “its all beautiful”... even the pain and hurt contribute to a beautiful, overall creation
- B. Augustinian theodicy is very similar to Aquinas’ view...
- C. Rejoice in the system... when evil surfaces, it is a derivative of the absence of good...
- D. Vices (and ultimately evil) are the by-products of free will (not God)
- E. Evil cannot compete with good in God’s economy of perspective
- F. Augustine says there is “no such thing as pointless evil” because God makes use of it all

DAVID RAY GRIFFIN – AUGUSTINE AND THE DENIAL OF GENUINE EVIL

- A. You really can’t worship a “mean” God...

Dr. Coppenger’s Website = www.kairosjournal.org Designed for Preachers to use as a resource!!!

JOHN WISOM – GODS

- 1. Advances the idea of “POSITION FALSIFICATION”
 - 2. The idea is that some people are so committed to their position that they are resistant to all forms of evidence...
 - 3. Position = Christians ignore rationale, reason, and evidence to believe in God
 - 4. His position is a famous skeptic, anti-theist position
 - 5. Grand Schemes typically cannot be proved or disproved, hence they are prone to “falsification” claims
- *** Note: the same thing could be said on the other side... Darwin’s position cannot be sustained if pressed, yet evolutionists defend the idea anyway...

PROVING OR DISPROVING THEISM: (Defeater / Defeater Approach)

- 1. Apologists have changed from trying to “prove” theism...
- 2. Plantinga is championing a new position called “Defeater / Defeater”
 - *** Analogy = Bad guys shoot a Skud missile, good guys counter by sending up a Patriot missile
 - *** Focus in on defense vs. offense

SPINOZA:

1. Argued for Pantheism (everything is god)
2. There can be only one “substance”: universe/god/people...
3. Hence, everything (people to roach waste) is equal... therefore all is “good”

SURRENDER AND CATCH (a book title)

1. The most powerful strategy one can employ is to surrender (base thesis)
2. Marilyn Adams agrees... it is more powerful to suffer, turn the other cheek...
3. Refutes the idea that “dominance is the supreme goal”
 - *** Revelation shows God’s dominance in the end...
 - *** Shows that a good idea can be taken too far (Adam’s idea)

RATIONALITY:

1. What is the definition of “rational?”
2. Who determines what is a “sound mind?”

WHY WE DO PHILOSOPHY

1. To define terms which in turn guide life choices
2. Christian philosophers work to stay linked to Scripture while helping to define those things that Scripture does not explicitly define
3. In a nutshell, philosophy is the process of refinement... it attempts to take a general issue down to its core foundation
4. Plato is basically the father of Philosophy... in his “dialogues”
 - a. What is piety
 - b. What is courage
 - c. What is knowledge
 - d. What is love
 - e. What is friendship
 - f. What is justice
 - g. There are many more...
 - *** His position reinforces the idea that there is a “form” to ideals...
 - *** “all philosophy is a footnote to Plato”
 - *** **Bottom line: try to sort out a concept!**

JOHN HICK –

- A. He is a Universalist & Pantheist
- B. He thinks the fall is a myth
- C. **Soul-Making Theodicy** – the point to the craziness of the world is to turn you into diamonds...
 - * God is in the business of making diamonds!
 - * How can there be courage if there is no danger
 - * How does one learn patience without challenge/temptation...
- D. He is a philosophical optimist... he says: “hang in there...” – we’re all going to heaven
- E. Hick champions Irenaeus’ theological position... the idea being that the idea of a “fall” is wrong... rather than starting perfect, falling to brokenness, and then going through a process of restoration through the atonement... Instead, he and Irenaeus say that we were created in the “image” of God and are on a “horizontal, developmental” journey to the “likeness” of God... it is a linear, A,B,C,D... X,Y,Z process of spiritual maturity.
 - *** He gets a lot wrong while hitting on some good ideas...

Aristotle said: “Virtues are the positions found between two extremes”

“So much of the Christian life is an art...” – Dr. Mark Coppenger

ROBERT ADAMS – MUST GOD CREATE THE BEST?

- A. **Utilitarianism** – that which is the most useful in the creation of **happiness is best**
1. Also known as “Altruistic Hedonism”
 2. Process = weigh the good and weigh the bad... choose the “most good” option
 3. Problem for Utilitarian = “if you do evil to one person that you think will prevent evil from happening to/with others, is it ok to do evil to the one...”
- B. Act-Utilitarianism = equate each and every act independently for its impact on “good”
- C. Rule-Utilitarianism = establish rules of goodness (i.e. do not kill)... THEN, the goal becomes finding the “BEST RULES” (vs. individual acts) to live by
- D. Adams claims God is an Act-Utilitarian because He CAN do all the analysis necessary to effectively accomplish the “good” by looking at all the connections associated with EVERY independent act ANYONE and EVERYONE can or will commit...
- * By contrast, we cannot do the analysis because we don’t have all the info... hence our need to be Rule-Utilitarians
- *** Any world designed to truly “maximize happiness” is stupid and irrational... just think of your family... what would life be like if as parents you prioritized the “happiness” (and only happiness) of your kids... You KNOW that is not the most “goodness” you can do!
- *** God is NOT a Utilitarian!!!
- *** **“America went looking for happiness and found only pleasures”** - anonymous?
- **Hedonistic Paradox** = if you are constantly asking yourself if you are happy, you will be miserable! *The thing that brings you happiness is when you lose yourself in something bigger than yourself that is worthy of your commitment/mission!*
 - o “Nobody goes to the Grand Canyon to look in a mirror” – J. Piper
 - Holy happiness is rooted in “genuine goodness,” which is built upon the foundation of God’s instruction for one’s life and in each circumstance.
 - *Too many Christians are “mood obsessed” – they seek out the easy road to happiness vs. God’s Holy happiness that may at times be the byproduct of choosing the narrow road of trial and challenge (for the glory of God).*
 - *A great part of Christian maturity is that part that does what is right regardless of the mood it creates in your fallen self.*
 - *“There is joy in being dependable.” – Dr. Mark Coppenger*
- *** Advice for dealing with “negative/pessimistic Christians”
- The Principle of the Limb =
 - o Get a project to work on
 - o The project should require them to get involved spiritually
 - o When they realize after the fact that “when they gave themselves to something... they became Holy happy”
 - o Key: “get people out on a limb for Jesus...”
 - The Principle of the Queue =
 - o Think of your people as being in a spiritual line
 - o You never know where different people are in that line
 - o Consequently, you (in obedience to God) keep doing the right things, and holding God’s Holy goodness (and opportunities to pursue it) in front of people
 - o Those at the front of the spiritual line (it could be one or a group of people) are the ones ready to take the next step with God

- 2 other considerations:
 - Some people just are not walking with God and honestly are not in line at all – even if they say they are in the line!
 - Some people you do not think are in line, are in actuality in line... number 1,874 in line today... may be at the front of the line tomorrow or the next day or 7 years from now...
 - The point is... we do not know who REALLY is or is not in God's spiritual line, therefore, we are to do the right thing (applying and illustrating God's Holy goodness) at every opportunity.
- E. We have to be careful not to "want" to eliminate everything that people assume is anti-happiness. This thought process is what under-girds the whole "engineered babies" movement. The bottom line is that if that is considered to be okay, is there not an established standard of "better?" And if there is a "better," is not every parent obligated to pursue it? Thus, "average" kids can sue their parents for their "averageness."
- F. Adams says the argument behind the "God has to create a perfect world" movement is like the "engineered babies" argument
- G. Adams bottom line: "come on guys... lighten up"

PHILIP QUINN – GOD, MORAL PERFECTION, AND POSSIBLE WORLDS

- A. God really does need to make the best of all possible worlds
- B. But, there are areas of conflict... the best moral world might conflict with the best happiness world...
- C. The issue comes down to defining the word "best"
- D. There is too much complexity and diversity to give one definition of "best"
- E. Quinn uses examples that are built around the word: "perfect" to show the lack of rigidity in defining the term... i.e. a perfect circle may be objective, BUT a perfectly wonderful dinner is not objective at all...
- F. Quinn suggests that we should take the same approach to our understanding of the definition of God's goodness
- G. Key term: "supererogatory" = going above and beyond the call of duty
- *** Think about the coolest moment or day in your life... what exactly was it that makes it so great in your memory and mind? i.e. George Bush Sr. was shot down and rescued in WWII... offered as one of his best days – trials, challenge, grace, and victory = key ingredients for him...
 - *** I think of our family's philosophy... "if we've made a memory... there's at least some good in the event"
 - *** The spirit of Christianity is adventurous!

RICHARD SWINBURNE – NATURAL EVIL

- A. Natural evil (i.e. tornados, earthquakes, diseases...) were created so as to give creation a back drop of evil to serve as a dictionary of evil... it is there to give context and creative ideas to those who would use their free will to do things that oppose God's commands (evils)
- B. Swinburne says that free will is a foundational truth... and if choice is a component of creation, natural evil is necessary to give context to choice
- C. Moral evil (i.e. Hitler) may be inclined to accept the free will theodicy... but, notwithstanding Swinburne's argument, it is not rationale to lump all natural evils into the "school of tragedy" pile...

- D. Example: Why Did God Create Tornados?
1. School of Tragedy... Swinburne's argument
 2. Opportunity for testimonies
 3. Taste of judgment
 4. Gives people a sense of finitude
 5. Renewal of the earth
 6. Display of God's power
 7. Demonstrates theology... (cause = the fall)
 8. Job creation...
 - *** There is a "storm Psalm" (29?) that gives glory to God thru the power of the storm

John Feinberg's Chapter On Natural Evil (different book)

- A. He is a COMPATIBILIST
- B. He divides natural evil into 4 parts:
- * (internal/"attached" = 1 & 2; external/"unattached" = 3 & 4)
1. Human Fault – i.e. many diseases are due to human choice
 2. Genetic Problems – i.e. different people groups just have higher occurrences...
 3. Diseases – i.e. the plague
 - 4.
- C. Note: "you cannot make non-drowning water..."
- D. Note: "God does not intervene with safety miracles (make a tornado turn away) every time because it would dull our necessary senses and undermine the good order of creation..."
 - * AND, I THINK GOD DOES INTERVENE WITH MIRACLES... A LOT! WE JUST DON'T REALIZE IT."
- E. Read Romans 8:18 about the fall of man in the Bible... all these things are attached to the fall of man!
- F. Romans 5 implies that if you want the affect of the second Adam, we have to accept the consequences of the first Adam...
- G. The "Religious Problem of Evil" (when we question God's goodness) – i.e. Monet's seizure...

*** Much of the problem of evil is not so much a philosophical problem as it is the out-crop of a tiny spirit... these people always feel like they are at risk and on defense.... They do not see the glory of the Lord in their trials...

JERRY WALLS – WHY PLANTINGA MUST MOVE FROM DEFENSE TO THEODICY

- A. Walls is an Arminian (embracing Libertarian Freedom)
- B. Walls tells Plantinga that he "was so close to getting it right..."
- C. Whiles Plantinga agrees with Walls in principle (libertarian freedom), Plantinga is not willing to commit his argument to the "necessity" of libertarian freedom.
- D. Walls says: without libertarianism, one has to assume God is unfair...
- E. Arminian foundation... "ought implies can" – if the Bible says sinners "ought to" believer, it implies they "can"... If, in reality they cannot (as pre-ordained/predestined) because of God... the Arminian argues that any god that would send such a person to hell is not a omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good God.

- *** **Libertarian Freedom Arguments:**
1. 1 Timothy 2:4-6 “God desires that all men will be saved...”
 - * Calvin = “all nations”
 2. Romans 10:9
 - * Calvin = “God works in the heart of the person first to accomplish...”
 3. 2 Peter 3: 8-9
 - * Calvin = “any of the elect”
- *** **Predestination Arguments:**
1. Ephesians 2: 8-10
 - * Arminian says: “dead is dead”
 2. Romans 6:22
 - * Arminian says: “slaves aren’t free”
- *** Compatibilists are Calvinists...

KENNETH SURIN – TAKING SUFFERING SERIOUSLY

- A. Don’t even get into the argument of evil...
- B. Those who worry about formulating a theodicy are ignoring the reality of evil
- C. **This is a Post-Modernism position**
 1. Timeline development:
 - a. Classic philosophy (Greek) = early BC to 300AD
 - b. Age of Faith = 300-500AD
 - Anselm
 - Augustine
 - c. Renaissance/Reformation
 - Luther
 - Calvin
 - Rembrandt
 - d. Enlightenment/Modernism
 - Kant
 - Rousseau
 - Voltaire
 - Locke
 - Hume
 - Darwin
 - Freud
 - e. Post Modernism
 - There is neither truth nor falsehood in this world
 - Relativism reigns (leaving scientific, absolute truths behind)
 - f. Some believe 9/11 (Sept. 11, 2001) marked the end of post-modernism
 2. Two kinds of logic (need to understand in the broad picture)
 - a. Formal logic
 - Precise rules apply (i.e. rule of non-contradiction)
 - Forms and proofs are laid out
 - b. Informal logic
 - Sloppy logic... subjective in nature
 - “Ad hominem” argument = ignore the issue and attack the person
 - “Ad baculum” argument = an appeal to power (i.e. Jesse B.)
 - “Ad misericordiam” argument = an appeal to pity
 - *** This “informal argument” style has been shunned over time...

3. In Post-Modernism... “informal logic” has become virtuous!
 - a. Truth and clarity are now seen as oppressors!
 - b. The bottom line in post-modernism = POWER
 - c. Everything is partisan... it leads to a near “tribal” division of society
 - d. Everybody develops their own hermeneutics
 - What does truth or good mean to you – you decide
 - What does the Bible say to you... you decide...
 - What does God represent in your life... you decided...
 - e. If there is no truth to be found, then philosophy and theology are inane
 - f. Post-moderns see existence like Disney World... everyone is happy, everyone gets along, anything goes...
 - * And then the Christians come along with their exclusivist, absolute truths...
 - *** Christians are therefore seen as evil oppressors.
4. Reductio ad absurdum = “reduction of an argument to absurdity” in philosophy
 - a. The problem is, post moderns seldom have a sense of absurdity to fall back upon
 - b. If there are no boundaries in life, there is no absurdity
 - c. Best approach with these people is to expose their errors by asking questions that force them to defend indefensible positions

KENNETH SURIN – TAKING SUFFERING SERIOUSLY

- A. Advance the position that anyone who can profess to believe in a moral, omnipotent, wholly good God is distasteful given the reality of creation’s evil (i.e. the holocaust).
- B. You have a “crusty soul” if you can ignore the evil of the world
- C. These people use the “I’m appalled” argument...
- D. They become proud of their intolerance...
- E. Lessons from these people:
 1. Don’t go thru life like a wounded duck... screaming victim status
 2. Don’t run for cover just because someone takes this approach
 3. Don’t let your policies and plans be held up by one/some of these people
 - a. You can’t reason with them... that’s why they are doing this...
 - b. Don’t let them paralyze you and/or your ministry
 4. When you give in to the “victim’s” ploys... you are creating a next generation of victims out of those who are watching and framing a world view...
- F. These guys try to take the high ground via hyper-sensitivity...
 - *** Ethics Point:
 1. Some say: “one cannot prescribe from outside.”
 - * “you’re a Pharisee until it hits home”
 2. Others say: “in the situation is the worst place to prescribe.”
 - * “you honor the Word of God... until it costs YOU”
- G. Don’t ever give up your biblical reasoning and convictions.

JAMES WETZEL – CAN THEODICY BE AVOIDED? THE CLAIM OF UNREDEEMED EVIL

- See Surin to get the main idea

JOHN FEINBERG – BOOK REVIEW

- A. There is no single problem of evil – it is a very diverse issue
- B. The difference between a theodicy and a defense...
 - 1. Defense answers the specific charges of another's position
 - 2. Theodicy takes the offensive by explaining God's position
- C. Two approaches rejected by Feinberg:
 - 1. Theonomy = "God makes the law"
 - a. *We should go back to God's **O.T.** laws...i.e. Massachusetts Bay Colony*
 - b. Solves the problem of evil by saying: "God does it = good"
 - c. God is the standard of goodness
 - 2. Leibnizian Rationalism = there is a rational order to things... there is a right and a wrong way to do everything...
 - a. God has to create an orderly world
 - b. God has to create the best of all possible worlds
 - c. God has to measure up to an established standard of "good reason"
 - d. "Principle of Sufficient Reason" entails God doing the best – always
- D. Modified Rationalist = Feinberg's position
 - 1. The middle between Theonomy and Leibnizian Rationalism
 - 2. Says: God is in charge, AND in His economy, He is rational in His decisions
- E. Last Plantinga article:
 - 1. Notes difference between "Nominalism" and "Realism"
 - a. Realist = truth is truth on its own (i.e. $2 + 2 = 4$... because it is)
 - b. Nominalist (a.k.a. Conceptualism) = everything is ultimately subjective because people give words meaning and therefore control the bottom line meaning of everything.
 - "The world is made up of manmade rules"
 - 2. Plantinga says that he is a Realist... BUT, that is not a requirement for his position to be upheld
- F. Leibniz's 3 Types of Evil:
 - 1. Metaphysical Evil = imperfections
 - 2. Physical Evil = suffering
 - 3. Moral Evil = sin
- G. Leibniz's 4 Senses of Good:
 - 1. Moral Good = mercy, heroism...
 - 2. Legal Good = obeying the laws of society
 - 3. Prudential Good = doing what is prudent (using wisdom that is not a strict issue of moral right and wrong) i.e. Billy Graham's approach to women...
 - 4. Functional Good = something is good if it fills its purpose admirably
 - *** All 4 kinds of good boil down to God's metaphysical goodness... it is beautiful in its entirety, as a system.
- H. Feinberg's Problem w/ Leibniz: "lighten up Leibniz..."
 - * Modified Rationalist = "both/and" position
- I. **Feinberg's Position**
 - 1. Compatibilist
 - 2. God chose to create beings who have not yet been glorified
 - a. They are in His image
 - b. But they are finite creatures
 - c.
 - 3. Genesis 1:31 = we were made "good"

4. Psalm 8: 5-8 = ⁵ Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty! ⁶ You make him to
rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet, ⁷ All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field, ⁸ The birds of the heavens and the
fish of the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.
5. James 1: 13-15 = answers question of whether or not God is responsible for evil
¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by
God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not
tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away
and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it
gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth
death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.
6. Our fallen desires are triggered by the bait of a fallen world... the devil just
keeps casting out bait in hopes of catching man... this leads to unhappy, evil
things!

II. 8 Ways God Could Remove All Evil

1. Do away with ALL mankind = defeats God's purpose
2. Eliminate the objects of desire = no limit to the process of elimination
3. Eliminate all human desires = Buddhism... "nothingness" is not God's plan
4. Neutralize desires at their danger points = ignores creation's interrelatedness
5. Neutralize intentions at the danger point = same problem as above
6. Neutralize the will...
7. Stop the action of evil at the onset of its occurrence
8. God intervenes with a miracle AFTER the act is committed

*** These would be awful...

*** God made man with desires... fallible people make mistakes and evil happens
*** **God could have simply added more people to heaven if that was His
intention... but He chose to create a drama/circus instead...**

*** Humans are "good" but not perfect... the imperfections of man, PLUS
the intentions and bait of Satan lead to evil.

*** God could have made a world of Mercedes... but He chose to make a
world of Taurus' instead. Taurus' are limited and less than perfect – by
design.

HELL... AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Annihilation Vs. Hell

- I. 5 Points Representing Tradition's View Of Hell
 - A. Hell is a real metaphysical place...
 1. Sheol = O.T. uses the word for "home of the dead"
 2. Hades & Gehenna = N.T. for same...
 - B. Hell = both physical and spiritual torment and death
 1. It helps to think of the analogy of a car being "totaled"
 2. The descriptive words used to describe hell in the Bible are similar to Jesus' words to describe heaven (i.e. like the lilies of the valley...)
 - * In this way, we are not to expect a rigid, literal translation of the descriptions...
 - C. Who goes there? = EVERYONE who does not accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior
 - * Romans 1: 19-20 makes this clear!!!
 - * God gives everyone enough light to respond...
 - D. Hell is never-ending punishment.
 - * It is arguable that there will be different levels in hell (like heaven)
 - E. Hell is the place of retribution.
 1. 4 stages of Punishment
 - a. Rehabilitative – Lewis says this is inhumane
 - b. Incarcerative / Segregation – ditto
 - c. Deterrent – ditto
 - d. Retribution = only humane option (i.e. eye for an eye...)
 - * Therefore, a person in hell "deserves" to be in hell...per
Feinberg
 2. Jonathan Kvanvig has an alternative view:
 - a. Annihilation thesis – everyone is snubbed out of existence
 - b. Existence thesis – they live forever
 - c. No escape thesis
 - d. Retributive thesis – they deserve it
- II. 6 Ways Christians Can Deal With Hell: (per Feinberg)
 1. Hell exists and therefore God is not really that "good"
 2. Marvel at the beauty of hell's counter balance to heaven
 3. Go with theonomy... if God says it is okay to have a hell... it's okay
 4. Universalism – everybody gets to go to heaven
 5. Annihilationism
 6. Traditionalism (see points "A – E" above)

*** Note that there are Scriptures that describe God hating some people
- III. Pro-Annihilationism
 - A. Language of "destruction" in the Bible
 - B. Imagery of fire in the Bible
 - C. The out-weighing of the punishment...
- IV. Anti-Annihilationism
 - A. Annihilation is an easy out for bad people
 - B. Bible (Luke 16: 19-31) talks of people suffering/tormented in hell
 - C. Eschatology... end-times Scriptures don't reflect annihilationism

- V. Argument in support of hell's suffering
 - A. It is God way of honoring our free will...
 - B. Annihilation is not great either
 - C. Sin is typically under-evaluated

- VI. For Those Who Do Not Hear The Gospel
 - A. God uses more than the Bible to get His message across (Job 33: 13-18)
 - 1. Dreams
 - 2. Angels
 - 3. Damascus Road experience
 - *** This is happening in the Muslim world today!!!
 - B. It would be fair if EVERYONE of us were to go to hell... therefore, if "some" do, it is still fair

***** ENDLESS PUNISHMENT IS THE BIBLICAL VIEW *****
 – even if people don't like it!

PASTORAL RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

- I. Coppenger's Keys:
 - A. Timing is everything! When people have needs... get there quickly. The ministry of presence is powerful... but remember, it is linked to timing.
 - 1. Don't ask: "is there anything I can do?" because you put them on the spot.
 - 2. Offer something... let them turn it down
 - B. Remember the golden rule

***** God's purposes are served in all of this...

- II. Feinberg's 16 Reasons Suffering Exists...
 - A. Suffering gives God an opportunity to reveal His power
 - B. To remove a cause of boasting
 - C. To demonstrate genuine faith to Satan
 - D. To demonstrate to believers and unbelievers the "body of Christ" concept. When others come around you... it reflects Christ
 - E. To promote sanctification (i.e. the stove is hot)
 - F. He refines our faith (1 Peter 1: 6-7)
 - G. It educates believers... God teaches perseverance
 - H. To catch a glimpse of God's sovereignty and majesty (see end of Job)
 - I. It gives intimacy with God
 - J. It challenges the righteous to grow rather than fall into sin (James 1: 1-13)
 - K. Gives opportunities to imitate Christ (1 Peter 3)
 - L. It opens up new ministry opportunities (literally and empathetically)
 - M. It prepares us for further trials
 - N. It helps to prepare (facing trials & getting points) for the return of Christ and His justice
 - O. It is the basis of our exaltation of Christ (humility is the way to God)
 - P. Suffering may be the vehicle to glory (i.e. cancer leads to death, death enters heaven)