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# A RATIONAL PROBLEM OF EVIL: THE COHERENCE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE WITH A BROAD FREE WILL DEFENSE

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A RATIONAL PROBLEM OF EVIL: THE COHERENCE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE WITH A BROAD FREE WILL DEFENSE

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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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## Abstract

The problem that evil presents for Christian theism is often thought to be the most difficult problem to solve. Since Alvin Plantinga's celebrated free will defense, however, some have argued that the logical problem was indeed solved. Yet, many non-theists remain convinced that evil is a problem for Christian theism. In this dissertation I attempt to move the strategy of defense forward by developing a distinction between narrow and broad defenses to the problem of evil. The former only aims to rebuff the immediate charge of inconsistency and makes no claims about the additional propositions used in the defense. The latter also seeks to rebuff the charge of inconsistency, but in doing so only employs propositions that are consistent with the defender's actual beliefs. It is hoped that non-theists find this broad defense to be more rationally persuasive than its narrow counterpart. In chapter 1, I develop this distinction, and in the remaining chapters use it to survey the consistency of traditional Christian doctrines with a broad defense. In chapter 2, I construct a consistency problem for two accounts of original sin, and consider potential solutions. In chapter 3, I explore the nature of creaturely freedom in heaven and attempt to refute charges of inconsistency already present in the literature. In chapter 4, I turn to the divine will and consider whether it was possible, or desirable, for creatures to be created with that same type of will. Finally, in chapter 5, I demonstrate how the project can be extended to include other beliefs Christian theists may take to be true, and also how the distinction developed in chapter one can be employed in discussing other alleged problems for the Christian theist.

# Chapter One: Discussing the Problem of Evil

## Problems of Evil

It is very likely that over the course of a person's life there will be a variety of bad things that happen to that person. It is probably appropriate to even say that at least some of these bad things are evil. This remains true for both the theist and the atheist, and both wonder why these things happened to them. The atheist has a means of answering this question that is not available to the theist. Bad and evil things happen because we live in a world that pays no special attention to us.[1] The human race is no different in any significant way from the rest of the universe and, though it is unfortunate, humans too are subject to the whims of nature and to the evil acts of other humans. However, such a response is not available to the theist.[2] The theist believes that there is some being apart from this universe that has a say in the goings-on of this uni-

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1. I differentiate 'bad' from 'evil' because it is not clear that all bad things are evil things, even if all evil things are bad things. For example, it is bad if I back my car into a pole, but not evil. For an interesting article attempting to evaluate the logical problem of evil by comparing its structural similarity to a logical problem of bad things, see Stephen Griffiths, "The Problem of Pomegranates," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Peter van Inwagen (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 85-94.

2. There is, however, a potential problem here for even the atheist. Several philosophers have developed arguments that conclude the existence of evil serves as a *proof for* God's existence. See C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), chapters six and seven or William Lane Craig, *No Easy Answers: Finding Hope in Doubt, Failure, and Unanswered Prayer* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 99-100.

verse. In particular, the Christian theist believes not only that this being cares a great deal about us, but also that he is perfectly morally good and essentially omnipotent.[3] These beliefs alone are sufficient to give a rough approximation of what has come to be known as the problem of evil. If there is an omnipotent and perfectly good being that cares about the human condition, then why do bad and evil things happen to those humans? As Epicurus famously stated the problem, "If God is good and omnipotent, whence then evil?"

It is tempting to speak as if there is one problem of evil, when in fact there is a host of related problems that together constitute the problems of evil. This is important to keep in mind because an answer to one problem of evil may have nothing to say to another problem of evil. In order to be clear about the problem of evil that will be dealt with here, it will be helpful to give a brief taxonomy of the problems of evil.

There are two broad ways to talk about problems of evil: the existential problem and the theoretical problem.[4] The existential problem is more concerned with difficulties raised when a person is forced to deal with a particular evil that arises in the "real world." A mother in the emergency room may ask why some particular evil happened to her family, but she does not really want a theoretical response about the compatibility of God and evil in general or about the unfortunate natural occurrence of pain. Instead, she

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3. While there are related problems of evil for other religious systems, the problem that evil raises for the Christian theist will be the focus of this dissertation.

4. It is common for some to refer to the theoretical problem of evil as the philosophical problem, but because determining if, or how, one can continue to believe in God even while experiencing evil is very much a philosophical question, I prefer to use 'theoretical' to pick out the abstract nature of this type of problem of evil.

wants to know why this horrible event happened to her family. While theists and non-theists alike are forced to deal with this existential problem, it takes a different form for the theist. If the mother in the emergency room believes in God, she will likely confront a religious version of the existential problem. If God really does love her and her family, then why would that God allow this evil to happen to her? Here the worry is directed toward some being, instead of the universe in general, but it is still existential in nature. Alvin Plantinga points to this distinction when he writes that there is no doubt that one can adequately solve a theoretical problem of evil, but "this is cold and abstract comfort when faced with the shocking concreteness of a particularly appalling exemplification of evil."[5] What the mother in the emergency room wants is comfort and the knowledge that she does not have to suffer through the tragedy alone.[6] It is important to remember that when dealing with the theoretical problem, an answer to it may have nothing to say about the existential problem at all. While it is important for the Christian theist to have some type of answer for the religious problem of evil, the intent here is to focus on theoretical problems of evil for a simple reason — seeking to comfort the sufferer of a particular evil with appeals to a God that cannot coexist with that evil is not likely to be comforting at all.

What philosophers typically have in mind when they discuss the problem of evil

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5. Alvin Plantinga, "Self-Profile," in *Alvin Plantinga*, eds. J. E. Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 35-36.

6. For more on responding to the religious problem of evil see C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001 or John Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books), chapters fourteen and fifteen.

is the theoretical problem. This problem can be approached in at least two ways: as an evidential problem, or as a logical problem. However, as Daniel Howard-Snyder points out, these labels can be somewhat misleading. Evidential problems tend to make rigorous use of logical structure, especially in terms of probabilities, and logical problems are often used as evidence that counts against theism.[7] But with this qualification in mind the distinction can be useful to determine what type of problem one is confronting. Briefly put, the evidential problem attempts to demonstrate that, given the existence of evil, it is more likely that there is not a God than that there is a God, whereas the logical problem attempts to demonstrate that the existence of evil creates a logical contradiction with the very notion of God.[8] Advocates of either of these types of arguments claim that the argument gives an individual reason to believe that God does not exist. The logical problem leads one to the conclusion that God and evil are logically incompatible and the evidential problem that God's existence is less likely than non-existence because of the existence of evil. As one would expect, Christian theists have not remained silent on this issue. Their responses to these problems of evil have typically sought to either provide God's reasons for allowing evil, or to demonstrate that the proposed problem does not succeed in providing reasons to believe that God does not exist. It is to these responses that we now turn.

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7. Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Introduction," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), xii.

8. See Howard-Snyder, ibid. for a collection of evidential problems of evil. For a general collection of problems of evil, including logical problems, see Marilyn Adams and Robert Adams, eds., *The Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

## Theodicy and Defense

Any response to a problem of evil that attempts to provide the actual reasons for God allowing evil is a theodicy. From an historical perspective, theodicies have been the dominant way Christian theists have dealt with problems of evil. This type of response can be found not only in the writings of church Fathers as far back as Irenaeus and Saint Augustine, but also in the modern philosopher Leibniz, who actually coined the term, and in contemporary philosophers such as John Hick. In giving a theodicy one attempts to justify God's ways to man by stating the reasons for God 's allowance of evil. Of course the success of a theodicy will depend upon God's actual reasons for allowing evil, but short of divine revelation, there is no way to judge if a theodicy does correspond to those reasons. However, there are ways for an individual to determine the likelihood that a theodicy is successful. For example, if the actual states of affairs in this world, or the actual details of the religious tradition in question, do not correspond to the details of a theodicy, then one can know that theodicy is a failure. A theodicy that provides a positive explanation for the evil in this world given a particular religious framework must at least be consistent with what is known about this world and that religious framework.

One of the more recent theodicies that purports to satisfy this consistency requirement is John Hick's Irenaean theodicy. Hick begins by distinguishing Augustinian theodicy from Irenaean theodicy. According to Hick, the Augustinian theodicy places the fall of Adam and Eve as the origin of moral evil, whereas the Irenaean theodicy focuses on the "creation of humankind through the evolutionary process as an immature

creature living in a challenging and therefore person-making world."[9] In contrast to the Augustinian picture, humans are not born fully perfected, but instead engage in various activities that provides them the avenue through which they become more like God. Some of this engagement comes in the form of responding to suffering caused by various types of evil. In other words, God allows his creation to undergo evil so that they can grow in their relationship with God by properly responding to that evil.[10] While an assessment of Hick's Irenaean theodicy is beyond the scope of this dissertation, we can determine what would have to be the case for this theodicy to be successful.

If the details of such a theodicy turn out to not be consistent with one's religious system or with the facts of the actual world, then Hick's theodicy fails. For example, if God did not need to allow humans to suffer evil to grow in their relationship with God, then the theodicy fails because an essentially morally good God would not subject his creation to evil if there were a way of accomplishing his ends without that evil. Further, if it turns out that it is morally wrong for God to allow humans to suffer simply so they can become more like him, then the theodicy is not consistent with the religious system and fails. Of course demonstrating that a theodicy is consistent does not entail that it is *the* correct account of why God would allow evil, but that consistency is at least a nec-

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9. John Hick, "An Irenaean Theodicy," in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen Davis (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 38.

10. Because I use Hick's view simply as an illustration of how a theodicy differs from a defense, the presentation of Hick's Ireneaen theodicy must be concise. For a full account of Hick's theodicy see John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love,* 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), and for a critique see R. Douglas Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

essary feature of a correct account.

In contrast to theodicy is defense. When an individual gives a theodicy the claim is that these are God's *actual* reasons for allowing evil to exist, and these reasons must be consistent with the actual world and that religious system. A defense differs in that it needs to only meet the final condition - consistency within the religious system. Instead of offering God's actual reasons, the defense offers *possible* reasons for God's allowance of evil and they only need to be consistent with the religious system. This distinction between theodicy and defense was first formulated by Plantinga and put to use to respond to a logical problem of evil. According to Plantinga the aim of a theodicy is to "attempt to tell us why God permits evil," whereas the aim of a defense "is not to say what God's reason *is*, but at most what God's reason *might possibly be*."[11] The reasons offered in a defense need only be possibly true and consistent within that religious system.

Even if the general structure of a theodicy is very similar to that of a defense, the purpose of the former is to give actual reasons for evil, whereas the purpose of the latter is to tell a possibly true story that would demonstrate that the existence of evil does not provide rational grounds for believing in the non-existence of God. The key difference between theodicy and defense is not content, but intent. In the former the intent is to give actual reasons whereas the latter is to give possible reasons. The reasons themselves might be the same, but what one is trying to accomplish by giving those reasons is different. Peter van Inwagen has nicely characterized this difference between theodicy

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11. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 28. (Original emphasis.)

and defense. He writes,

> A defense is not necessarily different from a theodicy in content. Indeed, a defense and a theodicy may well be verbally identical... The difference between a defense and a theodicy lies not in their content but in their purposes. A theodicy is a story that is told as the real truth of the matter; a defense is a story that, according to the teller, may or may not be true, but which, the teller maintains, has some desirable feature that does not entail truth - perhaps (depending on the context) logical consistency or epistemic possibility (truth-for-all-anyone-knows).[12]

This understanding of a defense centers on the attitude one takes when responding to the problem of evil. Because different responses to the problem of evil will take different forms, there could be a host of different defenses to the different problems.

For example, when presented with a problem of evil the theist might respond by demonstrating that the premises in the argument do not provide rational reasons to accept the conclusion. Such a defense would be successful whether the problem of evil presented against Christian theism was logical or evidential in nature. If the distinguishing mark between theodicy and defense is intent, then one could respond to both problems of evil by telling a just-so story that either demonstrates the logical compatibility of God and evil or demonstrates that the existence of evil does not make God's non-existence more likely than his existence. However, this understanding of a defense is not universal. Michael Murray, after relegating defenses to only logical problems of evil, writes "Defenses will be of little use in our context because... they do not aim to provide explanations that undercut the *evidential* value of evil."[13] Of course, if the problem of

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12. Peter Van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7.

13. Michael Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw: Theism and the Problem of Animal Suffering* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37. (Original emphasis).

evil addressed is not logical in nature, then a response demonstrating the logical compatibility of some set of propositions will not be satisfactory, but one may give a defense to the problem of evil that is not logical in nature at all.

What seems to lead to this misrepresentation is that defenses are typically thought of as a *type* of response. It is thought that a defense is simply the attempt to show that some set of propositions is logically consistent and if the set is logically consistent, then the argument claiming they are not fails. While a particular defense may include something like this, one should not restrict all defenses to this line of argumentation. For example, the proponent of the evidential argument claims that some set of propositions shows that God's non-existence is more likely than his existence, given evil. If a defense is simply a type of a response dealing with logical consistency, then it clearly will not work here because the claim is not that the set is logically inconsistent, but that even though it is possible that God exists, it is less likely that he does because of the existence of evil.[14]

There are at least two ways one could respond to the evidential argument from evil. The first way to respond we might call a rebuttal. Giving a rebuttal would be to demonstrate that there is some flaw in the original argument. That is, it would not seek to offer any positive argument for the co-existence of God and evil at all. but instead seek to show that, for example, there is an equivocation with one of the key terms or that an improper inference has been made between two premises.[15] Either response

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14. Such a complaint can be found in Joel Thomas Tierno, "On Defense as Opposed to Theodicy," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 59 (2006): 167-174.

15. For an insightful exchange based upon whether an improper inference is being made in certain evidential arguments see Stephen Wykstra, "Rowe's Noseeum Arguments

would be sufficient to show that the argument from evil at hand does not succeed.

A second way one could respond is by supplying some proposition that would explain the necessity of that evil. For example, an advocate of the evidential problem of evil might agree that there are some evils necessary to bring about a good and that, as long as that good sufficiently outweighs the necessary evils, God is morally justified in allowing that evil to occur. However, this person may go on to argue that some some evils appear to serve no good whatsoever.[16] Because those evils are not needed in any way an omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good God would prevent them from occurring. But since they do occur, one is justified in believing that there is no such God.

Of course, if one were to demonstrate that those evils are indeed necessary for some good, then that particular argument from evil would fail. Such a demonstration would provide reasons to believe that God had to allow those evils in order to achieve some good or to prevent some worse evil. When presenting such a response one has two options concerning the intent of the argument. One might argue that the propositions that demonstrate the necessity of those evils are actually true. That is, one could seek to give God's actual reasons for those evils and those that make such an effort would be engaging in theodicy. However, one might also argue that those propositions are simply possibly true. But, because the original argument did not concern strict logical possibility, one would have to do more than just demonstrate the possibility of those proposi-

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from Evil," and William Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look" both in Howard-Snyder 1996.

16. William Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1979): 335-341.

tions being true. One would also have to demonstrate that the probability of the propositions being true is greater than that of their being false. Those that engage in this second project would be offering a defense. A defense, then, would be any attempt to provide some proposition, or set of propositions, that demonstrate the argument from evil fails, and this understanding of defense applies equally to the logical problem of evil and to the evidential problem of evil.

This more precise understanding of a defense should be something that even Murray would accept given that he also suggests the main difference between a theodicy and defense is that a theodicy aims "to provide the known truth about why God permits evil."[17] The alternative to providing "the known truth" would be to provide a response that is possibly true. But providing a response that is possibly true can equally apply to the logical and evidential problems. Such a response might be offered to demonstrate how a set of propositions are logically consistent, but a different possibly true proposition might be offered as a reason to think it is more likely that God exists given evil than that he does not exist.

To summarize, one can distinguish responses to the theoretical problem of evil in one of three ways: a rebuttal, a theodicy, and a defense. A rebuttal to the problem is a response that gives reasons to believe that the problem of evil under consideration fails *due to an internal problem* with the specific argument. In providing such a response, the individual does not make use of any additional premises, but instead simply demonstrates that there is some internal flaw in that problem of evil, an improper inference

17. Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 37.

being one example, that prevents the problem from succeeding. The second way one might respond to the theoretical problem is to offer a theodicy. When giving a theodicy additional premises are presented and there is an expectation that the proponent of the problem of evil accepts those premises as accurately representing the way the world really is. Because the details of a theodicy are supposed to be reflective of the actual world, there is at least an implicit expectation that those details should be accepted as true by all participants in the debate. Finally, one might present a defense to the theoretical problem. A defense may look identical to a theodicy, but there is no expectation that all must accept the details of the defense as being actually representative of the way the world is.

*Theodicy and Defense in Action*

One of the most influential responses to the problem of evil is based upon human free will. Two of the most famous responses utilizing free will have come from St. Augustine and Alvin Plantinga. Each appeals to some good that is gained by God creating humans with free will, but many understand Augustine to believe himself as presenting the actual truth to the matter whereas Plantinga specifically states that he is only presenting what might possibly be the case. In other words, Augustine presented what is known as a free will theodicy while Plantinga has presented a free will defense.[18]

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18. While Plantinga's work on the problem of evil is most famously associated with his defense, he has recently also given a theodicy in, Alvin Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa'," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Peter van Inwagen

For Augustine the problem of evil was not primarily a problem in justifying belief in the Christian God given the existence of evil. Instead it was a problem explaining *how* an omnibenevolent God and evil could coexist, not *if* they coexist.[19] This is why, in *On Free Choice of the Will*, he begins his theodicy by giving a proof that God exists and is necessarily good. In the words of Douglas Geivett, "the cornerstone of Augustine's theodicy" is that God exists and is necessarily good.[20] The question is not "Given the existence of evil, does an omnibenevolent God exist?" but instead "Given the existence of an omnibenevolent God, how does evil exist?" In answering this latter question Augustine first argues that evil is not an actual substance, but is instead a privation of good. In Augustine's ontology, all created things are, in some measure, good because they were created by a good God. If a created thing is "evil" it is because it is lacking some measure of goodness. Here one may wonder what brings about that privation. If God created all things, and consequently all things are good, why are any of those created things lacking in goodness?

Speaking of 'evil' as a privation of good fully covers the range of created things, but in addition to these things, there are also evil choices made or evil actions committed by humans. Humans, as rational creatures, have free wills that permit them to

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(Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 1-25.

19. Michael Murray has argued that this is how the problem of evil was addressed by almost all theologians and philosophers through at least Leibniz. Michael Murray, "Leibniz on the Problem of Evil," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2005 Edition)*, ed. Edward E. N. Zalta, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2005/entries/leibniz-evil/>.

20. Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God*, 14.

choose rightly or wrongly. William Mann nicely characterizes this aspect of Augustine's thought. He writes, "A genuinely free will necessarily caries with it the liability to sin. But without having freedom of choice, with its built-in liability, humans would lack the capacity to choose to live rightly."[21] Because God desired a world in which humans could choose rightly, and deserve reward for those choices, God had to create a world in which humans had a genuine opportunity to choose wrongly. According to Augustine, "If man did not have free choice of will, how could there exist the good according to which it is just to condemn evildoers and reward those who act rightly?... Both punishment and reward would be unjust if man did not have free will."[22]

It does not appear that Augustine thought this explanation was simply possibly true, instead it seems he believed it was actually true. A person that does not believe in God because of the existence of evil should be able to come to belief in God once that person understands how and why God allows the evil to exist. The chief advantage of such a theodicy is that it can advance the dialectic between theists and non-theists. Of course, many will not be convinced by such a theodicy, but those participating in the debate understand that the success of the theodicy would remove one of the chief objections to Christian theism and the failure of the theodicy would force the theist to redress the problem in a more satisfactory way, or to at least have serious cause for concern. However, this advantage comes at a cost. The theist now must maintain that

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21.William E Mann, "Augustine on Evil and Original Sin," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 46.

22.Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Anna Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), book II, chapter 1, 36.

the details of the theodicy correspond to God's reasons for allowing evil and to the actual features of this world.

*Mackie and Theodicy*

J.L. Mackie has said that the free will theodicy has been the most important response to the problem of evil, but nevertheless fails. In the now famous paper, "Evil and Omnipotence," Mackie argued that the existence of God is logically incompatible with the existence of evil and that an Augustinian type of response will not adequately deal with the problem. In order to see the difficulty Mackie's argument creates for a free will theodicy like Augustine's, a brief presentation of Mackie's argument is in order. We will then be able to fully see how Plantinga's defense to the logical problem of evil differs from Augustine's theodicy.

Mackie's presentation of the logical problem of evil purports to demonstrate a contradiction between the following propositions:

(1) God is omnipotent and wholly good

and

(2) Evil exists.

At first glance it appears that not only is the traditional theologian committed to both propositions, but that the two are inconsistent. However, as Mackie notes, there is no explicit contradiction in believing that both an omnipotent and wholly good being could co-exist with evil. To get an explicit contradiction Mackie adds to the above what he

calls, “quasi logical rules connecting the terms ‘good’, ‘evil’, and ‘omnipotent’".[23] These additional rules are:

> (3) Good is opposed to evil in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can

and

> (4) There are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do.

Both (3) and (4) are supposed to be rules that the traditional theologian would also be inclined to accept, but by adding them to (1), one can see that a wholly good, omnipotent being would completely eliminate evil, which explicitly contradicts (2). There is, according to Mackie, a logical incompatibility between these propositions. Of course one might simply reject that God is omnipotent or wholly good, but that would be a major departure from the traditional understanding of the Christian God. One might also reject that there is evil in the world, but given the tragedies one reads about in the daily news, this seems to be a claim that approaches absurdity. If these are not viable options, what can be said of Christian theism in the face of evil? Mackie believes a theodicy based upon free will is a potentially adequate solution, but ultimately fails.

Mackie argues that while a free will theodicy is "Perhaps the most important proposed solution to the problem" it is unsatisfactory "primarily because of the incoherence of the notion of freedom of the will," but also because if God is able to create individuals that freely choose the good on one occasion, then he should be able to create individuals that freely choose the good on every occasion.[24] When choosing which world

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23. J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64, no. 254 (1955): 201.

24. Ibid., 209.

to create, God was not simply faced with the choice of choosing a world with free creatures that freely commit moral evil or a world with no free creatures and no moral evil. Instead there was the "obviously better possibility of making beings who would act freely but always go right." His failure to create such a world is "inconsistent with his being both omnipotent and wholly good."[25] If it turns out that freedom is compatible with that determinism, then because the Augustinian theodicy must correspond to the actual details of this world, this objection must be dealt with by anyone wanting to make use of that theodicy. Mackie's objection must be dealt with before one can claim to have an adequate response to the logical problem of evil.

If compatibilist freedom is all that is necessary for morally significant actions, then why would God refrain from creating such a world? The type of freedom referenced in a free will theodicy demands that morally significant actions require a more robust sense of freedom of an incompatibilist sort. Do morally significant actions require incompatibilist freedom, or is Mackie correct in suggesting that one can act in a morally significant way even though he was determined to do so? While answering this fundamental question would be quite helpful in dealing with the logical problem of evil and the age old debate about how one should understand the nature of freedom concerning human action, there is at least one way of answering Mackie's objection without too much digression into this seemingly intractable debate.

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25. Ibid.

*Plantinga and Defense*

Alvin Plantinga has offered a response to the problem of evil that is very similar in structure to Augustine's free will theodicy but is what he calls a "free will defense." Whereas Augustine's theodicy was intended to provide a response to the problem of evil in general, Plantinga's defense is presented as a response to Mackie's logical problem of evil in particular. Plantinga has actually presented two solutions to this problem, and neither involves rejecting (1) or (2). The first solution would be to argue that one of the "quasi logical rules" stated in (3) and (4) is false, or to show they are, at least, far from being necessarily true. Because logically incompatible sets are incompatible in all possible worlds, if it turns out that either (3) or (4) are not necessarily true, then there is some possible world where at least one of them is false. In that possible world, Mackie's logical problem of evil would fail because (3) and (4) are needed to generate the explicit contradiction. But if a set is logically consistent in any possible world, then it is logically consistent in every possible world — including this one. This negative approach only aims to demonstrate flaws in Mackie's argument and nothing more.

The second solution to the problem that Plantinga presents goes further by giving a positive argument demonstrating that (1) and (2) are consistent. The basic idea behind this argument is that there may be some third proposition that is consistent with (1), and entails (2). Plantinga writes,

> One way to show that P & Q are consistent is to find some other proposition R such that P and R are consistent, and such that P and R together entail Q… Now it is important to see that R need not be true, or probable, or plausible, or accepted by the scientists of our culture circle, or congenial to 'man come of age,' or anything of the sort: it need only to be such that its conjunction with P is possible and entails Q. R can do its job perfectly well even if it is extraordinarily im-

probable or known to be false.[26]

While Plantinga's strategy here is different from that of the first solution, the underlying idea remains the same. He is attempting to demonstrate that Mackie's argument fails by dealing with what might possibly be the case. If it can be shown that there is some proposition that is possibly true, and consistent with (1), that entails (2), then Mackie's argument fails. This is the case no matter how far from this world one must go to find such a proposition.

In *The Nature of Necessity* Plantinga seeks to demonstrate that Mackie's assumption that an omnipotent God could create free creatures that always choose rightly is false. More specifically, he argues that it is at least logically possible that in order for the world to contain moral good there must be creatures that are significantly free in that world and that any world containing significantly free creatures will also contain moral evil as a result of those creatures choosing wrongly. Plantinga argues that the conjunction of the following propositions are consistent with (1) and together entail (2). Those propositions are:

(5) God has created significantly free creatures

and

(6) each of those creatures suffer from transworld depravity.

A person is free with respect to some action if "no causal laws and antecedent conditions determine either that he will perform the action, or that he will not."[27] This is, in

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26. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," 42-43.

27. Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 165-166.

the words of Derk Pereboom, “a paradigmatic type of libertarian freedom.”[28] Plantinga goes on to distinguish free actions from *significantly* free actions. Whereas a free action is any act that is exercised in this libertarian sense, a significantly free action is one that is free and would be either morally right to perform and morally wrong to abstain from performing, or vice versa. Plantinga goes on to argue that in order for God to actualize a world with moral good, he must actualize a world that contains significantly free creatures. This alone is not sufficient to demonstrate that Mackie’s assumption is false because there may be a possible world where every creature is significantly free, and yet always freely chooses the good.

However, Plantinga also argues that not every possible world is an actualizable world and it is the essential point of the free will defense that it is not possible for God to actualize such a world. In showing why there are some possible worlds that God cannot actualize, Plantinga distinguishes between strong and weak actualization. For God to strongly actualize something is for him to directly bring about that state of affairs. If the definition of a significantly free decision includes the idea that no antecedent conditions determine one’s decision to perform an action, then it should be clear that God cannot strongly actualize any significantly free decision. However, if God knows what decision a significantly free agent would make if placed in certain circumstances, and causes that agent to be in those circumstances, then we can say that God weakly actualizes that decision. When considering if an omnipotent being could create a world in which its participants always freely choose the good, we are trying to

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28. Derk Pereboom, "The Problem of Evil," in *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William E. Mann (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 150.

determine if God could *weakly* actualize such a world. Is it possible for God to weakly actualize a world containing significantly free creatures that never choose wrongly?

According to Plantinga, if (6) is possible then God could not weakly actualize such a world. Any creature that suffers from transworld depravity, and is created significantly free, will at some point choose wrongly, no matter the circumstances in which he is placed. This means that it is possible that not even God could weakly actualize a world with significantly free creatures that always choose rightly. Given the nature of the defense, one need not worry about the actual truth, or even the plausibility, of (5) or (6). To adequately solve the logical problem of evil, (5) and (6) need only be possible. If, as Plantinga maintains, both (5) and (6) are logically possible, then there is an R that is compatible with (1) and entails (2).

Some proponents of the logical problem of evil have attempted to show that Plantinga's defense does not work because (6) may not be logically possible. Others argue that a lack of reasons showing why (6) is not possible is not sufficient to establish that it is possible.[29] Whether these arguments succeed or not, they seem to appropriately understand the strategy of Plantinga's defense. The same cannot be said for others that have argued that Plantinga's free will defense does not work because (5) is false. For example, in *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil*, Brian Davies writes, "So we can forget about the Free Will Defence as an exoneration of God with respect to moral evil. The notion of human freedom which is central to this defence (freedom indepen-

29. This line of argument is developed in Keith DeRose, "Plantinga, Presumption, Possibility, and the Problem of Evil," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (1991): 497-512.

dent of God's causal activity) is a mirage given that God is the Maker of all things, the source of their being for as long as they exist."[30] Davies is correct that the truth of (5) is important for the theist, but he has mistaken the role it is playing in Plantinga's defense. Its truth would matter only if using it as a premise in something akin to an Augustinian free will theodicy. Plantinga only needs (5) to be possible; he does not need it to be true.

Making note of this aspect of Plantinga's strategy highlights the difference between a theodicy and a defense. While a theodicy attempts to give a positive explanation for the existence of evil, a defense only seeks to rebuff arguments attempting to establish the non-existence of God based on the existence of evil. To this end, it seems that the free will defense is a success. Prominent atheologian William Rowe writes, "Some philosophers have contended that the existence of evil is logically inconsistent with the existence of the theistic God. No one, I think, has succeeded in establishing such an extravagant claim. Indeed, granted incompatibilism [between free will and determinism], there is a fairly compelling argument for the view that the existence of evil is logically consistent with the existence of the theistic God."[31] While one may believe that incompatibilism is false, and even argue persuasively that it is, that is different from establishing that incompatibilism is impossible. It is the sheer possibility that incompatibilism about free will and determinism is true that allows Plantinga to argue that God has created significantly free beings, which is central to the possibility of those beings suffering from transworld depravity. It is that same possibility that also allows Plantinga

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30. Brian Davies, *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 129.

31. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," 335, n1.

to argue that (1) and (2) are logically consistent regarding natural evil because it is possible that, "the natural evil we find is due to free actions of non-human spirits."[32] No matter how unlikely or improbable we find this to be, it does not matter if the possible existence of non-human spirits adequately functions as an R that, conjoined with P, entails Q.

*An Objection to Plantinga's Use of a Defense*

Even though some find Plantinga's defense unsuccessful,[33] his general strategy for responding to the logical problem of evil is mostly uncontroversial. However, there has been some resistance as to whether or not Plantinga's employment of that strategy is successful. Plantinga has consistently maintained that the propositions employed in a free will defense need only be possible, and this prevents him from having to answer the question as to whether or not human agents actually have libertarian freedom. However, Jerry Walls has argued that Plantinga's defense is committed to the actual truth of libertarian freedom and, because of that, Plantinga must "move out the relatively modest realm of defense into the bolder arena of theodicy."[34] If Walls is correct, then even though one could simply offer some possibly true proposition that would demonstrate

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32. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 192.

33. See, for example, Fred Chernoff, "The Obstinance of Evil," *Mind* 89, no. 354 (1980): 269-273.

34.Jerry Walls, "Why Plantinga Must Move from Defense to Theodicy," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 51, no. 2 (1991): 378.

the compatibility of evil and the existence of an omnipotent, wholly good God, it is not an option for those that employ libertarian freedom in that venture.

Walls believes that Plantinga must make this move because "If God is necessarily perfectly good, as well as essentially omnipotent and omniscient, then it is not even possible that we are free only in the compatibilist sense, given the evil in our world."[35] If it turns out that in the actual world we are free only in this compatibilist sense, then there should be no evil because God could have created each human agent free in this sense while ensuring none choose evil. Walls's argument is as follows:

> (7) If God is necessarily perfectly good, He eliminates all evil He can properly eliminate in all possible worlds.
>
> (8) In all worlds in which persons are not free or are free only in the compatibilist sense, God could properly eliminate all moral evil.
>
> (9) Therefore, there are no possible worlds in which persons are free only in the compatibilist sense, and in which there is moral evil.
>
> (10) Our world contains much moral evil.
>
> (11) Therefore, in our world persons are free in the libertarian sense.[36]

Premises (7) and (10) are not objectionable for Plantinga or any other free will defender, and premises (9) and (11) simply follow from the argument. So, the question is whether or not (8) is true. In support of (8), Walls writes, "Premise [8] ... could be disputed. However, I do not think there is much prospect for coming up with such a reason. For moral evil is the product of human choices, and if freedom and determinism are compatible, then God could determine all persons to make only good moral choices."[37] Walls's

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35. Ibid., 376.

36. Ibid.

argument will prove instructive in two ways. First, it demonstrates how easy it is to forget the limited scope of Plantinga's free will defense. Second, it demonstrates why Plantinga's response does little to convince the non-theist that a wholly good, omnipotent God might allow horrific evils to exist. We will consider each of these in turn.

It may be true that there is not much prospect for coming up with reasons why God would allow moral evil to exist if freedom and determinism are compatible. But, that has nothing to do with the logical compatibility of the existence of God and the existence of evil, which is precisely what Plantinga has demonstrated with his free will defense. The free will defense does not commit one to believing that libertarian freedom is the only way in which the consistency of the relevant propositions can be demonstrated. As Plantinga points out, "a large variety of *r*'s can plausibly play this role."[38]

Even if other explanations are difficult to come by, they simply are not needed to set aside the logical problem of evil. The free will defense, if successful, demonstrates that a set of propositions is consistent. But, if a set of propositions is consistent, then any subset of that set will also be consistent. Plantinga's free will defense demonstrates that the original set was logically consistent. If it turns out that in this world there is no libertarian freedom, then relative to this world we know that the above set is not consistent. But if we remove what generates the inconsistency in this world, libertarian freedom, a subset still remains and because the original set is consistent in some possible world any subset of that set will also be consistent. One's inability to *demonstrate*

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37. Ibid., 377.

38. Alvin Plantinga, "Ad Walls," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research: A Quarterly Journal* 51, no. 3 (1991): 623.

that the set is consistent in this world is beside the point when it comes to determining if it is logically consistent. By determining, or even just assuming, that compatibilism is true in this world we know that libertarian freedom is not the reason why evil exists in this world. But because there is some possible world in which the set is consistent one can know, apart from relying on the truth of libertarian freedom, that there is no logical inconsistency between the existence of God and the existence of evil.

To rephrase the above, if the libertarian understanding of freedom does not reflect the way this world is, then clearly the details of the free will defense do not apply to this world. But the defense is not intended to apply to a particular world. If we know that libertarianism is false in the actual world, then of course that set of propositions is not consistent in the actual world. However, once one removes the false proposition, libertarian freedom, a subset of propositions is created. Because the free will defense demonstrates that the original set is logically consistent in some possible world, that subset too must be consistent. This is the case even if we cannot go on to demonstrate how that subset is consistent in the actual world.

The nature of such a defense has left some philosophers unsatisfied. John Hick, while agreeing that Plantinga has resolved the logical problem finds his methodology "disquieting." He writes, "That he should so easily fill a gap in his theodicy by appealing to a mythological idea, on the ground that it is logically possible, emphasizes again the remoteness of Plantinga's concern from all questions of plausibility and probability."[39] The mythological idea Hick is concerned with is Plantinga's suggestion that

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39. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 369.

natural evil could be the result of the free actions of non-human agents. It does not seem to be the specifics of *what* Plantinga appeals to that bothers Hick, but instead the strategy that allows Plantinga to just appeal to some logically possibly state of affairs to deal with the problem. It is this feature of a defense, employing propositions that are simply possibly true, that seems to also be one of the more irksome features of the defense in general. While Hick is dissatisfied with how Plantinga "fills a gap," Mackie is unsatisfied with the response because it conflicts with what he takes to be the actually correct view about human action. He writes, "Since this defense is formally [that is logically] possible, and its principle involves no real abandonment of our ordinary view of the opposition between good and evil, we can concede that the problem of evil does not, after all, show that the central doctrines of theism are logically inconsistent with one another. But whether this offers a real solution of the problem is another question."[40]

While it is understandable that one may feel disquieted about the nature of this solution, or simply doubt whether it is a real solution at all, for the most part this misses the point of the defense entirely. This may explain why much of the recent scholarly attention has shifted from the logical problem of evil to the evidential problem. While this new problem is certainly a problem for Christian theism, it is a different problem — and different problems have different solutions. Hick and Mackie, among others, seem to have implicitly expected Plantinga's defense to do more than he intended it to do. Still, it does seem to be bothersome that one is able to summarily dismiss a problem that seemed, at least initially, intractable. Perhaps one of the causes of this problem is that

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40. J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 154.

there is no requirement for Plantinga, or anyone else, to suggest an R that he actually believes is true. Of course he may believe it to be true, but need not. This is what has led many philosophers to find defenses to the problem of evil more irritating than helpful. In what follows I will make a distinction between two types of a defense and show that one of the above worries applies only to one of these types whereas the other is much less likely to result in such dissatisfaction.

## Narrow and Broad Defenses

Recall that what distinguishes a theodicy from a defense is that the former attempts to resolve the problem of evil by stating what is actually the case whereas the latter simply offers a solution that is possibly the case. It is with this distinction in mind that most recent discussions of the problem of evil have occurred. However, it seems that Plantinga, among others, has actually been using two senses of defense. It will be helpful to distinguish them clearly.[41] The first sense of a defense is just what we have seen in action already. This is what I will call a *narrow defense*, which only employs propositions for the purpose of demonstrating the failure of a problem of evil. To this end, Plantinga's defense works admirably. Mackie claimed that there is an inconsistency between propositions that are central to Christian theology and the proposition that evil exists. Plantinga then showed that there is a way to resolve the apparent inconsistency

41. I have been using Plantinga's free will defense to demonstrate the method of a defense in general, what follows should apply to all defenses to the logical problem of evil, not simply Plantinga's.

and in doing so, answered that logical problem of evil.

The proponent of the logical problem of evil is forced to agree that this general strategy is correct.[42] Recall that the defense Plantinga offers maintains that all one needs to do is provide some possible proposition, R, that is consistent with what we know about God and together entails that there is evil. The task of finding such an R to play that role seems, to some, to be too easy. However, there seems to be a rule that we can stipulate about R that would go a long way to make a defense less bothersome, and would make that additional proposition much more meaningful. This rule, let us call it the *consistency requirement*, requires that R is consistent with other things the Christian philosopher believes about the actual world. If R is not consistent, then the thoughtful proponent of the logical problem of evil only needs to broaden the original set of propositions to include the other relevant propositions that would generate the inconsistency. For example, if a Calvinist employed the free will defense, it would be difficult for that same person to satisfy the consistency requirement. On many standard views of Calvinism, human agents do not have libertarian freedom and, because of certain Calvinist assumptions about divine providence, the lack of libertarian freedom is essential to their Christian beliefs. To respond to such a person, the proponent of the logical problem of evil need only add to the original set of propositions, (1) and (2),

(12) Incompatibilist free will does not exist.

If (12) is added to the original set, then it will not be difficult at all to demonstrate that

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42. Of course agreeing that a strategy is correct is different from believing that Plantinga's R is adequate. One might think that (5) or (6) is impossible, and yet still realize that there may be another proposition that can successfully fill that role.

(5) and (12) are not compatible. This Calvinist would have to give up one of the two incompatible propositions, but because he takes (12) to be essential to Christian doctrine, (5) would have to be rejected. And of course rejecting (5) means that the original logical problem of evil would remain.

I will call a defense that intends to answer the logical problem by only including propositions that satisfy the consistency requirement a *broad defense*. While I am not aware of Plantinga making such a distinction, it seems to be one he at least tacitly recognizes. We previously noted that Plantinga thinks "R need not be true, or probable, or plausible…," but in that very same essay goes on to write, "Many philosophers endorse a compatibilist analysis of freedom, according to which it is perfectly possible that some of my actions be free, even though all of them are causally determined by causal chains extending back to events entirely outside my control. *And of course if compatibilism is correct, the Free Will Defense fails*."[43] We can make sense of this apparent contradiction by employing the distinction between broad and narrow defenses. The free will defense would fail in this instance only if we take it to be a broad defense because, when narrowly construed, the truth of compatibilism does not make incompatibilism impossible. However, if one is offering a broad defense, then he must also take into account everything that he believes and maintain consistency in doing so. If someone agrees that incompatibilism is false, as did our Calvinist above, then he will not be able to consistently employ it as part of a broad defense, but that does not mean that the narrow defense fails as well.

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43. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," 43, 45. (Emphasis added).

It is important to point out that another component of the consistency requirement is that the theist also believe R to be true. There are several options one has when considering the truth of a proposition. One might: believe the proposition to be true, believe it to be false but possibly true, believe it to be possibly true but refrain from any judgment concerning its truth value, and believe it to be necessarily false. Because a broad defense aims to establish a defense to the logical problem of evil by only employing propositions consistent with what the defender actually believes to be true, the defender cannot satisfy the consistency requirement if he actually believes ~R because that would immediately create an inconsistent set. Additionally, if the defender aims to convince the atheologian that there are good reasons to reject the logical problem of evil, then it will seem sleight of hand to appeal to a proposition he believes is only possibly true, but he has no reason to think it actually is true. It seems this is at the heart of Hick's difficulty with Plantinga's willingness to appeal to the existence of non-human agents to explain the occurrence of natural evils. The simple fact that R is possible is sufficient for a narrow defense, but when giving a broad defense the theist is more likely to convince the atheologian that his defense works if he actually believes R to be true.

All the consistency requirement demands is that the defender does not believe ~R; actually believing R, though helpful, is not strictly necessary.[44] On any account, if one is concerned with giving a broad defense, the first step he must take is to ensure any of the propositions employed in that defense are consistent with his other beliefs. If

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44. It seems like the more one focuses on this second aspect of the rationality requirement, the closer one gets to giving a theodicy. In this dissertation, I will concentrate mostly on the first part of the consistency requirement of a broad defense.

there is an inconsistency between the free will defense and an essential Christian doctrine, then the defense, broadly construed, fails. However, if the inconsistency involves propositions that are not essentially connected to Christianity, then one must decide whether he should reject those propositions to ensure the success of the defense, or maintain those propositions and give up the broad defense.

If the Christian philosopher makes use of a broad defense, then it seems that the atheologian would have reasons to find the defense more to the point. There is a qualitative difference between saying to the atheologian, "This defense demonstrates how the Christian God can co-exist with evil" and "This defense not only demonstrates how the Christian God can co-exist with evil but is also consistent with everything else I take to be true." This approach brings a defense much closer to theodicy because the truth of other propositions becomes relevant, but it does not go as far as theodicy in offering the actual answer to the problem of evil. A broad defense would need to eventually encompass everything that one believes and not just Christian beliefs, but it seems most reasonable to begin the process with those Christian beliefs because they are most closely tied to the free will defense.

As we have seen, an essential feature of the free will defense is the possibility that incompatibilism is true. If there are Christian doctrines that require incompatibilism to be false, then there will be an inconsistency between those doctrines and a broad free will defense. There are at least three specific Christian doctrines that might generate such an inconsistency: the notion of original sin, the belief that human agents in heaven are free yet never sin, and traditional conceptions of the divine will. Even though various branches of Christendom all have their own take on how one should understand

the specifics of these doctrines, all are squarely within an orthodox understanding of Christianity. We will now evaluate each of these doctrines in turn.

## Chapter Two: Original Sin

In chapter one several responses to the problem of evil were presented: theodicies, rebuttals, narrow defenses, and broad defenses. There it was claimed that the salient difference between theodicy and defense is the intent of the response. In a theodicy the solution to the problem of evil is taken to be the way the world actually is. Thus, there is an expectation, at least implicitly, that the interlocutor accept that explanation as true. However, with a defense there is no such expectation. The defender is merely offering what is logically possible, or true as far as anyone knows. The salient difference between a rebuttal and a defense is that a rebuttal deals with the the problem by demonstrating an internal difficulty with the argument, whereas a defense supplies some additional proposition(s) to demonstrate one way the problem can be resolved.

One might give many different defenses to a problem of evil, but what is currently under consideration is a broad free will defense to the logical problem of evil. Recall that a broad defense to the logical problem of evil is one that only employs propositions that satisfy the consistency requirement. Because Plantinga's defense is generally considered to be the most influential defense, we have so far only considered that specific response to the logical problem of evil. It may very well be appropriate to continue in that fashion if for no other reason than his response is probably the most likely to succeed. However, for present purposes, it should be noted that the following should easily apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to other versions of free will defenses as long as

they include at least the following three features. First, there must be an internal reliance upon a libertarian understanding of free will. Second, it must maintain that libertarian freedom is necessary, in some way, for God to bring about a good. Finally, that good obtaining is a morally sufficient reason for God to allow the possibility of accompanying evils. Any response to the logical problem of evil that includes these three features can be considered a type of free will defense and will have to address the concerns to be raised in this chapter and those that follow.

## Introductory Issues

In this chapter a problem for a broad free will defense will be raised. It will be shown that prominent versions of the doctrine of original sin are not consistent with the free will defense. It will then be demonstrated that certain popular reformulations of the doctrine fare no better.

### *Why Original Sin?*

Central to Christian theology is the belief that God the Son, the second member of the Trinity, became incarnate, died, and rose again after three days. Why was such a dramatic event necessary? This was the divine answer to a problem that humanity created for itself — a problem of sin. As Alvin Plantinga nicely puts it, "it is sin that occasions Incarnation and Atonement, redemption and renewal."[1] But why is it that sin

1. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press,

seems to be such a universal problem? Why is it that no one is able to go through life without sinning?[2] According to traditional Christian teaching, such people cannot be found because all are born with a condition that has been called 'original sin'.

A more detailed presentation of original sin will be presented below, but for our current purposes we can take 'original sin' to mean the following: the Christian doctrine that teaches that the first sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is somehow imputed to their progeny, which has an initial disastrous effect upon all mankind. Now obviously the idea of a literal Adam and Eve and a literal Garden of Eden sounds a bit farfetched to the modern mindset, especially since it does not easily comport with evolutionary accounts of the human race, but many Christian theists do maintain such an account.[3] Given that most philosophers today no longer have much need for a doctrine of original sin, some justification is in order for spending time evaluating this particular Christian doctrine.

There are at least two, closely related, reasons for the necessity of examining the consistency of original sin with a free will defense. The first reason is that a great

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2000), 201.

2. The observation that no one refrains from sinning at some point or another led G.K. Chesterton to conclude that the doctrine of original "is the only doctrine within Christianity that can be proven." G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 19.

3. Most contemporary systematic theologies do not attempt to establish that the doctrine of original sin is true, but instead begin with its truth and seek to explain it. Two popular accounts can be found in Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 648-656 and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 494-498.

number of Christian philosophers and theologians do believe in some version of the doctrine of original sin. Of course there is a great deal of variance in how one understands the doctrine, but almost all branches of Western Christendom explicitly endorse the doctrine. This near-universality of the doctrine within the Western church can be traced to one of its earliest proponents, St. Augustine. The Catholic theologian Alfred Vanneste writes, "It was not until the outset of the fifth century that this doctrine, under the impulse of Augustine (354-430) was clearly and neatly formulated. The Council of Carthage (418) and later the Council of Orange (529) confirmed the essential elements of the Augustinian doctrine, thus incorporating them into the patrimony of the Western Church."[4] That incorporation is evidenced by the doctrine's continued acceptance outside of the Catholic church during and after the Reformation by the likes of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards. This fifth century doctrine is still embraced today, and anyone attempting to resolve the logical problem of evil by making use of a broad free will defense will need to ensure that their understanding of original sin is consistent with that defense.

The second reason for focusing on original sin is its centrality to the core of Christian theology. Initially this statement may come as a surprise, but in some respect the whole of Christian theology can be seen as God's attempt to right the wrong brought forth from Adam's sin.[5] This is a grand oversimplification, of course, but throughout

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4. Alfred Vanneste, *The Dogma of Original Sin* (Paris: Louvain, 1971), 30-31.

5. While it would be more accurate to speak of both Adam and Eve that originally sinned, I shall, for the sake of simplicity generally follow the historical and Biblical precedent of referring to that event as Adam's sin.

both Old and New Testaments God is presented as working to restore the relationship he had with his creation that was severed in the Garden. According to Christian theology, all mankind has been separated from God and Jesus' death and resurrection were necessary to remedy that separation. While Augustine was deeply influenced by the Apostle Paul, and in turn greatly influenced the way Western Christians think about original sin, one would still have an implicit doctrine of original sin even if neither Paul nor Augustine ever discussed the topic. The fact that Jesus' death is presented in the New Testament as being for all mankind is enough to generate some type of doctrine of original sin, a doctrine that teaches *all* mankind is in need of assistance. Noting the centrality of original sin, Robert Gleason writes, "Even if there had been no Pelagian controversy, no Augustine, no Paul to comment on Genesis, there would be an implicit doctrine of original sin because it is implied in the universality of Christ's redemption. His saving grace is *absolutely* necessary and for *all* men."[6]

As we have already seen, the doctrine of original sin teaches that all humans are somehow negatively impacted by Adam's decision to sin in the Garden. The specifics of the doctrine vary widely, but most versions will be presented in one of two ways. One way to understand the doctrine of original sin is to distinguish one's being born guilty from one's being born in a condition that inevitably leads to sin. The former I will call *original guilt* and the latter *original inclination*, but both are the result of Adam's sin. One might hold that a correct account of original sin will include both of these features, as Augustine did, but they are distinct nonetheless.

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6. Robert W. Gleason, introduction to Ibid., 16. (Original emphasis.)

## Original Guilt

While adherents to both understandings of original sin believe that original sin is the result of Adam's sin, the disagreement is in determining how we should understand what it means to be born "with the taint of original sin."[7] We shall begin by discussing the understanding of original sin as that of original guilt. On this account, Adam's decision to sin in the Garden of Eden has forever affected all of mankind, with the exception of Jesus and possibly Mary, his mother, and the initial effect was that all mankind is born guilty before God.[8] Why might one hold to this view? Why think all humans are born into a state of guilt? What could an infant have done to warrant a guilty judgment from an omnibenevolent being? According to Augustine, all mankind was somehow with Adam in that first sin. Augustine writes, "Man, however, depraved by his own free will, and justly condemned, produced depraved and condemned children. For we were all *in that one man*, since we all were that one man who fell into sin through the woman who was made from him before they sinned."[9] J.N.D. Kelly writes of Augustine's understanding of original sin, "As [Augustine] sees it, the essence of original sin consists in our participation in, and co-responsibility for, Adam's perverse choice. We were one

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7. Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press), q. 5, a. 1, resp. 2.

8. I say "possibly Mary" because many non-Catholics maintain the same understanding of original sin as Catholics, but also maintain that Mary too was affected by it.

9. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 555-556, chap. 13, bk. 14. Emphasis added.

with him when he made it, and thus willed in and with him."[10] It is this participation in that original sin that brings about the guilt into which all mankind is born.[11]

Not only are we guilty for participating with Adam, but we are also guilty for the corruption that results from that participation. Because of Adam's sin, all are born in a state that will inevitably lead to further corruption at some point in the course of one's life. The guilt, then, is twofold: we are guilty for participating in Adam's first sin and we are guilty for being born in the corrupted state that resulted from that sin. According to Michael Rae, this is not just Augustine's view of original sin. In fact, "Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin all explicitly endorsed the doctrine of [original guilt], and endorsement of that view is typical of theologians in the Reformed tradition."[12] This understanding of original sin was clearly influential throughout the history of the Christian tradition, but we will see below that it is not the only way in which one must understand the doctrine. But first we will examine whether or not this understanding of original sin is compatible with a broad free will defense.

*The Free Will Defense & the Principle of Alternative Possibilities*

Recall that in a broad free will defense propositions are offered that purport to

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10. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed., (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1960; Prince Press ed., Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2004), 364.

11. Kelly also notes that this is the primary reason Augustine thought all infants should be baptized. See *Early Christian Doctrines,* chapter 13. This concern regarding infants is found in Aquinas as well. See *On Evil*, q. 4, a. 1.

12. Michael Rae, "The Metaphysics of Original Sin," in *Persons: Human and Divine*, eds. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 324.

demonstrate the logical consistency of God and evil and these propositions must be consistent with other propositions the theist holds. In giving a free will defense it is maintained that it is at least possible that God could only achieve some moral goods by creating creatures with a certain type of freedom. What conception of freedom is being utilized in such a defense? William Rowe writes, "The basic assumption in [the free will defense] is that it is logically impossible for a person both to perform some act *freely* and to have been *caused* to perform that act. Without this assumption the Free Will Defense collapses."[13] Louis Pojman makes the understanding of freedom even more explicit, "The [free will defense] assumes a *libertarian* view of freedom of the will... This view is opposed to determinism as well as compatibilism. If you are committed to compatibilism or determinism, the free will defense will not be effective against the argument from evil."[14] Finally, Richard Gale writes "A crucial premise in every version of a [free will defense] is the *Libertarian* theory of freedom."[15] The reliance of the free will defense upon libertarian freedom is clear. But what does it mean to say that someone has libertarian freedom? That is, under what conditions can it be said that a person has libertarian freedom?

So, what does it mean to have libertarian freedom? A large number of philosophers pick out the ability to refrain from some action as the distinguishing feature in de-

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13. William Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 117. (Original emphasis.)

14. Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), 138. (Emphasis added.)

15. Richard Gale, "Evil and Alvin Plantinga," in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. Deane-Peter Baker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49. (Emphasis added.)

termining whether that act was free in a libertarian sense. For example, Randolphe Clarke writes, "Following many other writers on a basic characterization of this freedom, I shall say that when an agent acts freely (or with free will), she is able to do other than what she does then."[16] Hugh McCann argues that to have freely decided to perform some action in the libertarian sense one "must, categorically, have been able to do otherwise."[17] This ability to do otherwise is now commonly referred to as the principle of alternate possibilities and according to Robert Kane "many people have thought that the existence of alternative possibilities is the characteristic of free will that makes it incompatible with determinism."[18] On this understanding of libertarian freedom, to be free with regard to an action is just is to have alternative possibilities regarding that action. If this reading of libertarian freedom is correct, then the free will defense utilizes something much more precise than libertarian freedom. That is, it seems that for most libertarians, the free will defense requires a principle of alternative possibilities.[19]

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16. Randolphe Clarke, *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

17.Hugh McCann, *The Works of Agency* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 174.

18.Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 33.

19. Though the term 'principle of alternate possibilities' was first coined by Harry Frankfurt in his now famous article, Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 829-839, it is now commonly used as a way to refer to a family of principles that share the same structure concerning what it means to be free. See, for example, David Hunt, "On a Theological Counterexample to the Principle of Alternate Possibilities," *Faith and Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (2002): 245-255.

*The Principle of Alternate Possibilities and Original Guilt*

Now that we have a rough understanding of the original guilt reading of the doctrine of original sin and have seen that the free will defense rests upon a principle of alternative possibilities, we are in a place to present the problem this understanding of original sin poses for a broad free will defense.

> (1) To be guilty for some action entails moral responsibility for that action. [meaning of 'guilt']
>
> (2) So, if all humans subsequent to Adam are guilty at birth for participating in the original sin of Adam, then all humans subsequent to Adam are morally responsible at birth for participating in the original sin of Adam. [direct application of (1)]
>
> (3) If one is morally responsible for an action, then there must have been alternative possibilities available to that person regarding that action. [PAP]
>
> (4) So, if all humans subsequent to Adam are morally responsible at birth for participating in the original sin of Adam, then there must have been alternative possibilities regarding that original sin available to all humans subsequent to Adam. [direct application of (3)]
>
> (5) So, if all humans subsequent to Adam are guilty at birth for participating in the original sin of Adam, then there must have been alternative possibilities regarding that original sin available to all humans subsequent to Adam. [2, 4, by hypothetical syllogism]
>
> (6) But, no alternative possibilities regarding that original sin were available to any humans subsequent to Adam.
>
> (7) So, it is false that humans subsequent to Adam are guilty at birth for participating in the original sin of Adam. [5, 6 by modus tollens]

The argument is valid, but there are at least three ways for the proponent of original guilt to deny that it is sound. However, each ultimately fails. The first is to deny

premise (3).[20] But, as we have seen above, this denial would prevent the vast majority of libertarians from being able to use a broad free will defense because of the central role PAP plays in libertarian understandings of freedom. While it is true that this would negate the force of the argument, it comes at a price many libertarians would not be willing to pay.[21]

A second way is to deny premise (6) and argue that humans subsequent to Adam did in fact have alternate possibilities regarding the original sin of Adam. This might be an approach that Augustine would consider given his repeated comments regarding the presence of all humankind in Adam. Recall that according to Augustine all humans were somehow present in Adam and that because of that presence all humans participated in that first sin. Because all were, "in that one man [Adam]"[22] all are born "depraved by [their] own free will and justly condemned."[23] It is not clear what that participation consists in, but that there is some type of participation is clear. Elsewhere, Augustine writes,

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20. One should not be surprised if most Calvinists take this route since many are also compatibilists regarding free will and determinism. But such compatibilists are not likely to have much use for a broad free will defense at all.

21. Some libertarians, however, deny that PAP is a necessary condition for free action. Instead, what makes for a free action is that it issues from the agent and no prior conditions are what brings about that action. Because that condition is clearly not met in accounts of original guilt, I will not pursue such conceptions of libertarian freedom as a way to avoid the problem above any further.

22. Interestingly, Augustine's belief that all were in Adam comes from, in part, his understanding of Romans 5:12, which in the New American Standard Bible reads "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." However, Augustine's source was Ambrosiaster's Latin Vulgate edition which instead, incorrectly, reads, "*in whom* all sinned." See Tatha Wiley, *Original Sin: Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), especially chapter 3.

23. Augustine, *City of God*, chap. 13, bk. 14.

"that infants are involved in the sins of their parents, not only of the first pair, but even of their own, of whom they were born," which is why "each one of them must be born again, so that he may thereby be absolved of whatever sin was in him at the time of birth."[24] The problem with this approach is that it is not at all clear how one would explain unborn persons having options available to them concerning that original sin. Even if that could be done, one would then need an explanation of *why* no one in fact did exercise an alternative possibility. Recall that one of the leading questions concerning sin is *why* all of humanity does in fact sin. One cannot, in good form, simply appeal to original sin as the explanation for everyone's complicity in that sin because that complicity is what is supposed to generate the doctrine itself.

The final, and seemingly most plausible, way is to deny premise (1) as stated. This can take at least two different forms. One way would be to refine what we mean by 'guilt'. and the second way would be to deny that humans are guilty because of their *participation* in the original sin of Adam. We will begin with this second approach, which is often referred to as 'federalism'.

The long and rich tradition of federalism is mostly located within the Reformed theological tradition and dates at least to John Calvin.[25] According to the federalist explanation of original guilt, humanity is born guilty not because of some particular action

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24. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, section 46. Erickson also states that one is guilty for Adam's sin because of co-participation in that sin. He writes, "It is no imitation or repetition of Adam's sin [for which we are guilty], but participation in it." *Christian Theology*, 1998, 653.

25. For Calvin's presentation see his *Institutes of Christian Religion*, book 2, chaps. 1-6. For a contemporary presentation see Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), chaps. 1-2.

in which all participated, but because Adam is the *representative* for all humans. This view claims that "Adam was 'a public person,' or 'a Parliament man,' for whose conduct all men are responsible."[26] The federalist picture emphasizes the Biblical parallel of Adam as the "first man" and Jesus as the "second man."[27] Both engage in some particular act that has an effect on all humanity. Concerning this picture of original guilt, Millard Erickson writes, "Bound by the covenant between God and Adam, we are treated *as if* we have actually and personally done what he as our representative did."[28] Of course, there is much more that can be said of this view, but this should be sufficient to evaluate the underlying assumption of the view.

The main problem with this reading of original guilt is that we do not normally hold people *guilty* for the actions of their representatives — unless they had a role to play when it came time to decide what action to take. For example, at the close of the First Gulf War, it would have been morally wrong for Kuwait, or any other country for that matter, to punish Iraqi citizens as a result of Saddam Hussein's decision to invade another country. This is especially true since they seemed to have no say in whether or not they wanted Hussein to act on their behalf. Even though Hussein did represent the citizens of Iraq, they had no say in whether or not Iraq invaded Kuwait. The Iraqi citizens may have had to deal with the consequences of those actions, but that is distinct from being punished as a result of the invasion. The original guilt component of the

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26. H. Shelton Smith, *Changing Conceptions of Original Sin*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 3.

27. See Romans 5:12-21.

28. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 652. (Emphasis added.)

doctrine of original sin does not simply say that humans have to deal with the consequences of Adam's sin, it maintains that they are guilty for it because Adam was their representative. This concept can be seen even more clearly when one considers the fierce opposition among many Americans to the invasion of Iraq that began the Second Gulf War. Even though the invasion was initiated by appropriately elected officials, and thus representatives of even those opposed to the invasion, it would not be morally appropriate to deem these Americans as guilty for the invasion.

The most promising way to affirm original guilt and reject the above argument is presented by contemporary philosopher William Wainwright.[29] Wainwright argues that premise (1) should be redefined because it does not convey the appropriate meaning of 'guilt' in this context.[30] So how does Wainwright understand guilt?

Wainwright notes that guilt typically entails three things, "one's offense was within one's control, one should be blamed for it (if only by oneself), and one is an appropriate candidate for (legal, social, or divine) punishment" and that "the standard objects of guilt are actions."[31] However, Wainwright agrees with Robert Adams that there are other instances in which it is appropriate to consider a person guilty. One can also "be guilty of, and blamed for, beliefs and attitudes which are not within our

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29. William Wainwright, "Original Sin," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas Morris (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 31-60. Before addressing the notion of guilt, Wainwright actually presents and rejects aspects of Jonathan Edwards's view of Inherited Guilt, what I have called original guilt.

30. The definition of guilt that Wainwright offers would also serve as grounds for the denial of premise 2.

31. Ibid. 54.

control," but punishment for such beliefs and attitudes may not be appropriate.[32] This leads Wainwright to distinguish two senses of guilt. He writes, "In its primary sense, guilt presupposes control and entails that one is an appropriate candidate for punishment as well as blame. In a secondary sense, guilt does not imply control and only entails that blame is appropriate."[33] When it comes to original sin, Wainwright does not believe that guilt in the primary sense is appropriate. He agrees with Pelagius that "a person cannot be guilty of something in the primary sense unless it springs from his own will or affections" but disagrees that "sin is no more than 'the performance of a deed wrongly done.'"[34] Understanding original guilt in the secondary sense allows one to bypass the need for PAP entirely.[35] One should only be concerned with PAP if guilt in the primary sense is under consideration, but since it is sometimes appropriate to blame, though not punish, individuals for involuntary beliefs and attitudes, it is appropriate for God to do so concerning humans because of their original guilt. What should one make of this distinction between the two senses of guilt? Will such a distinction allow the broad free will defender to also endorse the doctrine of original guilt? I will argue that it does not.[36]

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32. Ibid. See also Robert Merrihew Adams, "Involuntary Sins," *The Philosophical Review* 94, no. 1 (1985): 3-31.

33. Wainwright, "Original Sin," 54.

34. Ibid. The internal quote is from Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius, Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: A. & C. Black, 1968), 97.

35. One should note that here the claim is not that PAP is not necessary for a libertarian understanding of freedom, just that it is not needed when assessing the doctrine of original guilt.

36. For a short critique of Adams's "Involuntary Sins" see Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), chapter two, but especially footnote 1. Since Wainwright's view depends upon Adams, if Swinburne is correct, then there will be difficulties with Wainwright's position too. I am not

If the doctrine of original guilt was only concerned with whether or not one is blameworthy because of Adam's sin, then Wainwright's argument would be quite helpful. However, the doctrine of original guilt maintains much more than humanity's blameworthiness. Even if we accept that there are two different senses of guilt, original guilt is concerned with the primary sense and not the secondary one. At least according to Augustine and those that follow him in this regard, unbaptized infants are not just blamed for the sin of Adam, they are subject to punishment. Being subject to punishment, in Wainwright's terminology, is to be guilty in the primary sense. In fact, it is this guilt that "baptism was designed to remove."[37] Recall that because of Adam's sin all are born "depraved and condemned." Being depraved may be consistent with the secondary sense of guilt, but being condemned is not. While Wainwright's distinction between the senses of guilt may, in many contexts, be accurate, it is not helpful in this discussion because of the notion of guilt that is actually employed by defenders of original guilt.

It seems that any doctrine of original sin that includes the notion of original guilt will not be compatible with a broad free will defense. Those that follow Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, or Edwards in endorsing original guilt will not be able to offer a broad free will defense to the logical problem of evil because original guilt is incompatible with PAP, which is central to the libertarian understanding of freedom that is contained in the free will defense.

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presently concerned with whether or not Adams is right because, even if he is, his argument does not actually help Wainwright's case.

37. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 364.

## Original Inclination

Although most Christians have understood the doctrine of original sin as a doctrine of, at least, original guilt, many contemporary philosophers who endorse libertarian accounts of freedom have recognized that there are difficulties with the notion that someone is held morally responsible for some action over which they had no control. This had led to a rejection, by some, of the traditional Augustinian understanding of original sin in favor of the view that original sin is a malady that affects all humankind since Adam, but it is not a guilt-conferring malady. That is, all humans are born in a condition of sin, but being born in that condition is not something for which one is guilty. Of such a condition Plantinga writes, "Unlike a sinful act I perform, original sin need not be thought of as something for which I am culpable (original sin is not necessarily original guilt); insofar as I am born in this predicament, my being in it is not within my control and not up to me."[38] Though he denies original guilt, Plantinga retains a doctrine of original sin according to which the condition of sin causes cognitive and affective disorders. But these are disorders with which the agent is born and for which he is not culpable. He writes that there is a "cognitive limitation that first of all prevents its victim from proper knowledge of God and his beauty, glory, and love… It therefore compromises both knowledge of fact and knowledge of value." But, sin is "perhaps primarily an *affective* disorder or malfunction. Our affections are skewed, directed to the

38. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 207.

wrong objects; we love and hate the wrong things."[39] This disorder results in the individual reversing God's decrees; for example, instead of loving God and neighbor, original sin causes the individual to primarily love himself while often hating God and neighbor. Even if one is able to see what is right and what he should do, he finds himself preferring that which he should not. This affective disorder is not guilt-conferring in of itself. But having the disorder leads one to sin, and it is *that* act of sinning for which one is held morally responsible.

Whereas Plantinga is silent on some of the mechanics of the transmission of original sin and the process of actually sinning, Paul Copan attempts a more thorough explanation. He explains Plantinga's position this way, "we do not sin necessarily (that is, it is not assured that we must commit this or that particular sin), we sin inevitably (that is, in addition to our propensity to sin, given the vast array of opportunities to sin, we eventually do sin at some point)."[40] Both Copan and Plantinga seem to want to affirm that every person will sin, but yet deny that any person must commit some particular sin. It is not hard to discern why this would be a desirable feature of their account. If it turns out that I had no say regarding some particular sin, then it will be quite difficult to explain why I can be held guilty for that sin. As Copan puts it, "while we may have an inclination to sin... as a result of Adam's sin in the Garden, his transgression does not entail the conferral of an alien guilt upon us at conception."[41] But nevertheless

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39. Ibid., 208-09. (Original emphasis.)

40. Paul Copan, "Original Sin and Christian Philosophy," *Philosophia Christi* 5, no. 2 (2003): 531 (parentheses in original). In a footnote Copan notes that this explanation is based upon a discussion with Plantinga.

41. Ibid., 530.

we do have an original inclination to sin, making sin at some point or other — but at no particular point — an inevitability for each of us. This preserves a fairly robust doctrine of original sin and explains why all of mankind is in need of redemption.

Plantinga and Copan are not alone in understanding original sin in this more nuanced way. Keith Wyma has also argued that "the predominant view on original sin needs alteration." Wyma's altered account is much like Plantinga's in that it proposes that "original sin should be understood more as a *shortfall* than as a *transgression*... Original sin is a sinful state in that its disorder disposes us to become actual sinners, but is not in itself grounds for guilt."[42] So, Wyma affirms that all humans suffer from original sin, but denies that having original sin is something for which all are guilty. Having an original inclination to sin is what Wyma calls "innocent sinfulness."[43] We are born with a condition that makes sinning inevitable, but no one is guilty for being born with that condition.

Here Wyma considers a potential objection to his view. Someone might argue that since we are not responsible for the original state of innocent sinfulness, and since it is this original state that ensures that we will commit sins, at some point or another, during our lifetimes, then we cannot be held responsible for those sins that we commit. So, the denial of original guilt should extend to a denial of guilt for sinful actions we actually perform.

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42. Keith Wyma, "Innocent Sinfulness, Guilty Sin: Original Sin and Divine Justice," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Peter van Inwagen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 271.

43. Ibid., 271.

Wyma's response is to appeal to a distinction between the inevitability of sinning and the inevitability of committing a particular sin. Like Copan, he endorses the former but rejects the latter. To illustrate the position, Wyma offers the following (over-simplified) disjunction, arguing that he inevitably makes at least one of the disjuncts true, though for any particular disjunct, it is not inevitable that he make it true:

> (S1) Four-year-old Wyma covets his older brother's Christmas present, *or* (S2) seven-year-old Wyma falsely accuses his younger brother of breaking a lamp, *or* (S3) ten-year-old Wyma mocks a classmate's disability, . . . *or* (S*n*) twenty-year-old Wyma presents a false I.D. to buy beer, . . . *or* (S*z*) on his deathbed Wyma curses God.[44]

Since for any single one of these disjuncts, Wyma can avoid making that disjunct true, he is guilty for any of them that he does make true. It is inevitable that he will make at least one of them true, and so it is inevitable that he will be guilty of sin.

This example nicely illustrates Wyma's distinction between the inevitability of sinning and the inevitability of committing a particular sin, but there is a potential problem, one that Wyma recognizes. How does Wyma's theory account "for guilt assigned to persons who refrained from sinning until their last possible action"?[45] To continue with the above example, if disjuncts S1 through S*n* were all false, S*z* was the last morally significant action, and Wyma's account of innocent sinfulness is correct, then S*z* *must* be true. Because that particular sin must be committed, it is false that no particular sin is necessitated. Wyma recognizes that this scenario presents a difficulty for his view, but denies that it is truly problematic. He agrees that "that *specific* action [S*z*] would

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44. Ibid., 272.

45. Ibid., 273.

become unavoidable, and guilt for it appears to be excluded," but thinks this is not a real problem because "the simple truth is that no one who survives past (early) childhood waits till the end of his or her life to sin."[46] While this may in fact be true, we will see, by considering a different scenario — one that considers the making of only one morally significant decision — that Wyma's response either does not fully appreciate the claim being made by proponents of the doctrine of original inclination, or it does not take seriously the problem raised by the scenario he himself presents.

This modified conception of original sin present by Plantinga, Copan, and Wyma is what I refer to as the doctrine of *original inclination*.[47] This doctrine can be formulated as follows:

> (8) Necessarily in a world tainted by original sin, (a) every human subsequent to Adam is born in a condition such that it is inevitable that she sin (given that she performs at least one morally significant action),[48] but (b) it is not inevitable that she sin on any given occasion.[49]

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46. Ibid., 274.

47. There is no reason why one's account of original sin could not include both original guilt, as discussed before, and original inclination. Such an account would maintain humans are born guilty, though being born guilty does not necessitate any future particular sin. It would, however, necessitate some future sin.

48.On some conceptions of sin, the parenthetical should read, “given that she performs at least one morally significant action, or adopts one morally significant attitude, or fails in a morally significant way to perform an action or adopt an attitude.” Given that in each of these cases, the moral significance entails that a blameless action or attitude could have been performed or adopted, or a blameworthy action or attitude avoided, this should not affect the argument below.

49. If there are worries about the second conjunct and moral dilemmas that we get ourselves into through sinning, the conjunct can easily be amended to: 'it is not inevitable that any human commit her first sin on any given occasion.' Again, (1) admits of at least one exception — Jesus — and possibly Mary as well.

(8a) expresses the idea that humans sin inevitably, while (8b) expresses the idea that humans do not sin inevitably on any given occasion. The 'necessarily' merely indicates that this is an account of what it means for a world to be tainted by original sin; a world in which (8a) and (8b) are not both true is not one which satisfies this account.

If Wyma's account of original incination is true, one that ranges over the course of an individual's life, then it would also be true when considering the individual that performs only one morally significant action. Consider the following claim:

> (9) Possibly, some human performs only one morally significant action in her lifetime.

Surely (9) is true. Thousands of people of all ages die every day, many of them children. Some of these people die at an age when they have performed very many morally significant actions. Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise for someone who lives an average lifespan. And many of these people die at such a young age that they have performed no morally significant actions. But surely some of them die at an age that they have performed only a very few morally significant actions. And among these, it seems likely that some have performed only one morally significant action before death. And even if in fact, against all odds, there has not ever been someone who died performing only one morally significant action, there is nothing that rules out the possibility of this happening. So (9) seems assured.

(8a) tells us that every human who commits at least one morally significant act inevitably sins. Given (8a), then, the following conditional is true:

> (10) If some human performs only one morally significant action in her lifetime, then that action is inevitably sinful.

(8b) tells us that it is not inevitable that any human sin on any given occasion. Given

(8b), then, the following conditional is true:

> (11) If some human performs only one morally significant action in her lifetime, then that action is not inevitably sinful.

But from (10) and (11) it follows that:

> (12) If some human performs only one morally significant action in her lifetime, then that action both is and is not inevitably sinful.

But (12) is absurd. (9) tells us that its antecedent is possible – indeed its antecedent even seems likely. But then, if (12) is true, its consequent should be true as well. But its consequent is not even logically possible. So, at least one of (8) — (11) must be rejected. Since (9) seems obviously true, and since (10) and (11) follow directly from (8), that leaves only (8) as a candidate for rejection. (8) leads to an absurd result, and so must be discarded. But (8) is merely an expression of the doctrine of original inclination. So, the doctrine of original inclination must be discarded.

If the argument is sound, then (8) must be rejected. But nothing in the argument implies that both (8a) and (8b) must be rejected. Rejecting either (8a) or (8b) is sufficient. We shall now briefly consider each of these options before considering three general solutions to the problem that original sin poses for a broad free will defense.

*Reformulating the Doctrine*

Richard Swinburne has embraced (8b) while rejecting (8a). He maintains that in each of our actions we are free to refrain from sinning, and denies that it is inevitable that each of us sin at some point in our lives. He attributes to humans "a disease, original sinfulness" which is "a proneness to wrongdoing." "The bad desires in which it [this

proneness to wrongdoing] consists incline, they do not (as such) necessitate." The claim that "they do not necessitate" is a rejection of (8a) rather than merely an endorsement of (8b) is clear from Swinburne's explicit rejection of the view of "some theologians [who] have wanted to go further and say that it is a proneness which led necessarily to sin." Swinburne endorses (8b) because "unavoidable sin is not culpable", and he seems to reject (8a) on the same grounds. For if we inevitably sin at some point, then it looks as if even if this or that sin is avoidable, sin is unavoidable. So even while Swinburne differs from defenders of the doctrine of original inclination on (8a), he shares their motivation to avoid attributing culpability for unavoidable actions.[50]

Rejecting (8a) comes at a cost. After all, (8a) was at least partly motivated by a desire to account for the universality of humanity's fallenness, and the universal human need for redemption. But if (8a) is rejected, then it is possible — even if unlikely — for someone to go through his entire life without sinning, and so to go through life without the need for redemption. This is a departure from the classical doctrines of original sin and of grace. Indeed, it is difficult to see what is distinctively Christian about this account of original sin. Many atheistic ethicists and ethicists from non-Christian religious traditions will readily agree that humans have a strong tendency to do wrong throughout their lives. Perhaps this is due to selfish traits that have been selected because of their evolutionary advantages,[51] or to similar explanations. If the doctrine of original sin is simply expressing this idea, then it hardly deserves the title of *doctrine*, since doctrines are usually taken to be distinctive claims of a religious tradition.

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50. Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 137-139.
51. This is Swinburne's preferred explanation; see Ibid., 142-144.

Those in the Reformed tradition, and indeed compatibilists in general, are likely to reject (8b). If genuine freedom, and the accompanying moral responsibility for action, does not require alternative possibilities, then there is no reason to suppose that sinful actions cannot be inevitable. So, the compatibilist can retain (8a) and affirm universal human fallenness and need for redemption, while rejecting (8b) and so avoiding the absurd consequences of (8). But of course those that believe free will and determinism are compatible are not likely to have much use for a broad free will defense in the first place.

While only committing oneself to either (8a) or (8b) avoids the absurd conclusion, from what we have seen, this is not an option for Plantinga, Copan, or Wyma. Further, it does not seem to be an option for anyone that desires to endorse a broad free will defense. But perhaps this is too quick. We will now examine three ways in which one might attempt to retain the a doctrine of original sin while still endorsing a broad free will defense.

## Possible Solutions to the Problems of Original Sin

For a large part of the history of Western Christianity, the doctrine of original sin has been taken to teach that all humans subsequent to Adam suffer from an infliction that was brought about by the moral failing in the Garden of Eden. A substantial portion of the Christian church has followed Augustine in saying that the infliction includes both being born guilty for the sin of Adam and being born with a further inclination to sin. Problems with each of these components were raised. The original guilt component

of original sin is problematic because it maintains that one is held morally responsible for some action over which he had no control. It was shown that to hold someone morally responsible at birth for the sin of Adam conflicts with the principle of alternative possibilities. Because the free will defense internally relies upon libertarian freedom, and many libertarians believe that libertarian freedom requires the principle of alternative possibilities, such an inconsistency prevents one who accepts the doctrine of original sin from being able to advance a broad free will defense. The original inclination aspect of original sin is problematic for a similar reason. Instead of maintaining that someone is morally responsible at birth, it teaches that sinning at some point or another is inevitable for all humans subsequent to Adam, even though no particular sin is inevitable. It was then shown that this understanding of original inclination leads to an absurd conclusion, that in cases where an individual performs only one morally significant action, that action both is and is not inevitable.

While these are genuine problems for anyone who wants to maintain a traditional understanding of original sin and wants to use a broad free will defense to answer the logical problem of evil, all is not lost. There are at least three potential solutions to the problems raised for the doctrine of original sin as it relates to a broad free will defense. The first two are less than ideal because they require a major departure from many free will defenders' prior beliefs. The first solution we will consider requires the rejection of previously held theological beliefs, and the second a rejection of previously held philosophical beliefs. We will briefly consider these solutions before turning to a much more robust solution that is not only consistent with the free will defender's prior beliefs, but actually relies upon aspects of the free will defense itself.

*Reject Original Guilt & Original Inclination*

One way to respond is by simply refashioning the doctrine of original sin entirely in such a way that both original guilt and original inclination are excluded. If one's doctrine of original sin includes neither original guilt nor original inclination, then there is at least *prima facie* reason to think that it will be compatible with a broad free will defense. Of course one would need to look carefully at what remains of the doctrine, but it does not seem to be too difficult to construct such a doctrine that avoids the problems presented.[52] Of course, rejecting both historically central components of original sin will likely put one outside the boundaries of orthodoxy.[53]

While this may not be a problem for some, it is an even further departure from the traditional understanding of original sin — a departure that many would not find desirable. This can be especially problematic for those who associate the universal benefits of Christ's death with the universal problem of original sin. If one's doctrine of original sin rejects both original guilt and original inclination, one may rightly wonder for what reason Christ had to die. If it is possible for someone to live and die without ever sinning, then it appears that Jesus' death may not have been truly for everyone. Of course, some may find this acceptable, given that the likelihood of someone going

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52. Earlier it was shown that this is the route Swinburne takes in relation to original inclination; a similar rejection of original guilt should not be hard to imagine.

53. Such a re-working of original sin is quite similar to the teaching of the fourth century monk Pelagius. However, his most prominent disciple, Celestius, was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Carthage in 431. Of course if staying within the boundaries of orthodoxy set by the early councils is not important, then affirming heretical teachings should not be an obstacle. However, many Christian theists *do* want to stay within those boundaries.

through life without sinning is very low. Whatever the merits of such a resolution to the problem, it does not appear to be one that Wyma or Copan could appeal to. This possibility is not an option for Wyma, who writes that original sin is an "*essential* inheritance and corruptive power"[54] or for Copan, who approvingly notes that "orthodox Christianity has held that the pervasiveness of sin is *semper, ubique, ad omnibus!*"[55]

*Reject the Principle of Alternative Possibilities*

A much simpler solution, allowing one to remain with the bounds of traditional orthodoxy, is to simply reject the principle of alternative possibilities entirely. As was shown above, the problem with original guilt is directly connected to this principle and now it has been shown that the problem with original inclination is also connected to the principle, though indirectly. Reject the principle and, of course, there is no longer a problem. There are two primary reasons why one might find such a solution troubling. The first reason is that, as shown above, most libertarian conceptions of freedom require some version of PAP. If this is correct, then a broad free will defense will no longer be available.[56] One might still offer a narrow defense to resolve the immediate charge of

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54. Wyma, "Innocent Sinfulness, Guilty Sin," 276. (Emphasis added.)

55. Copan, "Original Sin and Christian Philosophy," 529. Because Plantinga says very little about the exact workings of original sin it is hard to say whether this is an option he could endorse. However, from what he does write in *Warranted Christian Belief*, it does not appear that he could avail himself to such a radical re-working of original sin.

56. While it appears this is the majority view among libertarians, it is not universal. See, for example, William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 261-62, David Hunt, "Moral Responsibility and Unavoidable Action," *Philosophical Studies* 97 (2000): 195-227, or Linda Zagzebski, "Does Libertarian Freedom Require Alternate Possibilities?"

contradiction, but such a defense is not likely to do much for the atheologian, especially since not even the theist believes that is an accurate description of reality. One might rightly expect the theist to give an answer for the evil that appears in this world, or at least an answer that is compatible with the way the theist believes this world to actually work. The theist could still avail himself to other types of responses, but the solution that many believe is best will have to be neglected.

The second reason why rejecting the principle of alternative possibilities may be problematic is that many theists that initially employ a free will defense do so because they think it captures something correct about the nature of free will and moral responsibility. The free will defense trades heavily on the idea that if God desires to create a world with moral good, then he needs to create individuals with a genuine capacity to commit moral evil. The person that accepts this idea is likely to also accept the idea that moral responsibility for an action requires there to be alternatives for that action available. Of course free will compatibilists reject such a notion, but free will compatibilists are not likely to depend too heavily on a free will defense anyway. For many that find a broad free will defense attractive do so because of the way it characterizes human freedom. To reject the princple of alternative possibilites in order to retain the doctrine of original sin would come at the cost of not only a broad free will defense, but also a geneal theory of free will in moral responsibility. This may be too high a price to pay.

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*Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 231-248.

*Appeal to Middle Knowledge*

A third way one might respond to the problems above is to appeal to God's middle knowledge. The main advantage this response has over the first two is that those can only be adopted at the expense of rejecting some other prior belief, but the middle knowledge solution does not require such a rejection. Instead, for anyone offering a free will defense along the lines of Plantinga's, this response will be quite appealing because it makes use of components of that very defense.

Middle knowledge is a view of God's knowledge that traces back to the sixteenth-century philosopher Louis De Molina. It aims to provide an account of how God could foreknow what free agents will do in the future, while remaining providentially in control of that future. While a full length treatment of middle knowledge is not possible here, a brief account of the view will be helpful.[57] According to this account, God has three types of knowledge, each corresponding to a different logical moment. In keeping with most standard accounts of foreknowledge, this view maintains that God has natural and free knowledge. The first of those is knowledge of all the necessary truths, truths that are independent of God's will. The second, free knowledge, is knowledge of all the contingent truths that are dependent upon God's will. They are true because of the world that God in fact decided to create. What makes Molinism distinct is that it also maintains that God has middle knowledge. Middle knowledge is also knowledge of contin-

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57. For an in depth treatment of middle knowledge see Alfred Freddoso's introduction to, and translation of, Molina's, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the* Concordia (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988) or Thomas Flint's *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). The brief account of middle knowledge that I will provide is influenced by Flint.

gent truths, but these truths are not dependent upon God's will. These are true not because of some decision that God makes, but instead they are true because of what free creatures would freely do in various circumstances. Logically prior to God's creative act, he is able to know what every free creature would do when placed in any situation. This is how God is able to exercise providential control over the world he creates, and yet still allow those creatures to exercise morally significant freedom.

There is obviously much more that can be said about middle knowledge, but this should be sufficient for the purpose at hand.[58] God's ability to know what each person would do if placed in any circumstance allows God to actualize the world that satisfies his own desires and intentions. Such a view of God's foreknowledge can be quite useful in explaining a host of philosophical and theological difficulties. For example, those who believe Mary was sinless can explain more fully that belief by appealing to God's middle knowledge. One might suggest that the reason God chose Mary to be the mother of God incarnate was precisely because he foreknew, via his middle knowledge, that she would freely refrain from sinning. One might also use God's middle knowledge to explain how it is just for God to punish for eternity those who did not accept his plan for salvation, even though they never heard of that plan. If God decided to actualize a world in which the individuals who never hear of his plan for salvation are the same individu-

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58. Molinism is by no means an uncontroversial view. For two forceful arguments against Molinism see Robert Adams, "An Anti-Molinist Argument," *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991): 343-353 and William Hasker, "A Refutation of Middle Knowledge," *Noûs* 20, no. 4 (1986): 545-557. For responses see William Lane Craig, "Middle Knowledge, Truth-Makers, and the 'Grounding Objection'," *Faith and Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2001): 337-352 and Thomas P. Flint, "Two Account of Providence," in Thomas Morris, ed., *Divine and Human Action* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 147-181.

als who would have rejected who plan even if they did hear it, then, the argument goes, he is not unjust for punishing individuals that do not accept his plan because they never heard it. Such knowledge would be possible if Molinism is correct.[59]

Can middle knowledge be used to also resolve the above problems for a traditional doctrine of original sin? Both Wyma and Copan suggest that a view of original sin informed by the doctrine of middle knowledge will be less susceptible to the worries raised above. But how precisely is middle knowledge supposed to help?

Recall that above we saw there are at least two ways of thinking about what original sin is. According to both lines of thought original sin is some type of corruption that is inherent in all human beings since the first human pair. There are, however, two different ways of thinking about how Adam's progeny acquires original sin. One way is to say that all humans, somehow, participated in the first sin of Adam and so are punished in the same way that Adam was punished. The second way is to say that all humans have acquired original sin because Adam was the representative for all humans. While neither Wyma nor Copan explicitly address this distinction, we will see that Wyma's account appears to be designed to answer concerns associated with the former understanding of how humans acquire original sin and Copan's account is designed to answer concerns associated with the latter.[60]

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59. I am not aware of anyone that advances this type of argument regarding the sinlessness of Mary, but William Lane Craig does make such an argument regarding the unsaved. See William Lane Craig, "'No Other Name': A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation Through Christ," *Faith and Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (1989): 172-188. Both doctrines, the sinlessness of Mary and Christian exclusivism, will be evaluated in light of a broad defense in chapter five.

60. While it may turn out that both Wyma and Copan endorse both aspects of original sin, their appeal to middle knowledge seems to focus on answering objections

Wyma begins his account by explaining that many have thought that God's omniscience includes middle knowledge and that "in deciding whom to create, and in what conditions and circumstances to place them, God would have reference to truths about what any possible creature would freely do, in any circumstances possible for it."[61] No matter what state of affairs an individual found himself in, God would know what that individual would freely do in that situation. When creating Adam's progeny, "God could restrict himself to the set of possible humans who would freely have done as Adam did in the circumstances of his temptation and fall." Of all the possible humans that God could have created, he decided to create a "subset of those possible humans who would freely have fallen, just as Adam did."[62] God creates only those whom he knew would have sinned if they were in Adam's place and simply creates them *as if* they had actually sinned as Adam did. It is not that humans actually participated in the sin of Adam, but that they would have done the same thing if they were in his place. According to Wyma, "Adam's rebellion becomes a kind of paradigm for all of us, since his action represents what each of us would have done in his place. In him, we all sinned *figuratively* speaking."[63] While it is true that no one actually participated in Adam's sin, the fact that we would have done the same makes it just for God to punish us as if we did.

Copan's appeal to middle knowledge attempts to explain why God is morally justified in treating Adam as the representative for all of humanity and so, in this

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associated with only one aspect of original sin.

61. Wyma, "Innocent Sinfulness, Guilty Sin," 268.

62. Ibid., 269.

63. Ibid.

respect, is designed to avoid worries associated with a federalist account of original sin. Copan begins by considering a possible objection to the doctrine of original sin, one that is particularly aimed at a federalist understanding of original sin. Why should Adam be everyone else's representative in the first place? According to Copan, the objector has the "arrogant presumption" that if she were in Adam's place she would have obeyed God's command to not eat the fruit and could have prevented the "calamitous fallout from the first disobedience."[64] Since such an objection depends upon divine middle knowledge, Copan believes that he has the resources to deny this possibility. While human sinlessness in the garden was certainly logically possible, "it could be the case that those human beings God has actually created would have, according to His middle knowledge, chosen the same Adamic course, resulting in the same Adamic curse... Had any of us actualized human beings been in Adam's place, none of us by his free choice would have avoided bringing about the fall and its consequences."[65] The appeal to middle knowledge is supposed to deflate "charges of divine injustice regarding Adam's being our representative head since God knows that the rest of us would have acted in the very same way in the same circumstance."[66] If we would have done the same thing as Adam, then there is nothing morally wrong with Adam serving as our representative, and thus there is nothing morally wrong with God punishing us for something that our representative did.

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64. Copan, "Original Sin and Christian Philosophy," 540.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., 541.

There are at least three reasons why an appeal to middle knowledge along the lines suggested by Wyma and Copan does not succeed. First, both make the tacit assumption that it is acceptable for God to base his moral evaluation of humans in this world on some decision made in another possible world. On this account of original sin all humankind is morally evaluated not by what action was actually performed, but by what would have been performed in some other possible world. Of course this assumes that it is morally acceptable for God to make such a counterfactual judgment. But it is not the case that this is how current moral evaluations are performed and it is not clear why it would be morally acceptable for God to evaluate humankind in such a manner. For example, even if it were true that were I born in Darfur I would have freely participated in the intentional killing of innocent life, no one includes that truth as part of their moral evaluation of me. The world in which I am born in Darfur would be vastly different from the actual world, and thus it would not be morally appropriate to base a moral evaluation of me in this world on that one. The closest approximation to this practice is in morally evaluating a person's future intentions. If a person is arrested on the suspicion of terrorist activities, and then authorities subsequently find in his home various bomb making supplies and detailed drawings of prominent public spaces one might reasonable morally condemn the suspect based on those findings. It is false that the suspect actually did commit some terrorist activity, but given what was found in his home, it seems reasonable to believe that he *would have* committed some terrorist activity. While it is true that it is morally acceptable to punish the suspect for something which did not occur, this case simply does not apply, at least in any straightforward way, to the case of original sin.

There are two reasons for this. First, the suspect's punishment differs based upon what actually happened. If the authorities did not foil his plan, but he was caught afterward, his punishment would be based upon the crime he actually committed. But if the authorities did foil his plan his punishment would be based upon what he intended to do, and that punishment would be less severe than if he successfully carried out that intention. In the legal context, which in this case appears to coincide with our moral intuitions, the punishment would be less severe for intending to commit terrorist activities than for actually committing them. The punishment is based upon what actually did happen and not upon what *would have* happened. However, when it comes to original sin, according to Wyma and Copan, humans are treated in the actual world *as if* each did participate in that original sin. It is obvious that no human other than Adam did actively participate in that original sin, so the only basis for morally evaluating humans regarding that act is on what would have happened. Since this runs counter to standard practices of moral evaluation, it appears that one is justified in expecting some account of why it is permissible for God to evaluate humankind in such a radically different way.

One can see that the suspected terrorist example of morally evaluating someone for what would have happened fails in a second way as well. If one looks at the biblical data regarding that calamitous event, the source for the doctrine of original sin in the first place, it appears that Adam's progeny receive a punishment *worse than* that which he received even though his sin was committed in the actual world while the rest of humanity only commits the sin in a possible world. The relevant biblical passages record that Adam's punishment included being removed from the Garden of Eden, having a more difficult time working the fields, and being subject to physical death and suffering.

Each of Adam's descendants are afflicted in the same way but, additionally, are *born* in such a state that sinning is inevitable. Not only is humankind punished for an action that is committed in some other possible world, but that punishment includes everything that was dealt to Adam plus the inability to refrain from sinning in the actual world — something that results in further punishment.

A second problem with the counterfactual moral evaluation envisioned by Copan and Wyma is that it is not clear why God chooses to form his basis for moral evaluation on those worlds in which all humans decide to sin as Adam actually did.[67] The question is, why would God pick out those possible worlds and not the possible worlds in which humans do not sin as Adam did? Presumably it is not the case that every human would have sinned, necessarily, if in the same situation as Adam. If it is not, then there are at least some possible worlds in which some humans do not choose as Adam did. If so, what reasons would God have for not using those actions as a basis for his moral evaluation? Perhaps one might object and simply deny that there are possible worlds in which humans do not sin as Adam did. The problem with such an objection is that it fails to recognize that there is no original sin at this point that would explain *why* every human does sin as Adam did. That first decision to sin is supposed to be the explanation for all other sinful decisions — it cannot be the explanation for why all humans would choose to sin in every possible world.

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67. For a different worry about the appropriateness of counterfactual moral evaluation as it relates to religious luck see Linda Zagzebski, "Religious Luck," *Faith and Philosophy* 11, no. 3 (1994). The concern there is that such counterfactual moral evaluation appears to make the actual world meaningless. This appears to be compatible with the above worry and, if legitimate, would make the case against the middle knowledge solution that much stronger.

This is a problem even for free will defenses that utilize Plantinga's notion of transworld depravity. Plantinga, one will recall, admits that it is logically possible that some humans freely refrain from ever committing a wrong action, it just so happens that none of those worlds is actualizable.[68] But if it is logically possible that some person refrains from ever committing a wrong action then, of course, there is a possible world in which that person does no wrong. In such a world that person does not even choose to sin as Adam did. Why, then, does God choose to punish that person in this world based on what she did in some other possible world if there is yet another possible world in which she does no wrong at all? It appears that even if one can make sense of counterfactual moral evaluation, such an account is of no use for explaining original sin.

A final problem for attempting to resolve the difficulties with original sin by appealing to middle knowledge is that it is not clear what it means to say that any one person would have eaten the fruit if that person were in the same situation as Adam. What type of world would it be such that *Paul Franks* is born in the Garden of Eden and is deceived by the serpent? If counterfactual moral evaluation is acceptable, it seems that one condition of such a evaluation would be that those other possible worlds in which we commit some wrong action, and are morally responsible for it in this world, be at least relevantly similar to the actual world. As stated above, even if it is true that I would have participated in genocide if I were to have been born in Darfur, no one holds me morally responsible for actions in that possible world. Why am I not now held morally accountable for those actions? One reason is that the world in which I am born

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68. See page 20 above.

in Darfur is simply too different from the actual world. The world in which the suspected terrorist fulfills his intention is quite similar to this world. In fact it looks as if the worlds are identical until the terrorist is apprehended by the authorities. But, this is not true in the case of my having been born in Darfur. Such a world would be vastly different from this one, thus making it morally unacceptable to now hold me morally responsible for what I would have done in that world. But if that world is too different for such counterfactual moral evaluation, then surely the world in which I commit that first sin is even more different, making such counterfactual moral evaluation unacceptable.

## Conclusion

We have seen that one may separate the doctrine of original sin into two distinct doctrines: original guilt and original inclination. Adhering to both doctrines presents problems for those wishing to advance a broad free will defense to the problem of evil. There are solutions available to each of these problems, but those solutions present difficulties of their own. For example, rejecting the principle of alternative possibilities may allow one to retain both original guilt and original inclination, but such a rejection would make it difficult to advance a free will defense because such a defense relies on libertarian freedom. And libertarian freedom, for many, relies upon that principle. One might also attempt to resolve the problems above by appealing to God's middle knowledge, but such appeals are ultimately unsuccessful, even if one assumes that there are such things as true counterfactuals of freedom. The primary failure of the middle knowledge solution is due to the inappropriateness of counterfactual moral evaluation.

Because of the difficulties raised in this chapter, it does not appear that maintaining both a traditional doctrine of original sin and a broad free will defense is promising.

The proponent of a broad free will defense is now faced with a decision. Should she continue to advance a broad defense, at the expense of traditional understandings of original sin, or should she give up on the broad defense and fall back on a narrow one? Ideally one will be able to come up with an account of original sin that avoids the problems raised above, but is still able to do the same theological work as the traditional doctrine of original sin. It remains to be seen, however, whether such an account of original sin is available.

# Chapter Three: Heaven

In the previous chapter a problem was raised for those who want to maintain both an historically orthodox account of original sin and a broad free will defense. In sum, the idea that humans are either born guilty or in a condition that guarantees some action for which they will be guilty runs counter to certain implicit ideas within a free will defense. If the theist aims to give a response to the logical problem of evil that goes beyond stating what is merely broadly logically possible, but is also consistent with other beliefs the theist maintains, then a modification of either that account of original sin or of the free will defense is necessary. We shall now turn to the other end of the spectrum. Instead of considering a Christian doctrine regarding how humans begin their time on earth, we shall look at the state of existence humans experience once their time on earth is complete.

## Introductory Issues

The biblical data regarding the nature of heaven is sparse, so differences among accounts of heaven are commonplace. A contributing factor to the presence of these differences may be that the biblical data regarding heaven is mostly negative. For example, the author of Revelation informs the reader that in heaven God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor

crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."[1] Such a description makes it clear that heaven will be a place without many ills that are frequently experienced on earth, but the reader is not told what heaven *is*. This fact leaves a lot of room for various presentations of the doctrine. There is room to debate whether heaven is a located in space and time, and if so, how it is related to this universe.[2] Questions also emerge surrounding the nature of one's existence in heaven as well. Are the inhabitants of heaven numerically identical with those on earth? If so, how is that identity retained? How one answers these sorts of questions is important for the overall coherence of Christian theism, but because they are not immediately problematic for free will defenses they will not be addressed here.[3]

*A Different Soteriological Problem*

Much attention has been paid, and rightly so, to various difficulties that Christian theists have in believing that a wholly good God would consign a significant portion of his creation to damnation. Some have argued that a loving God would not punish someone eternally for finite wrongs. Others have argued that it would be unjust for God

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1. Revelation 21:4 (English Standard Version). 1 Peter 1:3-4 also provides details of heaven in the negative.

2. Perhaps the uncertainty regarding this is the cause of people regularly speaking about living "on earth," but speak of living "in heaven." Whether heaven is a state or place is not directly relevant to broad free will defenses, but I will speak of heaven as a place simply for the sake of simplicity.

3. For development of these sorts of questions, see Trenton Merricks, "The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting," in *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed. Michael Murray (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 261-286.

to punish people for failing to follow Christian teachings when they were never exposed to those teachings. While these are important issues that Christian theists must carefully consider to ensure that their theological system is coherent, they will not be pursued here because none of these issues is immediately problematic for broad free will defenses. If the notion of hell is indeed, in Marilyn Adams's words, "a problem of evil for Christians," then it is simply a different type of problem of evil.[4] Christian theists ought to develop a response to the problem, but such a response may have nothing to do with a free will defense at all. In the same way that a solution to the problem of natural evil may be quite distinct from a solution to the problem of moral evil, the problem of hell may require its own unique solution. For these reasons the focus of this chapter will be on a different soteriological problem.[5]

Instead of focusing on those that are not saved, the question pursued here is whether or not orthodox conceptions of heaven are compatible with a broad free will defense. A more precise formulation of the problem will be given below, but the general worry stems from the traditional Christian teaching that heaven is essentially good. If heaven is essentially good, then it is not even logically possible for agents in heaven to do evil. However, the the free will defense maintains that having the freedom to choose

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4. Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians," in *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 301-327.

5. One can pursue these difficulties in Keith Yandell's, "The Doctrine of Hell and Moral Philosophy," *Religious Studies* 28 (1992): 75-90 or Michael Murray, "Heaven and Hell," in *Reason for the Hope Within*, 287-317. For book-length treatments of the doctrine of hell see John Kvanvig, *The Problem of Hell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) or Jerry Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

between good and evil is a great good. If it is not possible for agents in heaven to choose evil, and the free will defense is correct in maintaining that such an ability is necessary for freedom, then it appears that those agents are not free in heaven. But because the free will defense also maintains that such freedom is a great good, one may wonder why it is not had in heaven. A slightly different way of looking at the issue starts with the traditional Christian teaching that heaven is as good of a place to be as any. That is, it is a place overflowing with joy and other associated goods. If agents in heaven are not free to sin, and yet it is such a great place to be, then why would a wholly good God bother with creating humans on earth in the first place? What reason would a perfect being have for not directly creating humans in heaven?

The problem these questions pose for a free will defense is this. If the theist wants to give a broad free will defense, then the details of that defense must be consistent with all the beliefs that theist holds. As noted in chapter two, free will defenses must rely upon the existence of libertarian freedom, maintain that libertarian freedom is necessary to bring about some good, and maintain that the obtaining of that good is a morally sufficient reason for God to allow the possibility that evil may accompany that good.[6] The Christian teaching that heaven is essentially good, and overflowing with goods, appears to conflict with the first two of these features. If the result of heaven being essentially good is that human agents in heaven do not have libertarian freedom, then some explanation is needed as to why those agents on earth have libertarian freedom but do not have it in heaven. In addition, if heaven contains such great goods

6. See page 35 above.

and yet does not have libertarian freedom, then there appears to be a straightforward objection to the free will defense's insistence that libertarian freedom is necessary for the bringing about of great moral goods.

In this chapter a brief overview of the doctrine of heaven will be presented and then two problems the doctrine causes for a broad free will defense will be considered. It will then be shown that the Christian theist has several distinct ways of reconciling a robust doctrine of heaven with a broad free will defense.

*The Orthodox Account of Heaven*

There are two characteristics to orthodox accounts of heaven. The first is that it is a place overflowing with good and the second is that it is essentially free of evil. That heaven is a good place to be is so obvious that it hardly needs to be stated. It should be noted, however, that heaven is not just a good place to be, it is a place that surpasses that of any other. Among the great-making features of heaven is that it is a place in which one can build meaningful friendships with other saints and continue the friendships that were had on earth. In an attempt to comfort those afraid of dying, the seventeenth century Anglican clergyman, Jeremy Taylor, reminds his readers of one of the aspects of heaven that makes it so great. In heaven one is able to "converse with St. Paul, and all the college of apostles, and all the saints and martyrs, with all the good men whose memory we preserve in honor, with excellent kings and holy bishops, and with the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ, and with God himself."[7]

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7. Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, ed. P.G. Stanwood (Oxford: Clarendon

This social component is often what brings comfort to theists when faced with the loss of loved ones, but as great as this will be, it is not the primary thing that makes heaven so great.

While having social relationships with family, friends, and great saints is something to look forward to, such social relationships are not what ultimately makes heaven so great. What makes heaven greater than any other place is the direct experience of God. Instead of experiencing God indirectly through creation, in heaven one is able to see and experience God directly. Of this experience, the author of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* entry on heaven writes, "In heaven we know and love God as He is in Himself, i.e., as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in whose divine life we along with all the other blessed fully share. The infinite perfection of the Blessed Trinity and the infinite love which we shall then fully possess provide a never-ending source of satisfaction to our entire selves. Our restless hearts have at last found rest where alone they can, in the Blessed Trinity."[8] Similar ideas are found in the Protestant tradition as well. For example, Wayne Grudem writes, "From time to time here on earth we experience the joy of genuine worship of God, and we realize that it is our joy to be giving him glory. But in [heaven] this joy will be multiplied many times over and we will know the fulfillment of that for which we were created."[9] While popular accounts of heaven may

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Press, 1993). According to Plato's *Apology* (40d-41b), Socrates also appealed to such soon-coming social relationships as a way to comfort those concerned with his impending death.

8. Forshaw, B. "Heaven (Theology of)." *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. 2nd ed.

9. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1164.

present heaven as a place more akin to an extended Hawaiian vacation, traditional orthodoxy teaches that it is one's full relationship with God that makes heaven paradise.[10]

The second feature of traditional orthodox accounts of heaven is that it is a place free of all evils. According to James Sennett, it is not just that heaven happens to be free of evil, "it is not even *possible* that any should arise." This absence of evil "owes its purity to the unmediated presence of God" and is "*essentially* pristine, grounded in divine immanence, not contingently due to the fortunate choices of humans."[11] Sennett goes on to argue that "if heaven is only evil-free contingent on the choices of its human occupants, then it is constantly in danger of losing its evil-free status" which is "contrary to traditional theism." If heaven is to remain free of all evil "it must be *necessarily* evil-free—it cannot be possible for there to be evil."[12] Yujin Nagasawa, Graham Oppy and Nick Trakakis have also identified the essential goodness of heaven as being an aspect of orthodox accounts of heaven. They write that "according to the orthodox view, it is not an accidental matter that Heaven [be free of evil]: it is part of the *essence* of Heaven that it should be a place in which there is no evil."[13] While it is true that Christ-

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10. This feature of heaven serves as the foundation for many theistic responses to the problem of hell. If seeing God fully is what makes heaven so great, then a case can be made that those that die having no desire for God whatsoever would not be capable of enjoying heaven at all and so God mercifully does not admit them. For a more detailed account see Murray, "Heaven and Hell" or Jerry Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chapter two.

11. James Sennett, "Is There Freedom in Heaven?" *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (1999), 69. (Original emphasis.)

12. Ibid., 70. (Emphasis added.)

13. Yujin Nagasawa, Graham Oppy, and Nick Trakakis "Salvation in Heaven?" *Philosophical Papers* 33, no. 1 (2004): 99. (Original emphasis.)

ian theism has traditionally held that those in heaven will not sin, it is not clear that this means *heaven* is essentially free of evil.

There is a problem with characterizing heaven, the place, as being essentially free of evil. In addition to Christian teaching about the future enjoyment of heaven by humans, there is also the Christian teaching of the angelic fall. According to this doctrine, at one point Satan and his fellows were actually angels, but choose wrongly and thus were removed from heaven. If this is so, then it is not correct to say that *heaven* is essentially free of evil since at one point an evil action was taken in heaven. Sennett considers this but has reservations about whether the angelic fall is a legitimate component of Christian theism. Regarding this concern he writes, "First, traditional theism in no way *entails* the story of a Satanic fall, and there are serious questions about whether or not it even represents good biblical exegesis[14] It is true that one could reject the angelic fall without serious damage to the Christian system, but a large number of Christian theists do accept the angelic fall and the difficulty remains for those who do and who also want to characterize heaven as being essentially good.

One may also attempt to reconcile the notion of the essential goodness of heaven with an account of the angelic fall by arguing that the heaven that *will be* inhabited by humans is somehow different than the heaven that *was* inhabited by the pre-fallen angels. Sennett considers this strategy as well and believes it to be "perhaps representative of most theists who accept the story of the fall of Satan."[15] The key difference

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14. Sennett, "Is There Freedom in Heaven?" 79-80 n. 4.

15. Ibid.

between heaven-past and heaven-future is that "the fall of Satan constitutes the final eradication of evil from heaven, so that, consequent to his expulsion, no evil can ever arise again."[16] The problem with this approach is that it has the consequence of heaven gaining an essential property. It is not clear how the eviction of a group of agents from heaven is capable of changing the very essence of heaven. It may be that an entirely new heaven was created, and the new heaven has free-of-evil as an essential property, but then questions emerge concerning what happened to the old heaven, what sort of relationship is had between God and these two heavens, and why God would ever create the obviously inferior heaven in the first place. However, there is a better way to deal with the problem that allows one to forego these types of issues altogether.

Instead of describing heaven itself as being essentially free of evil, as Sennett and Nagasawa, Oppy and Trakikis appear to do, one can more simply make a claim regarding the individuals in heaven. If one interprets claims regarding the essential goodness of heaven as actually a claim about the inability of individuals in heaven to commit moral evil, then one can give a coherent story regarding the fall of Satan and the future state of the blessed. For reasons untold,[17] Satan was the type of being that was capable of sinning in heaven even though humans will not be. Simon Gaine notes that according to Augustine "before their fall, both angels and the first human beings were able not to sin but were also able to sin... In the beatific vision, however, both angels and human

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16. Ibid.

17. To those seeking an answer to why angels would ever turn away from God Augustine writes, "If we seek an efficient cause of the evil will of the wicked angels, we shall find none . . . An evil will is the efficient cause of an evil action, but nothing is the efficient cause of an evil will." Augustine, *The City of God*, bk. 12, chap. 6.

beings are unable to sin."[18] Here the difference between heaven-past and heaven-future is not a change in the place, or state, of heaven itself but a change within the agents in heaven. The reason why angels were ever able to fall was that they had yet to have the beatific vision and it is the beatific vision that renders agents impeccable. Gaine goes on to note that the historically dominant position of the church was that the reason why no one ever leaves heaven is because those in heaven are rendered incapable of sinning. This doctrine of impeccability explains the perpetuity of the blessed and, following Augustine, "emerged as the orthodox Christian view."[19] It is not that heaven-past was somehow fundamentally different, but that those in heaven then did not have the beatific vision and so were still able to sin. However, according to orthodox accounts, future denizens of heaven will have the beatific vision, become impeccable, and therefore not be able to sin.

To summarize, orthodox accounts of heaven have two main features. The first is that heaven is overwhelmingly good and the second is that it is essentially good. This means that its inhabitants must be rendered impeccable upon entry. That impeccability means that once one is in heaven, she will never leave it. Each of these features generates difficulties for broad free will defenses. The first feature, that heaven is overwhelmingly good, creates what will be called the Motivational Problem of Heaven. Because orthodox accounts of heaven maintain that

(1) Heaven is overwhelmingly good, and

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18. Simon Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will in Heaven?* (New York: T&T Clark Ltd., 2003), 10.

19. Ibid.

(2) the inhabitants of heaven are unable to do evil,

one appears to have good grounds to question the motivations of a perfect being for creating humans on earth. Traditionally, free will defenses have maintained that not even an omnipotent being could create a world in which there is a great amount of good and no evil. So, if this perfect being desired to create a world with a great amount of good, then a world with good and evil would have to be created. But the orthodox account of heaven appears to be a direct counterexample to that claim. In heaven, there is an overwhelming amount of good but no evil at all. Since such a world is not only logically possible but, according to Christian theism, also able to be actualized, what would motivate a wholly good God to create humans on earth at all? Even if it is true that a free will defense can satisfy the atheologian's charge of logical inconsistency when it comes to the existence of evil and a wholly good God, a broad free will defense requires one to also consider the other beliefs of the theist. In this case it seems that orthodox accounts of heaven preclude the possibility of a successful broad free will defense because heaven is overwhelmingly good and yet free of evil.

The second feature, that heaven is essentially good and its inhabitants never leave because they are impeccable, creates what will be called the Libertarian Problem of Heaven. The problem can be seen most clearly by considering the following subset of propositions regarding orthodox accounts of heaven and free will defenses.

(3) Libertarian free will includes the ability to do moral evil.

(4) The existence of libertarian free will is necessary for the amount and kinds of goods on earth.

(5) No one in heaven is able to do moral evil.

(6) Heaven is overwhelmingly good.

Even allowing for slight modifications, one can generally take (3) and (4) to be the backbone of any free will defense and (5) and (6) to be the backbone of any orthodox account of heaven. Of course, including (3) and (4) as part of a free will defense is not problematic on its own. However, if one is attempting to present a broad free will defense, and also adheres to an orthodox account of heaven, then (5) and (6) must also be taken into consideration. If libertarian free will includes the ability to do moral evil and no one in heaven has the ability to do moral evil, then no one in heaven has libertarian free will. But if heaven is a place that is overwhelmingly good without agents in heaven having libertarian free will, then one has the resources to doubt the truth of (4). If heaven is a better place than earth, and agents in heaven do not have libertarian free will, then why think that libertarian free will is necessary in order for the goods on earth to obtain? We shall begin by considering the Motivational Problem.

## The Motivational Problem of Heaven

A version of the motivational problem of heaven can be found in a recent paper by Yujin Nagasawa, Graham Oppy, and Nick Trakakis.[20] The authors begin by arguing that because orthodox accounts of heaven maintain that heaven is essentially good and

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20. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis, "Salvation in Heaven?" While an earlier version of the motivational problem can be found in George B Wall, "Heaven and a Wholly Good God," *Personalist* 58 (1977): 352-357, the present focus will remain on Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis because their argument is more precise and also more difficult to dismiss. A successful response to the later argument should also succeed against the earlier one.

essentially free of evil those same accounts are also committed to the idea that humans in heaven are not morally significantly free.[21] They write, "if it is part of the *essence* of Heaven that it should be a place in which there is no evil, then there is at least some reason to think that Heaven must also be a place in which human beings have severely limited freedom of action."[22] According to the authors, this severely limited freedom of action means that "theists must suppose that it is possible for very great goods—'infinitely great', 'incomparably great'—to be realised in a domain in which there is no freedom." That such great goods can be realized in a domain without freedom leads Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis to ask, "If there can be an abundance of goods without either freedom or evil, then what justification could a perfect being have for making a universe like ours?"[23] The authors begin by arguing that orthodox accounts of heaven and libertarian conceptions of freedom together entail that there is no morally significant freedom in heaven. The argument for this is straightforward.

> (1) Necessarily, there is no evil in Heaven.
>
> (2) If there is morally significant freedom in Heaven, then it is not the case that, necessarily, this is no evil in Heaven.
>
> (3) (Therefore) There is no morally significant freedom in Heaven.[24]

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21. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis do not specifically address this as a problem for Christian theism, speaking only of "orthodox theism,", but because the philosophers with whom they interact are all Christian philosophers, it seems warranted to assume that this is the variety of theism they have in mind.

22. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis, "Salvation in Heaven?" 99. (Original emphasis.)

23. Ibid., 103.

24. Ibid. The first premise can be read as either a claim about heaven itself or about the inhabitants of heaven. While the latter seems preferable, see above, the distinction does not affect the current argument.

The first premise is justified by an appeal to an orthodox account of heaven and the second by the libertarian conception of freedom. At first glance this conclusion may seem innocuous regarding Christian theism. Some Christian philosophers appear to have willingly endorsed it. For example, William Lane Craig is ready to accept that one is not morally significantly free with respect to at least one morally significant action. Writing in defense of Christian exclusivism, Craig argues that the unsaved person's "ability to reject God's love is testimony" to his status as a "morally significant person."[25] However, this ability is lacking in heaven. In an earlier paper defending the same position he writes, "I do not find it objectionable to affirm that the blessed in heaven in the the presence of Christ no longer have the freedom to reject him."[26] Given that being able to accept or reject God's love is a sign of one having morally significant freedom, and inhabitants of heaven do not have that ability, it appears that a prominent proponent of the free will defense may in fact fully endorse (3).[27]

In his book *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy*, Jerry Walls argues that human agents do not have free will in heaven with respect to morally significant actions. Human agents will be free, but it "will be free in something like the compatibilist sense with respect to our choice of God and the good. That is, we will invariably act in accor-

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25. William Lane Craig, "Middle Knowledge and Christian Exclusivism," *Sophia* 34, no. 1 (1995): 134.

26. William Lane Craig, "Talbott's Universalism Once More," *Religious Studies* 29, no. 4 (1993): 514.

27. Craig defends the free will defense in William Lane Craig, "Inspiration and the Free Will Defense Revisited," *Evangelical Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (2001): 327-339. See also J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), chapter twenty-seven.

dance with our transformed character, but we will do so willingly... While our character will rule out any choice of evil or disobedience to God, we will still retain libertarian freedom within the happy limits of joyous obedience and worship."[28] Since Walls affirms that human agents will have significant freedom in heaven, but denies that it will be morally significant freedom it appears that he too would willingly accept the truth of (3). From here the authors present the rest of their "argument from Heaven."

> (4) Heaven is a domain in which the greatest goods are realised. (Premise, justified by appeal to the orthodox conception of heaven.)
>
> (5) (Therefore) The greatest goods can be realised in a domain in which there is no morally significant freedom. (From 3, 4.)
>
> (6) (Therefore) A perfect being can just choose to make a domain that contains the greatest goods and no evil. (From 5, appealing to the omnipotence of a perfect being.)
>
> (7) A world that contains the greatest goods and no evil is non-arbitrarily better than any world that contains the greatest goods, *incomparably* lesser goods, and the amounts and kinds of evils that are found in our universe. (Premise.)
>
> (8) If a perfect being chooses between options, and one option is non-arbitrarily better than the other options, then the perfect being chooses that option. (Premise.)
>
> (9) (Therefore) It is not the case that a perfect being made our universe. (From 6, 7, 8.)[29]

Before considering how this argument is potentially problematic for Christian theists that seek to employ a broad free will defense to logical problems of evil, it should be noted that there appears to be a structural problem with Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis's argument.

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28. Jerry Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 61.

29. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis, "Salvation in Heaven?" 103-104.

If (9) is true then there is no reason to accept the truth of premises (1) or (4) because both of these premises are justified by appealing to "the orthodox conception of Heaven."[30] The following demonstrates how quickly the problem becomes apparent.

(10) If (9), then the universe was not made by God.

(11) If the universe was not made by God, then Christian theism is false.

(12) If Christian theism is false, then there is no reason to accept specific claims based upon Christian theism.

All orthodox Christian conceptions of God maintain that God is a perfect being, so (10) is assured. Support for (11) will vary slightly depending on one's theological tradition, but the core of such support will remain the same. Christian theism maintains that God is the one "who made the world and everything in it."[31] God is the only necessary being and so everything owes its existence to God. (11), too, is assured. But what of (12)? Why think that the falsity of Christian theism precludes one from believing any specifically Christian metaphysical claims? Simply put, if one believes that Christian theism is false and the support for a particular claim comes only from Christian theism, then there is no reason for anyone to believe that the claim is true. For example, once Copernicus' hypothesis was well established, and the falsity of Ptolemy's was no longer in doubt, the justification for believing Ptolemaic-specific claims regarding planetary motion was gone. The system as a whole was shown to be false, and since the system itself was the sole rationale for specific beliefs within that system, one would no longer be justified in taking those specific beliefs to be true. Of course this does not mean they are false, just

30. Ibid. 103.

31. Acts 17:24 (English Standard Version).

that one's justification for those beliefs would have to come from outside the system.

In the same way, if one accepts the conclusion of the authors' argument, then there is no justification for two of their premises. The support for both premises (1) and (4) was that they are part of an "orthodox conception of Heaven." The claim was not that these are general truths one ought to accept regardless of whether or not Christian theism is true. Because they are justified by the specifics of Christian theism itself, if Christian theism is false there is no reason to believe that either (1) or (4) is true. Of course, either one may in fact be true, but because the authors' own conclusion undercuts any reason to believe that they are, until additional reasons are provided, there is no rational obligation to accept that they are indeed true.

Because Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis start with component beliefs of Christian theism and conclude that Christian theism cannot be true, one would think they were constructing a *reductio*. However, this is clearly not what the authors were attempting. A *reductio* starts with an assumed premise so that a contradiction can be deduced from it. Once the contradiction has been made evident, the argument concludes with the denial of that assumed premise. None of these features are present in the authors' argument. In this case the authors do not demonstrate that either (1) or (4) lead to a contradiction, or that the conjunction of (1) and (4) leads to a contradiction. Moreover, the conclusion of their argument relies on the *truth* of the two premises, not their denial. If one had independent reasons to accept these premises, then this problem would not arise. However, in this case, there are no additional reasons to think that these premises are true. So where, then, does the problem arise? What is the structural defect in the argument? The problem with the argument is that it seeks to prove too much. What began as an argu-

ment attempting to demonstrate that morally significant freedom is not a great good, as some theists claim, it concludes by stating that the universe was not made by a perfect being.

There is a simple way to remedy this problem, and this remedy highlights the problem that Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis's argument causes for Christian theism. If the authors had simply concluded the argument at (6), then one could still accept their justification for premises (1) and (4) because what follows from (6) is not that Christian theism is false, but that particular components of Christian theism are false. Further, the truth of (6) gives one reason to reject any free will defense that includes the belief that not even God could create a world with the greatest goods and no moral evil. Such a conclusion would not entail that any of their premises are false since it may turn out that Christianity is true even if the free will defense fails. All that can be concluded from the failure of the free will defense is that it is not an acceptable solution to the problem of evil. One might then give *different* arguments against other proposed solutions, but the details of those arguments would not produce any immediate problems for the logical structure of this argument.[32]

If (6) is true then there is an obvious difficulty for broad free will defenses. Free will defenses maintain that libertarian freedom is necessary for obtaining some kinds of good and those goods are morally sufficient to warrant any accompanying evils that

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32. Perhaps this is what motivated Mackie to address all the solutions to the problem of evil he could imagine in his "Evil and Omniptoence." The failure of one solution does not entail the falsity of Christian theism. In fact, the failure all proposed solutions would not *entail* that Christian theism is false, though it would certainly create a significant difficulty for it.

come with that libertarian freedom. However, if (6) is true then these central features of free will defenses are false. If God could just create a world with the *greatest* goods and no evil then how is it that libertarian freedom is necessary for the obtaining of some goods? In other words, proponents of free will defenses are obviously going to reject (6), but what makes this problem interesting is that it is not clear that such proponents have the resources available to do so.

*Responding to the Motivational Problem of Heaven*

Because (1) through (3) are all likely to be endorsed by Christian theists, (5) follows from (4), and (6) appears to follow logically from the previous premises, one aiming to reject that conclusion must deny (4). The problem is that (4) is not easily rejected on orthodox conceptions of heaven. In fact, one might think that believing heaven is a domain in which the greatest goods are realized is simply a requirement to even be considered orthodox from the start. If one accepts each of the premises and the logical structure of the argument, then how is the conclusion avoided? The conclusion at (6) can be avoided once one recognizes that there is an ambiguity in one of the key terms in (4) and (5). Once that ambiguity is resolved, the defender of an orthodox view of heaven will be able to deny that (6) follows.

Recall that

> (5) The greatest goods can be realised in a domain in which there is no morally significant freedom

allegedly follows from

> (3) There is no morally significant freedom in Heaven

and

> (4) Heaven is a domain in which the greatest goods are realised.

According to the authors, when one adds to (5) the omnipotence of a perfect being one can conclude,

> (6) A perfect being can just choose to make a domain that contains the greatest goods and no evil.

However, in this argument the authors fail to recognize that a good may be realized in at least two distinct ways. Further, one of these ways, the one the authors employ, is not something a large segment of orthodox Christian theists are likely to accept. What is missing from the argument is a recognition that a good could be directly realized (DR) or it could be conditionally realized (CR). Consider the following:

> (DR): A good G is directly realized by person P at time *t* if and only if P's willing that G be brought about at *t* guarantees that G is brought about at *t*.
>
> (CR) A good G is conditionally realized by person P at time *t* if and only if P's willing that G occur at *t* is conditional on the actions of another agent prior to *t*.

Imagine that you are dining with a friend and you know that your friend recently became unemployed. Even if your friend is financially able to pay for his meal, you are able to *directly realize* the good of paying for your friend's meal, allowing him to use that money for something else. Your paying for the meal does not require any action on the part of your friend. You could even make arrangements to pay for the meal with the wait staff prior to your friend's arrival so he is not even presented with the opportunity to accept or reject your offer to pay. The prior arrangement with the wait staff guarantees that the good is brought about.[33] However, not all goods are realized in this way.

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33. The scenario can be told in such a way that your friend is not offended by your

Imagine further that you own a small business, are in need of another employee, and this same friend is qualified to fill the position. Here you are able to realize the good of your friend having gainful employment. But because this good requires that your friend accepts the offer of employment and actually shows up to work, you are not able to directly realize that good. You are, however, able to *conditionally realize* that good. The good is there to be had because of you, but that good's being realized is conditional on your friend's actions. If he turns down the position, or accepts but never shows up to work, then no matter how greatly you want your friend to be employed the good cannot be brought about.

When determining which understanding of 'realize' the authors' argument utilizes, there are two basic options. The goods spoken of in (4) and (5) could be directly realized or conditionally realized. Consider the first option, that

(4)* Heaven is a domain in which the greatest goods are *directly* realized

and

(5)* The greatest goods can be *directly* realized in a domain in which there is no morally significant freedom.

Because (5)* follows validly from (3) and (4)* the question is whether or not (4)* is true.

According to a large segment of Christian theism, (4)* is false because salvation requires an explicit acceptance by the individual receiving that salvation. It may be true that even though God has made an offer of salvation to all humans, some never accept

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paying for the meal, and thus preventing any good from being realized at all, but since such details are trivial they have been left out.

that offer. Just as the realization of the good of your friend having gainful employment is conditional on the actions of your friend, the realization of the good of entering heaven is conditional on the actions of human agents. In other words, entrance to heaven is conditional upon the individual. Of course, Christian theists that trace their soteriology to John Calvin, among others, would likely accept (4)* since they already believe that the eternal destinies of each person was preordained by God before anyone was created at all. In fact, on Calvinism there simply is no *offer* of salvation at all. The elect are chosen by God to spend eternity with God, being chosen is a sufficient condition for spending eternity with God, and being among the elect is unconditional. However, it is not likely that the authors intend to create a problem for those in the Calvinist tradition since those same individuals would reject the appeal to a libertarian conception of freedom that is used in support of (2). Most Christian theists that are willing to accept a libertarian conception of freedom are going to reject (4)* because it conflicts with the notion that libertarian-style choices are required for certain goods to obtain. If God were able to directly realize goods like that which is found in heaven, then the free will defense would fail because there would be no reason for God to refrain from directly realizing those goods in the first moment of creation. However, Christian libertarians do not believe that it is possible for God to directly realize those goods. The first option, that (4) and (5) rely upon the understanding of a good being directly realized, is not tenable for those that hold to a libertarian conception of freedom.

Now consider the second option, that in (4) and (5) one ought to understand the realization of a good as a conditional realization. On this understanding, (4) becomes

> (4)** Heaven is a domain in which the greatest goods are *conditionally* realized

and (5) becomes

> (5)** The greatest goods can be *conditionally* realized in a domain in which there is no morally significant freedom.

Both (4)** and (5)** are consistent with the libertarianism expressed in (2) because both allow for the goods referred to in (4)** and (5)** to come about as the result of libertarian free choices. Of course, given (3), those choices do not take place in heaven, but even if the choices do not occur in heaven the goods that result from those choices may be realized in heaven. That is, the goods of heaven are conditional upon the choices that one makes prior to entering heaven. However, even if one accepts the truth of (4)** and (5)** the authors are faced with a new problem.

Christian libertarians are wont to deny that God had the ability to create a world in which the greatest goods are realized and yet there is no evil. This idea may even be thought of as *the* central idea to the whole free will defense enterprise. But are Christian libertarians justified in rejecting (6)? After all, if one accepts (4)** and (5)**, and (6) follows from them, then it appears that the Christian libertarian must accept (6) and deal with any of the ramifications its truth has for their philosophical framework. Fortunately for the Christian libertarian, (6) does not actually follow from (4)** and (5)**.

According to (4)** and (5)** there are goods in heaven that are realized because of the free choice of another agent. That is, the goods realized in heaven are only realized because of the choices that the inhabitants of heaven made. But, as (3) tells us, there is no morally significant freedom in heaven, so one must ask *where* these choices are made.[34] One candidate would be the earthly existence that heaven's inhabitants expe-

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34. Here one may wonder why the goods in heaven must be *moral* goods. One, though

rienced prior to entering heaven. Even though there is no morally significant freedom in heaven that does not mean that there was no morally significant freedom on earth. In fact, this is something that free will defenders already believe and have incorporated into their philosophical explanation for the existence of evil. All (4)** and (5)** state is that certain goods are brought about in a place in which there is no morally significant freedom. They do not state that there are no other domains in which there is morally significant freedom or that the goods brought about in the heavenly domain are able to be brought about only because of that morally significant freedom in the earthly domain.

The problem for the authors' argument arises when one considers (6) with this in mind. Since the goods spoken of in (4)** and (5)** require there to be at least one other domain in which there is morally significant freedom, it becomes clear that (6) does not follow. In fact, the rationale for accepting the truth of (4)** and (5)** serves as a reason to think that (6) is false. If the goods in heaven are only able to be conditionally realized, as (4)** and (5)** state, then that alone is sufficient to deny that (6) is true. According to (4)** and (5)**, the domain spoken of in (6) must include heaven and earth since heaven alone does not contain morally significant freedom.[35] If one broadens the domain to include earthy and heavenly existence, then it is easy to see why (6) is false,

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not the only, line of reasoning may go as follows. If hell is place of eternal punishment, and punishment is a moral notion, then one would have good reason to think that heaven is a place of reward, which would also be a moral notion. Thus, the goods of heaven too are moral goods.

35. Douglas Erlandson and Charles Sayward have argued that if one believes the concept of heaven has a necessary connection to another world, then one is able to reject the idea that God could create heaven alone. See their "Is Heaven a Possible World?" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 12 (1981): 55-58.

at least according to Christian libertarians. Christian libertarians deny outright that God could have created the universe in such a way that the greatest goods are able to be brought about in a domain in which there is no evil. Those typically in favor of a free will defense maintain that morally significant freedom is a necessary condition for a moral good being brought about. Even if *some* of those goods are immediately realized in the same domain in which that morally significant action occurs that does not mean that *other* goods are not realized at a later point in which there is no morally significant freedom. In other words, even if a moral good being brought about requires the possibility of evil in the domain in which that moral good is brought about, it may also be true that other moral goods, the conditions for which are satisfied on Earth, are realized in heaven. If one accepts the idea that the goods of heaven are conditioned upon the free choices that one makes prior to entering heaven, then (6) must be false.

According to Christian theism, there are some goods that are realized in heaven that require some choice or action by a human agent on earth. This means that not only is (6) false, but the question about why a perfect being would refrain from creating heaven right away is simply mistaken. God did not bypass the earthly domain because if a heaven of the Christian variety was what God was after, then he had to first create that earthly domain. The motivational problem of heaven falls flat once one sees that the Christian heaven is not a possible world on its own, but connected to some other domain. Because Christian theism maintains that some goods of heaven require earthly free choices, it is logically impossible for God to create the Christian heaven without first creating the earthly domain. Of course there are other heavens that God could have created, but the Christian theist need not bother with those heavens because the Christ-

ian theist is not committed to defending concepts of heaven that are outside the Christian system. When faced with the problem of evil, the Christian theist must make sense of how evil could exist given that Christian system. In doing so all the details of the Christian system ought to be employed—including the details of the Christian account of heaven.

## The Libertarian Problem of Heaven

The libertarian problem of heaven arises when one attempts to affirm the orthodox Christian theist's claim that no one in heaven can do evil and that libertarian freedom is necessary for the obtaining of some good. Whereas the motivational problem assumes that it is possible for God to create heaven directly, a proponent of the libertarian problem is asking a different question altogether. Even if earthly existence is necessary for the Christian heaven to obtain, why would a perfect being refrain from creating humans on earth with the same type of freedom that is had in heaven? If libertarian freedom is necessary for the obtaining of certain goods, as the free will defense maintains, then it looks as if those goods must not be had in heaven. This by itself may not be a problem, but since orthodox accounts of heaven also maintain that heaven is overwhelmingly good, one wonders if the goods associated with libertarian freedom are as good as the free will defense needs them to be.

One can also find this version of the problem of heaven in Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis's argument.[36] The argument begins with the same assumption that orthodox ac-

36. Because the Nagasawi, et al. article appears to be the most complete, it will be the

counts of heaven makes,

(1) Necessarily, there is no evil in heaven.

If it is not even logically possible for someone to commit evil in heaven, then surely

(13) No agent is free to commit evil in heaven.[37]

As it was noted above, orthodox accounts of heaven do not just specify that heaven is essentially free of evil but also that

(14) Necessarily, heaven is overflowing with good.

If heaven is, by necessity, overflowing with good, but there is no freedom to commit evil in heaven, then it appears that one ought to conclude that,

(15) The freedom to commit evil is not a great good.

While Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis do not provide an explicit account of why one should believe that (15) follows from (13) and (14)[38], it appears they are employing a

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focus of the current discussion. However, a similar argument is also presented in Wall, "Heaven and a Wholly Good God," and John Donnelly, "Eschatological Enquiry," *Sophia* 24 (1985): 16-31. Wall concludes that problem forces the Christian theist to abandon attempts to use heaven as a way to remedy the problem of evil. Donnelly, on the other hand, concludes that the Christian theist ought to simply deny that inhabitants of heaven are unable to sin.

37. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis justify this premise by arguing that to be free to commit some action one must first have the power to commit that action. If it is logically impossible for the action to be committed, then no one has the power to commit that action (99-100). While elucidating this step in the argument may be useful in some way, it still relies on the intuition that the logical impossibility of evil being in heaven precludes an agent from having the power to commit evil in heaven. Because it is not clear that this is any more obvious than the claim that the logical impossibility of evil being in heaven precludes one from being free in heaven I have bypassed that step of the argument.

38.The authors simply state that "If morally significant freedom of action really were such an important and weighty good, then surely there would be lots of it in Heaven." "Salvation in Heaven?" 100.

general principle regarding the nature of heaven's goodness along the lines of,

(16) If some x is a great good, then x is had in heaven.

The rationale for (16) is simple. Because heaven is, essentially, overflowing with good then one would expect it to contain *all* that is good. If some good were only a good on earth, but not in heaven, then one could imagine a scenario in which heaven becomes greater than it is. By adding the good that was only had on earth to the heavenly realm, then one has increased the amount of goodness in heaven. But heaven is supposed to be "as good as any place can possibly be,"[39] so this possibility should be ruled out. The only way to rule it out is by arguing that all goods are had in heaven.

If (15) is true, then it turns out that a broad defense to the problem of evil is very likely to fail. If libertarian freedom is not a great good, then it is not likely at all that it will be good enough to justify the amount of kinds of evil that come with having it. When responding to the problem of evil the theist needs to do more than simply argue that a perfect being's creating humans with libertarian freedom is what leads to evil. The theist needs to also argue that this perfect being would be morally justified in creating humans with that freedom. But in order to make the moral case for having libertarian freedom, it appears that libertarian freedom needs to be a great good in of itself. If it is not, then the non-theist appears to be well within his rights to wonder why a perfect being would bother with it at all. Why not, instead, create humans with some type of compatibilist-style freedom that would allow this perfect being the ability to more directly control how freedom is exercised? Here the non-theist is not simply asking why

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39. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis, "Salvation in Heaven?" 100.

would a perfect being bother creating the earthly domain in the first place, which is the focus of the motivational problem of heaven, but instead seeks to know why such a being would refrain from creating humans with a different type of freedom altogether. If libertarian freedom is not a great good then this is going to be a difficult question for the Christian theist to answer. The problem becomes even more pressing when one considers how difficult it is to give a satisfactory response to the problem of evil when employing a type of freedom that is compatible with determinism. It looks as if Christian theists *need* there to be libertarian freedom to explain the problem of evil, but according to this argument, that very freedom is not sufficient to morally justify all of the evils that come with it.

*Responding to the Libertarian Problem of Heaven*

There are at least two types of responses that one can give to diffuse this problem. The first type of response admits that the authors' argument is valid, but denies the truth of (13). That is, this first response rejects what has been described as the Christian orthodox position that agents in heaven are incapable of doing evil. The second type of response attempts to retain Christian orthodox beliefs regarding heaven, but denies the analysis of libertarian freedom that is presented. Once one has a fuller understanding of the type of libertarian freedom that agents in heaven have, the problem disappears.

The first type of response to the libertarian problem of heaven can come in one of two ways. One could argue that those in heaven are able to do evil, and some agents do in

fact exercise that ability. This is the approach that John Donnelly has taken in his paper, "Eschatological Enquiry." According to Donnelly, one need not, in fact ought not, believe that agents in heaven are incapable of doing evil. Of the inhabitants of heaven he writes, "There would still be the possibility of *moral* evil (sin) in heaven, and I would underscore that to forget this is to ignore the crucial lesson of Lucifer and his fallen cohorts."[40] Donnelly takes the account of an angelic fall to be an indicator that human agents in heaven too will have the same ability to do evil. This account has not been adopted because it helps solve the problem at hand, but instead follows naturally from what Donnelly takes to be the Christian background evidence regarding the fallen angels. In fact, "a depiction of heaven as a mode of existence in which the *possibility* of vice has not been eradicated" is entailed by views of heaven that refer to heaven as a "personal, post-mortem life with God."[41]

Even though this account is not motivated by a desire to reject the libertarian problem of heaven, Donnelly notes that it does have that effect. George Wall had previously argued that if it is "logically impossible for a god to have created a world with as much value as this one, but less moral evil," then Christian theists must explain the absence of evil in heaven. If that explanation includes the idea that freedom "is jettisoned in heaven" then one ought to explain why such freedom in not simply jettisoned on earth as well.[42] To this charge Donnelly's account of heaven holds up remarkably

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40. Donnelly, "Eschatological Enquiry," 22.

41. Ibid., 20, 23.

42. Wall, "Heaven and a Wholly Good God," 352.

well. It is simply false that human freedom is ever jettisoned.

While Donnelly's account does adequately deal with the libertarian problem of heaven there are two problems with this solution. First, as noted above[43], orthodox accounts of Christianity do not allow for the existence of evil in heaven. While Donnelly appeals to the story of the angelic fall to justify his account, there are other alternative explanations of that event that do not require such a radical modification of one's understanding of heaven. However, while remaining within the bounds of orthodoxy is something to strive for, there is no guarantee that those orthodox boundaries are right. Pointing out that a response is not orthodox is not sufficient to know that the response fails. The second problem for Donnelly's account goes beyond concerns regarding orthodoxy and instead questions the internal commitments of the view.

Donnelly's solution to the libertarian problem of heaven is considered, and rejected, by Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe because it results in heaven not being a place of ultimate happiness. Pawl and Timpe consider two redeemed individuals, one "experiences the joys of heaven but isn't sure that he will be with God forever" because to use Donnelly's phrase, "heavenly eviction" is a genuine possibility. The other "experiences the same joys but also has an assurance that she will always be with God in heaven." When one considers which of the two will be happier, "it is clear that certainty of eternal life with God brings more happiness with it than the lack of certainty." The first person could have a greater amount of happiness if she were certain that she would never be evicted, but that means that on Donnelly's account heaven "isn't a place of ulti-

43. See page 80 and following.

mate happiness" and so is "no heaven worthy of the name."[44] While Donnelly's solution does resolve the worry, it not only requires a modification of the orthodox view that heaven is essentially free of evil, but also of the orthodox view that it is a place as good as any could possibly be.

This Certainty Argument, if successful, would provide a sufficient reason to deny Donnelly's account. However, even if the Certainty Argument is not successful there are alternatives methods of resolving the libertarian problem of heaven which do not require such a radical departure from orthodox Christian beliefs.[45] Just as one might avoid the problem of evil altogether by denying, for example, God's omniscience, one should first seek to resolve the problem without departing from the classical conception of God. In the same way, if there are alternative methods for resolving the libertarian problem of heaven without such a departure, then those methods should be pursued.

We shall now consider the second way in which one can respond to the libertarian problem of heaven by denying that those in heaven are essentially unable to do evil. The virtue of this response is that it is able to avoid the problem of heavenly eviction that Donnelly had. On this account of heaven, it is true that no one in heaven is essentially unable to sin. However, God was able to ensure via his middle knowledge that those in heaven never do in fact sin. If there are true counterfactuals of freedom that are

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44. Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe "Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven," *Faith and Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (2009), 403.

45. If the Certainty Argument is correct, then there may be difficulties with consistently maintaining that agents in heaven exercise libertarian freedom in refraining from committing some evil action. If agents in heaven are aware of the fact, something the Certainty Argument commits one to, that it is logically impossible to do evil, then it is not clear they are able to exercise their will at all with respect to that action.

known by God, then it might turn out that not even God is able to actualize a world in which all free creatures, or at least worlds with as many free creatures as this one, always choose rightly. He might, however, be able to create a world in which those that happen to do evil on occasion on earth never in fact do evil once in heaven. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis consider this response and state that it does not make "any *addition-al* difficulties for Molinism" but they believe there are "very good independent reasons not to adopt a Molinist version of the free-will defence."[46] It is true that many people also find Molinism problematic for a variety of reasons, but not all philosophers do. For example, some, like Alvin Plantinga, have already incorporated counterfactuals of freedom into their free will defense and so appealing to other aspects of Molinism to explain heavenly freedom is not a problem at all. Those that do rely on some type of Molinist free will defense might even make the case that it is a virtue of their system that the same theory can help explain various parts of Christian theism.

Pawl and Timpe disagree that Molinism can successfully remedy the problem. They argue that this account ultimately fails because it fails to adequately capture what orthodox accounts of heaven mean when speaking of the redeemed in heaven. Accord-ing to Pawl and Timpe, the Molinist account maintains that "those in heaven could retain their libertarian freedom. But on the basis of His middle knowledge, God could make sure that once in heaven, the redeemed will find themselves in circumstances in which they will freely not sin." Inhabitants of heaven will only find themselves in "sin-free circumstances" as opposed to "sin-prone circumstances" because God uses his

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46. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis, "Salvation in Heaven?" 106. (Original emphasis.)

middle knowledge to guide them into the former and never the latter. While Pawl and Timpe agree with Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis that Molinism itself faces serious objections that are sufficient for many to reject it outright, they reject this solution because it faces a dilemma.

On any account, it is either possible for the inhabitants of heaven to do evil or it is not possible. The Molinist response appears to take the first horn of the dilemma, but according to Pawl and Timpe "this solution does not do justice to the heavenly perfection of the redeemed."[47] If what keeps an individual from doing evil is only that God is preventing that person from entering sin-prone circumstances, then it does not appear that the person is actually morally perfect. To illustrate they present the following thought experiment. Suppose that Smith is one that is prone to committing adultery and that Smith's wife knows this. Because she also knows exactly which situations will lead her husband to commit adultery, she simply prevents her husband from ever getting into those circumstances. If one extends the situation, then one can imagine that Smith's wife could also prevent her husband from ever being in circumstances in which he would lie, cheat, or steal. Because of the actions of Smith's wife, Smith may never do anything morally wrong. Even though Smith never does wrong, one must ask if it would be right to consider him to be morally perfect. Pawl and Timpe conclude, rightly, that to consider Smith to be morally perfect is no different than rendering a coward "courageous by being kept away from the front lines."[48] The first horn of the dilemma does not appear to

47. Pawl and Timpe, "Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven," 405.

48. Ibid.

be an appealing choice for the proponent of the Molinist solution. What, then, of the second horn?

The second horn of the dilemma appears to make the Molinist strategy superfluous. If it is not possible for the redeemed in heaven to sin, then it is not clear what work the Molinist solution is actually doing. One must still provide an account of how it is possible for someone to have libertarian freedom in heaven and yet not have open to her the possibility of sinning. The Molinist solution was first presented to explain how one could deny that those in heaven are essentially unable to sin, but the second horn of the dilemma accepts that very claim.[49]

What should one make of the Molinist solution then? Pawl and Timpe are right that the second horn of the dilemma precludes the Molinist solution from doing much work and it does seem unlikely that one would consider Smith to be morally perfected because of the maneuvering of his wife. However, the defender of the Molinist solution might simply argue that the first horn of the dilemma presented by Pawl and Timpe is the wrong way to look at the issue. Pawl and Timpe present the solution as if God is actively working to prevent someone from getting into sin-prone circumstances, but that may not be the best way to understand how those in heaven happen to never do evil. Instead, one may, ironically, adopt Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis's description of the Molinist account. On this reading, "even though all of the creaturely essences that the

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49. It should be noted that if Molinism is true, then it may turn out that it ought to be incorporated into an account of heaven. However, even if it is true, and the redeemed in heaven are essentially unable to sin, then one must still provide an additional account explaining how it is that those in heaven can have libertarian freedom and not be able to sin.

perfect being can instantiate suffer from transworld depravity, at least some of those essences have possible instantiations in which their 'final segments' always go right."[50] On this account God is not actively preventing the denizens of heaven from doing evil, but instead God chose to create a world in which those who go to heaven are also those who will always freely refrain from doing evil while in heaven. It may have turned out that there are possible worlds in which some people make it to heaven, but once in heaven choose to do evil. The actual world, however, is one in which those who enter heaven never do evil. God is no more actively involved in preventing their doing of evil in heaven than he is involved in preventing persons from doing evil on earth.

This version of the Molinist solution solves the libertarian problem of heaven because it allows one to deny the premise that those in heaven are essentially unable to do evil. This solution also avoids the seemingly unorthodox consequence of individuals being evicted from heaven and avoids both horns of the dilemma as presented by Pawl and Timpe. However, it does still commit one to a metaphysical framework that many philosophers are unwilling to accept. Fortunately for such philosophers there is a remaining way one might respond to the problem without requiring such a heavy metaphysical commitment.

The second type of response attempts to retain all of the orthodox Christian beliefs regarding human freedom in heaven. That is, it affirms that those in heaven are

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50. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis, "Salvation in Heaven?" 106. Here the authors are attempting to present the view using Plantinga's nomenclature. While such an account is consistent with Plantinga's free will defense, it would also be consistent with any other free will defense that employs counterfactuals of freedom, regardless of whether it also makes use of a notion like transworld depravity.

essentially unable to do evil. However, advocates of this response deny that the account of libertarian freedom presented in the libertarian problem of heaven is accurate. This is the approach that Sennett takes in his "Is There Freedom in Heaven?" and is also Pawl and Timpe's preferred solution. Though the two accounts are not identical, the overall structure is the same.[51] According to this account, the redeemed in heaven are unable to sin, but this inability is due directly to morally free actions undertaken by the redeemed while on earth.

Sennett argues that the libertarian problem of heaven relies on the mistake of assuming that humans in heaven do indeed have libertarian freedom. Instead, one is able to avoid the problem by "opting for a *compatibilist* or *soft determinist* view of freedom."[52] This solution may initially seem to be doomed to fail if one is attempting to give a free will defense to the problem of evil since such defenses start with the assumption that incompatibilism is true. However, Sennett argues that one can retain the view that incompatibilism is true when considering human actions *on earth*, but is false when considering human actions *in heaven*. On Sennett's view, free will is compatible with an agent's being determined as long as that which determines the agent is brought about by some previously undetermined action. For example, it may be true that most people's character is such that that they are unable to torture children for fun. On Sennett's view, one can go as far as saying that their character determines them to refrain from such an

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51. This approach can also be seen in Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy*, 61-62. However, I will focus on Pawl and Timpe's article since their account is more fully developed.

52. Sennett, "Is There Freedom in Heaven?" 71.

activity. However, if their character was formed by actions that were not determined then it is still appropriate to say that those people freely refrain from torturing the children.[53]

With this understanding of freedom in mind, Sennett has the resources to explain why humans on earth are able to do evil but are not able to do so in heaven. The actions that one takes in heaven are the result of the character that was formed while on earth. The character that was formed while on earth determines that those in heaven do not do evil. This allows one to still maintain that libertarian freedom is important, and thus is compatible with free will defenses, and explains why those in heaven do not do evil.

Pawl and Timpe's account of freedom in heaven is very similar to Sennett's. In heaven the redeemed will not be able to sin because of the character that was formed while on earth. If the character that was formed on earth was formed as a result of undetermined actions, then it is still appropriate to consider the redeemed in heaven to be free. However, Pawl and Timpe argue that one need not believe that all of one's actions in heaven are determined as Sennett does. On their view, "even if one's character determines that one not perform certain actions, it doesn't determine all the actions that one does perform; rather, one's freely chosen moral character underdetermines at least some of one's actions."[54] The character that is formed on earth does not determine *all* actions, but instead just precludes certain ones. To illustrate, Pawl and Timpe note that one need

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53. Sennett notes, in Ibid., footnote 13, that his account does not rely upon Robert Kane's account of libertarianism, but finds it "quite reassuring" that his account is similar to Kane's. For Kane's discussion of this type of libertarianism, see *The Significance of Free Will*, especially 73-78.

54. Pawl and Timpe, "Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven," 410.

not think that whether one sings in a heavenly choir or plays the harp is determined by one's character. Because both are consistent with the essential goodness of heaven, either action may be pursued in a way that is not determined by anything at all. The same is true for any action that is consistent with the essential goodness of heaven and not just seemingly trivial cases like singing in choirs or playing the harp. If one has the option to "pray for all of her descendants, all of her Godchildren, or just one particular friend" then each of these options is available to this person because all are consistent with the nature of heaven. Praying for others is not morally trivial, yet something that one can exercise libertarian freedom in choosing the object of those prayers.

This second type of response has much in its favor. It allows one to retain beliefs common to the Christian system while also avoiding contradictions with a broad free will defense. However, it is not without its detractors. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis consider this response but reject it outright because "it is not plausible to think that there are—or ever have been—*any* people whose characters are such that, when they die, it is logically impossible for them to make evil choices."[55] It appears to be unlikely that the types of actions one engages in while on earth are sufficient to form one's character to such a degree that it becomes logically impossible for that person to ever do evil. Furthermore, if one has freely chosen to do evil, then those actions are going to form one's character in the same manner. But many Christian theists allow for even these types of people to have a "deathbed conversion." If this is a legitimate possibility, then how could Sennet's or Pawl and Timpe's account explain that this person with an evilly

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55. Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis, "Salvation in Heaven?" 110.

formed character is suddenly unable to engage in evil after entering heaven?

Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis are right to point out the difficulty in explaining how it is logically impossible for those in heaven to refrain from sinning based upon the character that was formed while on earth. There is, however, a remedy for this problem. If one has developed a doctrine of purgatory, then the worries about one's character not being sufficient to ensure one never does evil in heaven disappear. Defenders of a free will defense are already committed to the view that God values the libertarian free will of humans. This allows humans to shape their character, which in turn guides their future actions. There appears to be no reason that such a process must cease upon death. If, at death, one's character is not sufficient to ensure that no evil will be done in heaven, then that person's character needs further refinement. Since such refinement is not possible in heaven, given its essential goodness, then there must be some other state of existence that allows for further development of character.[56]

Many Protestant Christians are not willing to accept a doctrine of purgatory because they find a lack of evidence for it in the Biblical text and there is a concern that the credit for one's sanctification would be due to the human individual rather than God. In his rejection of the doctrine, Millard Erickson writes, "the concept of purgatory implies a salvation by works. For humans are thought to atone, at least in part, for their

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56. Such an account of purgatory is developed in Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy*, 51-62 and also in his recently released *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Richard Swinburne also appears to accept that some doctrine of purgatory is useful in accounting for the fate of those with a less than fully developed character. See Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 197-198.

sins. This idea, however, is contrary to many clear teachings of Scripture."[57] For Protestant Christians that reject the doctrine of purgatory altogether, then the second type of response is not available to them. Without such a doctrine it is not likely that Nagasawa, Oppy, and Trakakis's obection can be met. These individuals must either reject the view that heaven is essentially good or refrain from giving a broad free will defense altogether.

There is, however, one remaining problem for those who attempt to use the doctrine of purgatory to supplement their view that those in heaven are determined to do good by their character. George Wall agrees that for advocates of this type of response "purgatory seems an absolute necessity, for few, if any, persons adequately develop the required virtues in this life." The problem, for Wall, is one must then ask why this "life now is not purgatorial in nature." If purgatory is better at instilling the virtues than life on earth is, then "purgatorial existence should have been introduced to begin with."[58]

There are two problems with Wall's objection. First, he misunderstands the doctrine of purgatory itself and second, he assumes that it is possible for God to directly create humans in purgatory. Purgatory is not inherently better at instilling virtues than this life, but instead is a place where character development can continue. It may in fact be better, but that may only be due to the fact that those in purgatory are now fully

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57.Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1186. While Erickson is representative of many Protestant Christians, it is not clear that the doctrine of purgatory itself poses any *additional* problems when it comes to discussions regarding whether salvation is achieved by works or by grace. If one is willing to accept that human agents on earth are in some way responsible for the development of their character, then there seems to be no reason why that same process could not continue after death.

58. Wall, "Heaven and a Wholly Good God," 354.

aware that God exists and have, in at least a limited way, already attempted to orient their life towards God. Doctrines of purgatory do not specify that *all* human agents spend time there. Instead, at death each person is judged according to how his life was lived on earth. Some will enter heaven directly and some will enter hell directly. But some, if not most, are not candidates for either. Individuals who have attained salvation, but do not yet have the character required to spend eternity with God, are sent to purgatory to work out their remaining character flaws. Once one has a proper understanding of purgatory it is easy to see the second problem with Wall's objection. God can no more create people in purgatory directly than he can create people in heaven directly. The good of purgatory, like the good of heaven, is something that can only be conditionally realized.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that there are two distinct problems that arise when one considers the compatibility of orthodox beliefs about heaven and a broad free will defense. The motivational problem arises mostly because of worries about why God would not create humans in heaven directly and the libertarian problem arises because it appears to result in libertarian freedom not being as good as a free will defense needs it to be. The motivational problem rests on the mistaken notion that it is possible for God to create humans in heaven. The libertarian problem can be resolved, but only by either rejecting the belief that heaven is essentially good or by accepting a view of incompatibilism about free will that allows for some actions to be determined by one's character.

# Chapter Four: The Divine Will

The previous two problems that were raised for those giving a broad free will defense focus on aspects of human freedom. The first problem had to do with whether or not classical Christian views of original sin were compatible with the libertarianism that underlies free will defenses. The second problem had to do with whether or not such libertarianism is compatible with views of heaven that maintain those in heaven are unable to sin. While neither problem would result in the failure of a narrow defense to the logical problem of evil, there is the potential for that when it comes to a broad defense. This chapter will attempt to discern whether traditionally held beliefs about the type of will that God has cause problems for the broad defense. If something one believes about God's will is either inconsistent with a broad defense or undercuts one's ability to accept a belief crucial to that defense, then the theist will not be able to employ a broad defense.

## Introductory Issues

Central to any conception of Christian theism is the idea that God is worthy of worship. This worthiness can be spelled out in various ways, but two themes are likely to emerge. One is that God is worthy of worship simply for being who he is. God, as a perfect being, commands the respect and admiration of any other being. The second theme, that follows from the first, is the idea that God is worthy of worship because of

what he does. On traditional Christian theism it is taken to be true that God not only created, and sustains, the universe, but also interacts with it. This interaction with creation produces great goods. This much is settled opinion and, seemingly, quite benign. However, when one considers the type of will that God has problems arise for a broad free will defense. If God is able to act in such great ways, and bring about such great goods through those actions, then why do humans need to have such a different type of will in order for them to bring about goods? This is a pressing question regardless of whether you think that God is free in a compatibilist or libertarian sense. However it is that God is able to bring about great goods without also, given his perfection, being able to bring about evils, why would God create humans differently? If God is free in the compatibilist's sense, and with that freedom is able to bring about great goods, then why are not humans created in the same way? If God has libertarian freedom, then why is it that he is unable to do evil even given that freedom? Further, why would the details of that answer not be applicable to humans with libertarian freedom? This chapter will not attempt to settle the matter as to what type of freedom God has, but instead attempts to determine whether it is possible, or desirable, for humans to have the same type of will as God — whatever type that may be.

Most enquiries into the divine will surface as questions about divine freedom as it relates to whether God's creative activity could have been different than it in fact was. For example, it may seem unobjectionable to say that God could have created a different world than the one he did in fact create and that God exercised his freedom in creating this world. However, there are reasons to think that if God were to create, then he was not free to create any world but this one. This, for example, was famously proposed

by Leibniz. Because "no fact can be real or existent, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason why it is so and not otherwise,"[1] God must have had some sufficient reason for creating this world. But if there was a sufficient reason for its creation, then it is false that God could have simply created another possible world. It looks as if Leibniz's reasoning, based upon the principle of sufficient reason, commits him to affirming God was not free to create at all. There being a sufficient reason means just that. The reason for creating this world, or for creating at all, is sufficient for God doing just that. While the principle of sufficient reason also gives one reason to think this world is the best, it also suggests that God was not free at all with respect to his creative activities.[2]

A different sort of enquiry into God's freedom focuses more specifically on things that are true within a world and which of those things could have been created differently. There appears to be a commonsensical intuition that the world God created could have been different in almost every way imaginable.[3] What is less commonsensical is whether mathematical and logical truths are some of the things that could have

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1. Gottfried Leibniz, *Monadology* (1714), para. 32, in *Leibniz Selections*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).

2. William Rowe argues that Leibniz's attempt to explain how God could remain free given his omnibenevolence and the principle of sufficient reason fails. See William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (New York: Oxford, 2004), chapter two. Robert Adams argues that even if there is a best possible world God need not create it. See Robert Adams, "Must God Create the Best?" *The Philosophical Review* 81, no. 3 (1972): 317-332. Bruce Langtry has recently argued that a being like God could rationally choose to create even if there is no best possible world as long as the world God does create is good enough. See Bruce Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

3. Of course, such an intuition would not sit well with those in agreement with Leibniz.

been different. For example, Descartes is famous for arguing that even the "eternal truths" are what they are because of God's creative activity. Mathematical and logical truths turn out to true only because God created them that way. After God has created the eternal truths then they are necessary, but it was not necessary for God to create those eternal truths. If God had desired to create *different* necessary truths, then it would have been within his power to do so. On this account God has a great deal of freedom because he not only is able to choose which world to create, but he also must choose which eternal truths to create as well.[4]

Some might argue that while God could not have created different logical or mathematical truths, he could have created different moral truths. It may be true that in the actual world God did not command selfishness or prohibit selflessness, but there was nothing preventing him from doing just that. Having such freedom to create moral truths however he saw fit is how we can make sense of the notion of divine freedom.

The complex discussions surrounding the topics above all have at least one thing in common. They all, in one way or another, start with a feature we take to be true about the actual world and then ask whether God was free, with respect to that feature, to create differently. Questions of that sort are important for the Christian theist to answer, and some of them may even have a significant bearing on the logical problem of evil. This chapter, however, seeks to answer a different question altogether. Instead of focus-

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4. I owe this reading of Descartes to Edwin Curley, "Descartes on the Creation of the Eternal Truths," *The Philosophical Review* 93, no. 4 (1984): 569-597. Harry Frankfurt's reading results in a much more radical view of Descartes' voluntarism. On Frankfurt's reading Descartes believed there are no necessary truths at all, that anything is logically possible. Harry Frankfurt, "Descartes on the Creation of the Eternal Truths," *The Philosophical Review* 86, no. 1 (1977): 36-57.

ing on what God did create and ask if he was free to create differently, this chapter will focus on something that God did not create but presumably could have. Namely, why would God refrain from creating humans with a will like his own?

## The Problem of Divine Action

Proponents of a broad free will defense attempt to give a plausible explanation for why there is evil in this world. Such an explanation must include all that one takes to be true in the actual world, which, of course, includes one's beliefs about God. It is in this context that the problem of divine action arises. When faced with the logical problem of evil the Christian philosopher may respond with some version of a free will defense demonstrating that given the existence of morally significant freedom, God and evil are not logically incompatible. To this the atheologian may ask why an omnibenevolent God would bother with creating human beings with such a free will in the first place. After all, is all the evil that comes with it really worth the price? Here the advocate of a free will defense can respond in one of two ways. First, she might advance various pieces of natural theology in an attempt to demonstrate, independent of questions about evil, that there is a God. With that established, she might then argue that the free will defense is the best way to make sense of two seemingly disparate facts about the actual world: the existence of God, established by natural theology, and the existence of evil, established by a brief glance at the morning paper.[5] A second, and more

5. This approach corresponds nicely with Michael Murray's account of approaches to

common, way to respond to the question is by arguing that

> (1) there are some goods that can only be obtained if humans have morally significant freedom,
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> (2) the having of morally significant freedom allows for the occurrence of evil, and
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> (3) the goods that result form having morally significant freedom outweigh the evils that come along with that freedom.[6]

This second response, while perhaps initially plausible, may in fact be untenable because of the dilemma it generates.

Either the goods that are brought about by humans as a result of having morally significant freedom are greater in value than the goods God brings about or they are not. Those committed to traditional accounts of Christian doctrine are going to be reticent to accept any view of man's activities that puts them on a higher moral plane than God. So, the first option is, at the least, unappealing. But, if these goods are less valuable than that which results from God's actions, then an account must be given spelling out why God would not simply create humans with the same type of freedom that he has since that freedom brings about greater goods with no associated evils. A world in which creatures bring about greater goods than they do in the actual world without bringing about any accompanying evils would appear to be vastly superior to the actual world. Without an account as to why a wholly good God would not actualize such a world the atheologian has the resources to reject one of the underlying motivations for the free will

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the problem of evil up to Leibniz. See his "Leibniz on the Problem of Evil."

6. Here one may note that this response would appear to turn the free will defense into a type of greater goods defense. Whether or not such a taxonomic revision of responses to the problem of evil is problematic will not be considered — though at first glance it does not appear to be so.

defense.

*The Problem as a False Dilemma*

There are several ways one might attempt to respond to this problem of divine action. One way is to argue that it is actually a false dilemma. The dilemma above can only be generated if one assumes that the goods brought about via divine or human actions are comparable. God, on traditional accounts of Christianity, is not a super-human as the Greek gods might be characterized. Instead, God is "wholly other" and it is incorrect to even try to compare actions between these two very different kinds of beings.

While it may be true that God is a different kind of being than humans, this response is unsatisfactory for two reasons. One potential worry with this response is that it precludes one from making use of an Anselmian strategy in determining God's various attributes. This strategy starts with an *a priori* understanding of God as a maximally perfect being. This means that God possesses the set of all the great-making properties and each property is had to the greatest degree possible. So, for example, because it is intrinsically better to possess power than to not, God must have that property to the greatest degree. However, if God and humans are such different kinds of beings that their actions are incomparable, then it is highly unlikely that one will be able to use this Anselmian strategy for identifying God's attributes. One would still be able to begin with a conception of God as the greatest-conceivable being but could not draw anything from that conception regarding God's specific attributes. Those in the Anselmian tradition must first look at what they take to be great-making properties in humans and then

infer that they would be great-making for God as well. If the two beings are so fundamentally different that they cannot be compared, then there is no guarantee that a great-making property in one would be so in the other.

There is a second objection to this response that is not limited to those Christians in the Anselmian tradition. If God and humans are indeed too different to compare, then it is inaccurate to say that God's actions are *better* than human actions. If the two are incomparable then we are left with only being able to say that God's actions are different from our own, but we cannot say they are better. This is only marginally better than saying they are worse than our actions. If we are unable to say that God's actions are better than our own, then are also unable to say God's actions are praiseworthy. If we have independent reasons for thinking that God is wholly good and cannot do wrong, then we could still say God praiseworthy but this would be closer to praising a child for being intelligent than praising a child for doing the laundry without being asked. The Christian tradition, however, is full of examples of God being praised for who he is and for what he has done.[7]

*Rejecting God's Essential Moral Perfection*

A second way the proponent of a broad free will defense can avoid the problem above is to reject one or more of the beliefs that lead to the dilemma. That is, one might

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7. For this reason Bergmann & Cover focus on divine thankfulness instead of divine praiseworthiness when examining whether either is appropriately attributed to an essentially perfect being. Michael Bergmann and J. A. Cover "Divine Responsibility Without Divine Freedom," *Faith and Philosophy* 23, no. 4 (2006).

reject or modify one or more of the attributes traditionally ascribed to God. It is true that God's moral perfection, moral praiseworthiness, and moral freedom are well-entrenched within the Chrisitan tradition, but one might attempt to modify one or more of these in a way that is consistent with much of that tradition, yet avoids the problem above. This is precisely what Theodore Guleserian has tried to do by rejecting the idea that God is essentially morally perfect.[8] Human creatures are obviously not essentially morally perfect, but if it turns out that God is not either, then one might respond to the above dilemma by arguing that the goods brought about by divine and human agents are actually of the same type because they issue from the same type of will.

In his paper "Divine Freedom and the Problem of Evil" Guleserian attempts to "render the Free Will Defense more plausible" by arguing that one ought to reject the idea that it is a greater excellence for God to essentially conform to the moral law than to do so contingently.[9] If traditional "Anselmian" accounts of divinity are right and it is better for God to have an essentially perfect will (PW), "then it should be true for *any* moral agent who can have essential PW that it would be a greater excellence for that agent to have PW essentially than to have it freely and hence contingently."[10] Further, if God is omnipotent, then he has the ability to create humans with essential PW. Because

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8. As will be seen below, Guleserian does *not* reject the idea that God is morally perfect but only that he is so essentially. His strategy is different from those that attempt to resolve the problem of evil by simply denying altogether one or more of the attributes regularly ascribed to God. Guleserian is rejecting the traditional understanding of God's perfection, but is not rejecting the idea altogether.

9. Theodore Guleserian, "Divine Freedom and the Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 17, no. 3 (2000): 348.

10. Ibid., 350. (Original emphasis.)

the traditionalist believes both that it is better for God to have essential PW and that God is omnipotent, she is committed to believing that God could create humans with essential PW and that it would be better for him to do so.[11] Not only would it be better for God to create such a world, it turns out that his ability to do so undercuts the primary reason proponents of free will defenses give for why God would choose to create a world with morally significant freedom rather than one without. If Guleserian is correct, God could have created a world in which all moral agents have the same type of will that God has, resulting in the complete lack of evils associated with the greatly inferior type of will moral agents actually do have. However, if it is false that having essential PW is greater than having it contingently, then the free will defense stands on a much greater footing. The reason God would create moral agents with morally significant freedom is because the goods that go along with having a genuinely free will are sufficiently great to justify the evils that may come along with it.

Guleserian begins by discussing the necessary features for a being to be morally perfect. He argues that there are at least two distinct concepts at work in the notion of moral perfection. First, a morally perfect being must have PW. Any agent with this property will always will to conform to the moral law in any situation where the agent recognizes both that the moral order calls for a particular action and that the agent has

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11. I will use 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' instead of Guleserian's 'Anselmian' and 'nonAnselmian' because Guleserian's conclusion is consistent with Anselmian accounts of divinity. If one understands, as Guleserian does, "Anselmian" accounts of divinity to maintain that for any property p, if it is a greater excellence for God to have p than to not, then God does indeed have p, then Guleserian's account is still Anselmian. The difference is that on the non-traditional view having PW contingently is a greater excellence than having it essentially whereas the traditional view maintains the opposite.

the power to do that action. This alone is not sufficient for moral perfection because there is no guarantee that the agent will in fact act in accordance with the moral order. One might will to conform to the law but not have the requisite knowledge to ensure she actually does conform to it. What is needed for moral perfection, in addition to PW, is "perfect conformance of outward action with the moral law" (PC). Any agent with this property will always act in accordance to the moral law any time the agent has the power to do so. This alone is not sufficient for moral perfection either because it does not preclude the possibility that one might always intend to break the moral law but because of some cognitive defect, for example, this agent always finds himself conforming to it. However, if an agent has both PW and PC, then together those entail "perfect intentional conformance" (PIC).[12] Any agent with PIC will always intend to conform to the moral law and will always actual do so. That is, a being with PIC will be morally perfect.

That Christian theists take God to have PIC is obvious, even for Guleserian. The question is whether God has PIC essentially or contingently. Because both PW and PC have essential and contingent counterparts, any being that has either contingently will also have PIC contingently. According to Guleserian, the traditional understanding of God has maintained that God has PIC essentially. As will be shown momentarily, Guleserian does not believe that God's having PIC essentially would mean that created beings could have it too. However, for Guleserian to generate the problem for a free will defense he does not need it to be the case that God could create creatures with essential

12. Ibid., 348-349.

PIC. Created beings having contingent PIC is enough. If God could have created creatures with PIC, even contingently, then he could have created a world in which every agent in that world always conforms to the moral law because they always intend to do so. In that world one would have far greater beings than what is found in this world and there would be no evil of the sort we find in this one. But why, exactly, does Guleserian think it's true that a created being could have both PW and PC?

First, it should be noted that even though Guleserian believes God can create other beings with essential PW, that does *not* commit him to the idea that God can create other perfect beings. Guleserian admits that a "perfect being has the attribute of necessary independent existence—a property which no *created* being could have" but nothing in his argument requires the creation of other perfect beings.[13] In fact, while Guleserian is optimistic about God's ability to create beings that are both omnipotent and omniscient, provided that God is also able to exercise something like middle knowledge to ensure that any such created being would always conform to his own will, he restricts the discussion to essentially finite creatures, "who due to their essential finitude cannot be omnipotent and cannot be omniscient." The essentially finite creatures under consideration are not perfect but are able to have essential PW. They are not, however, capable of having essential PC because for any finite being there "are some possible worlds in which that person is in a situation S in which the moral law requires that person to do a certain act A, but in which she does not believe that she is in S or does

13. Ibid., 351. (Original emphasis.)

not believe that the moral law requires her to do A in S."[14] In such a situation this person refrains from doing A and thus does not perfectly conform to the moral law. If this person had essential PC then such a world would be impossible.

Even though created beings cannot have essential PC, the same sort of argument does not apply to considerations of created beings having essential PW. Why, then, think that God could create creatures with essential PW? The basic argument for this starts with the traditionalist's assumption that "It is really possible for a divine being to have moral and factual beliefs that metaphysically necessitate its moral volitions." If one accepts this assumption then "there seems to be no reason to suppose that the same may not be true of a creature." Here one might object that a finite creature could not have essential PW because even if he wanted to act in accordance with the moral law, without omniscience there may be times that he was ignorant of what the moral law actually requires or, without omnipotence, be unable to comply with it. Guleserian considers, and rejects, this objection. Creatures with essential PW do not need to have omnipotence or omniscience. All that is required are beliefs sufficient to "metaphysically determine or necessitate one's acts of will about moral matters" and the power required to act as the moral law requires.[15] This allows the range of beliefs and the range of power to fall short of omniscience and omnipotence while retaining essential PW. However, this does not mean that such an agent would always act in conformance with the moral law. There may still be situations in which the agent fails to have the correct

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

moral beliefs about some situation he finds himself in. All essential PW states is that when the agent is in a moral situation, and believes himself to be in one, the agent always wills to act rightly in that situation.

God's ability to create creatures with essential PW creates a problem for a broad free will defense because there is no reason to think God could not also give such creatures the requisite moral and factual knowledge that, along with their perfect will, necessitates they always conform to the moral law. The creatures would have contingent PC and essential PW, which together entail PIC. If this is correct, then "God could have avoided the intentional wrongdoing in this world of morally free creatures by actualizing instead a world of *better* creatures." This undercuts one's ability to explain actual evil by referencing the goods associated with the libertarian freedom found in free will defenses. God's inability to create free creatures that always do what is right is irrelevant because God could have instead created "these more excellent nonfree creatures having PW."[16] If one takes seriously the idea that "moral freedom is an excellence so great that even a world of creatures who *by nature* conform perfectly to the moral law would not be greater than our world, because of our moral freedom" then the free will defense remains plausible.[17] This, however, requires that traditionalists explain why this type of moral freedom is a great good for created beings but not a great good for God.

What should we make of this type of argument? Does Guleserian's argument succeed in resolving the initial worry raised above? I will argue, first, that there are

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16. Ibid., 353-354.

17. Ibid., 363.

good reasons to reject his conclusion because it depends on the assumption that there is a best possible world and that God must create it. I will also demonstrate that Guleserian's argument is useful in providing an account of why the worry raised above is misguided because it assumes that God and created creatures are able to possess the same type of will.

The first way one might object to this type of argument is by denying that a perfect being like God must actualize a world with creatures that have essential PW and contingent PC, even if it turns out that such a world is better than a world like this one where creatures have free PW. While many take it to be the case that God must always do what is best, Robert Adams has given an argument to the contrary. According to Adams, it would not be wrong for God to create the world he did create, even if another much better would could have been created in its place. As long as none of the creatures in the created world would exist in the better world, none are so miserable in the created world that it would be better had they not existed, and every creature in the created world is at least as happy overall as it would have been in any other possible world in which it exists, then it is false to say that God has wronged anyone in creating less than the best.[18]

Guleserian considers this type of objection but finds it lacking because, primarily, in creating a world God must evaluate the "overall moral character" of a world and not simply the "amount of moral good and moral evil" in that world as it relates to some other possible world that God could create. Even if two worlds contain the same overall

18. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?" 320.

amount of moral good "it would be *morally wrong*" for God to choose to create a world with moral monsters if the alternative available to God does not create such morally deficient beings.[19] Guleserian justifies this with a thought experiment where two universes, U1 and U2, both contain an infinite number of people. In U1 every person commits a great moral evil but also performs just enough morally right actions to outweigh that evil. In U2 every person also commit a moral evil, but it is of the much more mundane variety, like lying about one's weight. In U2, however, the goods each person performs greatly outweighs the evils they committed, but because in each world there is an infinite number of people the overall amount of good and evil is the same. Who, Guleserian asks "would consider herself justified in choosing to create U1 instead of U2, if the choice were hers?"[20]

At first there is an intutive appeal to Guleserian's argument but it's not clear that this helps his case against Adams. First, in order for this thought experiment to serve as grounds for rejecting this Adams-style objection, we must specify that the beings in U1 and U2 are entirely different beings. This is required for two reasons. First, one should recall that the creatures that could have essential PW are of a different sort altogether from the free creatures God did create. Second, the first of Adams's conditions is that none of the beings in the less-than-best possible world exist in the best possible world. The choice is not simply between creating U1or U2, the only difference between the two being the kinds of evil in each. Instead, the choice is between creating U1 with one

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19. Guleserian, "Divine Freedom and the Problem of Evil," 360. (Original emphasis.)
20. Ibid., 359.

type of creature that does great moral wrong and creating U2 with an entirely different type of creature that does moral wrong but not egregiously so.

With this in mind, we can see how the defender of the objection is going to respond. In order to say it would be morally wrong for God to create U1 instead of U2 one must specify who is being wronged. The creatures in U1 cannot have been wronged by God creating U1 instead of U2 because they do not exist at all in U2. As long as they are, on the whole, better off having been created than not, then God could not have wronged them for creating U1. If those in U1 have no complaint against God, then perhaps one could say the creatures in U2 have been wronged because they were not created when they could have been. This idea Adams explicitly rejects because "The moral community consists of actual beings. It is they who have actual rights, and it is to them that there are actual obligations. A merely possible being cannot be (actually) wronged or treated unkindly."[21] If those in U1 were not wronged and neither were those in U2, then it is not clear what would make it the case that choosing U1 over U2 is morally wrong.

This type of response does seem able to adequately undercut Guleserian's argument, but it is not without weaknesses of its own. For example, William Rowe has argued that Adams's contention that God does not have to create only demonstrates that it would not be *morally* wrong for God to create less than the best, not that he could actually do so. Even if it is morally acceptable to create less than the best it remains true that "one being may be morally better than another even though it is not better by virtue

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21. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?" 319.

of the performance of some *obligation* that the other failed to perform. It may be morally better by virtue of performing some *supererogatory* act—a good act beyond the call of duty—that the other being could have but did not perform."[22] From the fact that one being does something morally better than a second it does not follow that the second did something morally wrong. This does not mean that a perfect being could refrain from creating the best, it only suggests that the reason why a perfect being like God must create the best may not be moral in nature. In fact, according to Rowe, the principle reason why God must create the best is that if he did not, it would be possible for there to be a being that is morally better.[23] The traditional conception of God, however, is that God is morally perfect which would make it logically impossible for there to be a being morally better.

A full discussion of whether God must create the best is beyond the scope of this project, but even with that aside one is able to see that Guleserian's argument is susceptible in a second way. It may turn out that God does not have to create the best possible world simply because there is no best possible world. Plantinga, for example, has argued that:

> Just as there is no greatest prime number, so perhaps there is no best of all possible worlds. Perhaps for any world you mention, replete with dancing girls and deliriously happy sentient creatures, there is an even better world, containing even more dancing girls and deliriously happy sentient creatures. If so, it seems reasonable to think that the second possible world is better than the first. But then it follows that for any possible world W there is a better world W' , in which case there just isn't any such thing as the best of all possible worlds.[24]

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22. Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* 82. (Original emphasis.)

23. Ibid., 97.

Bruce Langtry has provided an account of what conditions would need to be satisfied for a perfect being like God to create if faced with an infinite range of possible worlds. This account cannot simply state that God chooses the best because the infinite number of worlds ensures that whatever world God chooses to create there will be another even better. Langtry argues that if God were faced with an infinite range of good possible worlds he ought to simply "satisfice." That is, God ought to "select some good state of affairs even though [he] could select a better one."[25] Rowe's contention that God's failing to create the best possible world, because there is no best, results in there being a way for God to have acted better fails in situations in which the following is true.

> (4) For every world that could have been selected there is a better one that could have been selected.
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> (5) The world that was in fact selected is good enough relative to the foregoing circumstances.
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> (6) Failure to select any world would have led to an outcome that is far inferior to each of the world which is good enough.[26]

In this context what Guleserian must show is that a world with creatures like what we find in the actual world does not satisfy the second of Langtry's three conditions.

But such a denial does not seem to be available to Guleserian because he actually believes that creatures with free PW are more excellent than those with essential PW, and that creatures in this world do indeed have free PW. From the fact that God's having essential PW is a greater excellence than his having free PW, as traditionalists maintain,

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24. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 61.

25. Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil*, 78.

26. Ibid., 75.

and from the fact that God could create creatures with essential PW, as Guleserian maintains, it does not follow that a world with creatures having mere free PW is not a world that is good enough. In other words, the ability for better creatures to be created does not mean that the creatures actually created are worse off than if they were the only type of creatures God could create. If I purchased a valuable painting from a prominent local artist that painting's value would not be diminished simply by a friend pointing out I had the ability to purchase a much more valuable painting from an historically important artist.

What we have seen is that even if one accepts Guleserian's argument that God could have created creatures with essential PW, and if one accepts Guleserian's contention that traditionalists are committed to the view that such creatures would be more excellent than creatures with free PW, it does not follow that God would have to create a world with such creatures. This means that one can still appeal to the various features found in a free will defense to explain the existence of actual evils. As long as there is reason to think that the world God actually created is good enough, then the traditionalist's belief that God has, essentially, a perfect will cannot serve as grounds to reject the free will defense. While this failure of Guleserian's account means that there is no immediate conflict with a broad defense and the traditionalist's account of God, it also means we are still without an answer to the initial question raised above. If the goods brought about by God are so much greater than the goods brought about by humans, then why would God refrain from creating us with that same type of will?

*God's Morally Superior Acts of Will*

If God does not have to create the best possible world, either because there is not one or for some other reason, then Guleserian's solution to the problem of divine action will have been undercut. So what are we to make of the problem of divine action? Why would human agents be created with an inferior will, compared to God's, especially since God is able to bring about even greater goods without any accompanying evils? In answering this problem it will be helpful to explain a second way that Guleserian's argument fails. Guleserian wrongly assumes that a created being with the same type of will as God would be better than one with a lesser type of will. The rationale for rejecting that idea as found in Guleserian's argument can in turn be used to resolve our initial worry.

Recall that Guleserian argued that if God's having an essentially perfect will is a greater excellence than having a perfect will only contingently, "then it should be true for *any* moral agent who can have essential PW that it would be a greater excellence for that agent to have PW essentially than to have it freely and hence contingently."[27] Central to Guleserian's defense of the idea that created creatures are capable of having PW essentially is the belief that God's actions are metaphysically necessitated by his moral and factual beliefs. He writes, "Surely, then, on the traditionalist assumption that there is *one* individual whose moral volitions are metaphysically necessitated by his beliefs, viz., God, and therefore that it is *possible* for moral and factual beliefs to metaphysically necessitate moral volitions. Further, it is possible, perhaps even plausible,

27. Guleserian, "Divine Freedom and the Problem of Evil," 350.

that God "could create finite spirits, who possess *essentially* the property of always willing in accordance with their moral beliefs."[28] This remains possible even if one does not believe God could create creatures with attributes like omniscience because even finite creatures can be given the requisite moral beliefs to metaphysically determine their acts of will.

What are we to make of this argument? There appears to be two deficiencies in this account, the second building upon the first. First, it is not clear that God's acts of will are metaphysically necessitated by his beliefs, but by his nature instead. Second, if we deny the assumption that beliefs metaphysically necessitate God's acts of will then we have no reason to accept the claim that God could create creatures that have their acts of will metaphysically necessitated by their beliefs. For creatures to have a perfect will, like God's, they would have to be created with a perfect nature. But there are reasons, consistent with a broad defense, to think a world with these sorts of creatures would not be as morally good as a world where creatures do not have a perfect will.

The traditionalist's assumption that God is incapable of acting contrary to the moral law does not require one to accept that God's actions are determined by his beliefs. In fact, there are reasons to think this is not the case.[29] If God's beliefs necessitate his acts of will then one immediately wonders what it is that God's beliefs are

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28. Ibid., 352. (Original emphasis.)

29. The critique that follows does not explicitly take into account the possibility that God does not have beliefs at all, though such a critique would likely be devastating. If God has no beliefs then one will have trouble specifying how they could determine his acts of will. For development of the idea that God has no beliefs see, William Alston, "Does God Have Beliefs?" *Religious Studies* 22 (1986): 287-306. The critique I offer, however, may be compatible with this conception of divine knowledge.

*about*. It is likely that one will answer that God's beliefs are about the moral order, especially since it is those beliefs that allegedly necessitate his actions. But we now need to know what sort of thing the moral order is. Is it something that is external to God himself or simply created by God? Here a similar worry arises as those that are associated with what is commonly referred to as Euthyphro's Dilemma. Does God believe what he does about the moral order because such beliefs are appropriate to a perfect being or is it the beliefs of a perfect being that causes the moral order to be what it is? Taking the second horn of this dilemma is untenable. Not only does it commit one to a sort of divine voluntarism about morality that results in the moral order being entirely arbitrary, but in this context it may not even be logically coherent. This view maintains that it is God's beliefs about the moral order that necessitates his acts of will. But on voluntarism it is God's very act of will that is supposed to create that moral order. If there is no moral order then there can be no beliefs about it. But those very beliefs are what are said to necessitate his moral acts.[30] Taking the first horn of the dilemma fares no better, especially for the traditionalist, because it seems to result in the moral order being something distinct from God himself.

This dilemma is well known to anyone who ascribes to a divine command theory of ethics and some of the resources for responding to that problem will help elucidate why it is is a mistake to say God's acts of will are necessitated by his beliefs.

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30. This should not be read as a general critique of those that believe God creates the moral order. For a recent defense of that claim see, T. J. Mawson, "God's Creation of Morality," *Religious Studies* 38, no. 1 (2002): 1-25. This is only to be a problem for those that say God's beliefs necessitate his acts of will and are also voluntarists about the moral order.

Those resources can then be employed to solve our initial problem of divine action. Robert Adams has argued that the way we ought to think about morality as consisting in the commands of a loving God. On this account one need not worry about the problem of arbitrariness because "it is only the commands of a definitively good God, who, for example, is not cruel but loving that are a good candidate for the role of defining moral obligation."[31] This also negates worries about the moral order coming from some source not intimately connected with God because the moral order is to be identified with the commands of God. What is important in this context is that it is ultimately the nature of God, and not his beliefs, that form the moral order. When asking what necessitates God's acts of will it may be correct to say it is his beliefs, but that would not tell the complete story. Those beliefs can only necessitate God's acts of will because of the nature God has. This means that if one wants to maintain the idea that God could create creatures with the same type of will he has, then those creatures will not only need beliefs sufficient to determine their actions but also a nature that determines those beliefs.

What would it mean for a finite creature to have her acts of will determined in such a way? If a finite agent's actions are determined by her nature, using her beliefs, the choosing originates with God and not with that agent. A morally salient difference between this happening in God and this happening in some creature is that the finite agent would not have the same grounding for her moral and factual beliefs that God does. As is commonly understood, a finite agent chooses based upon her moral and

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31. Robert Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 250.

factual beliefs. Sometimes she may act with a great deal of prudence and make the correct decision that perfectly complies with the moral law, but there may also be times when she acts irrationally and acts contrary to the moral law. Still yet, there may be other times that she *intends* to make the correct decision, but actually makes the wrong one or is unable to follow through with her intention. In any of these scenarios, it is the agent that makes her own decision and no one else. She chooses freely without reliance on her beliefs or intentions being determined by someone or something else.

In order to ensure that the agent always makes the correct choice she would need to have essential PW coupled with enough knowledge to know what the correct decision is and enough power to follow through with that decision. Guleserian argues that this is a genuine possibility; "God can create finite spirits who possess *essentially* the capacity to think and to believe, and who possess *essentially* the capacity to will and to form intentions regarding moral acts, just as God possesses."[32] But notice that it is God that creates in the agent the essential capacity to think, believe, will, and form intentions. The agent does not have the possibility to choose incorrectly, but, unlike God, it is *not* due to the agent's own nature. Instead it is due to the active role that God played in necessitating that the agent have the nature, beliefs, and powers that she has. When asked why an agent with an essentially perfect will always acts in accordance with the moral law one could rightly reply that it is because of her perfect will, moral and factual knowledge, and power to carry out what ought to be done. But that is not the whole story. One must also ask why she has that perfect will, why she has that knowledge, and

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32. Guleserian, "Divine Freedom and the Problem of Evil," 352. (Original emphasis.)

why she has that power. In this case the only reason she has that power is because God created her with it. Had God chosen to create this agent without such capacities, then there is no guarantee she would have acted rightly. However, when one asks why God always acts in accordance with the moral law the whole story can be told without relying on anything external to God. Perfect intentional conformance to the moral law simply follows from his perfection. Unlike finite creatures, a perfect being's actions trace back to that being alone.

While it may be possible for God to create creatures that have a perfect will essentially, the above discussion should raise questions about whether it would be better for God to create a world with these creatures than not to do so. Guleserian argued that if the traditionalist is correct to say that God's having a morally perfect will essentially is a greater excellence than his having it contingently, then it would be greater for all moral agents too. Further, if God were able to create creatures with a perfect will essentially, that he would be obligated to do so. We saw, however, that Guleserian's argument for this second contention does not justify the claim that God would be obligated to create such creatures, and we saw that the traditionalist's assumption about God having a perfect will essentially does not carry over to other agents. With this in mind, the solution to our initial problem is straightforward. The proponent of a broad free will defense can maintain the commonly held view that the goods that result from God's actions are greater than those that result from human actions. When asked why God would refrain from simply creating humans with the same type of will that he has, we now have the resources to show that such a creature is simply not able to be created. When God brings about moral goods it is only because of the type of being that God is. The moral

valuation of such goods starts and stops with the person of God. But that cannot be said of any created being. Regardless of whether God is able to create creatures with a perfect will essentially, the value of their moral acts of will eventually traces to God. When agents like those found in the actual world choose to do the good, it is not simply because God created them with requisite capacities that determine they choose to do the good. Instead, they do so because of their own free will, which also means they are able to choose to do evil instead. And this, of course, is exactly what the proponent of a broad free will defense believes.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen various reasons to think that it would be appropriate for God to create humans with a distinctly different type of will than his own. Even if God could create humans with the same type of will as his own it does not follow that God must. First, God may have no obligation at all to create the best possible world. Second, there are reasons to think that there simply is no best possible world. If there is not, then as long as this world is good enough, then it does not matter that there may be another possible world where creatures have a better type of freedom than what is had in this world. On this scenario, no matter what world God actually creates there will always be a better world, in fact an infinite number of better worlds that God could have created. Finally, reasons were given that demonstrate a world where creatures have the same type of will as God would be less desirable than the actual world. In the actual world when humans do right their doing so traces to their free will. However, in worlds

in which creatures have perfect wills that determine their actions any moral goods that result from those actions would ultimately trace to God's will and not that creature's. As a result, adherents to traditional conceptions of divine will can retain those traditional conceptions while, at the same time, making use of all the resources found in a broad free will defense.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

Dealing with evil is something that falls to each of us. Whether we struggle to eliminate the actual evils we find in the world around us or wrestle with how to explain its occurrence at all, all will be confronted with its reality at some point or another. The theoretical, and existential, problems that arise can be particularly troubling for Christian theists since, according to that worldview, there is a powerful and wholly good being that would presumably prevent any of these evils whenever he could. It is that common intuition that serves as justification for many non-theists' belief that there is no God at all. Further, that common intuition can also be used to demonstrate that non-belief is not only rationally acceptable, but also that belief in God is rationally unacceptable. It is this latter challenge that I have attempted to address in the course of this dissertation.

We have seen that the theist may respond to the charge that evil's existence precludes God's, and vice versa, in a variety of ways. One may initially attempt to simply rebut the argument in favor of the charge. This response, if successful, would demonstrate that there is no reason to think that God and evil cannot coexist, but it is unlikely to be found satisfactory by the non-theist for the very same reason that arguments demonstrating the failure of arguments for God's existence rarely trouble committed theists. Even in light of the failure of an argument *for* P one rarely concludes that P is false. Instead one often defaults to the previously held belief and searches for a new argument that would substantiate P, or simply remains agnostic with respect to P. What

makes the free will defense so powerful is that it is not simply a negative argument showing arguments for P fail, but instead is a positive argument for ~ P.[1] However, even among non-theists who agree the free will defense succeeds, we still find those skeptical about whether there would be evil given the existence of God.

I have attempted to account for this holdout position by noting that the free will defense, as traditionally construed, can appear to be nothing more than sophistry. Because the defense does not require its details to be true in the actual world, it can seem disingenuous to resolve the theoretical problem of evil in such a detached manner. If, however, one's response includes only beliefs that are taken be true in the actual world, then it is more likely the response will allay the non-theist's worries. A defense that is limited to only these beliefs is what I have called a broad defense. Imagine the difference between a defendant who avoids prison because of a technicality and one who avoids prison because the defense counsel provided a persuasive alibi. The result in both instances is the same, but it is much more likely the concerned parties will be more unsatisfied with the former than they are with the latter. Just as the provision of an alibi does not guarantee non-guilt, neither does the provision of a broad defense. Still, such a provision is more persuasive than getting off on a technicality, legal or philosophical.

It is with this in mind that three beliefs central to Christian theism were examined: beliefs about original sin, beliefs about freedom in heaven, and beliefs about God's own will. Various concerns were raised about whether a broad free will defense is indeed consistent with aspects of these central beliefs, and ways to address those con-

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1. In the final instance, let 'P' stand for the claim that God and evil are logically incompatible.

cerns were considered. However, there is certainly more work to be done.

Because a broad defense expects consistency with *all* of one's beliefs, and not just one's religious beliefs, the project should also be expanded to include one's philosophical beliefs that may, upon examination, turn out to be in tension with a broad defense. For example, Derk Pereboom argues that while event-causal libertarianism is able to be squared with a scientific understanding of causation, it is not able to provide the desiderata libertarians typically want — the type of control over our actions that is sufficient for moral responsibility. However, agent-causal libertarianism would provide that control, but does not comport well with the empirical data concerning human agency.[2] If Pereboom is correct, then there are philosophical reasons to deny event-causal libertarianism and scientific reasons to deny agent-causal libertarianism. It is not clear what sort of libertarianism is left that could provide the sort of freedom needed for a broad defense.

The fact that there are countless beliefs that might cause difficulties for a broad defense does not mean that one must first examine each of those beliefs prior to offering the defense as a solution. The narrow free will defender can simply dismiss that task as unessential since he is only concerned with the logical possibility that God and evil coexist. On the other hand, the broad free will defender must be willing to examine those beliefs as possible conflicts arise. In what follows I will provide a sketch of just one additional example of a religious belief that may generate tension for proponents of

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2. Derk Pereboom, *Living Without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), see especially chapters two and three. John Searle makes a similar scientific argument against libertarianism in John Searle, *Minds, Brians and Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

a free will defense and, finally, illustrate how the distinction between broad and narrow defenses can be applied to other alleged problems for Christian theism.

*A Final Doctrinal Worry*

Catholic and Protestant Christians tend to agree that at Jesus' birth his mother, Mary, was still a virgin. In many respects, however, that is where the similarities end. According to Roman Catholic teaching, Mary did not only give birth to Jesus while still herself a virgin, but was "from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin."[3] This belief in the sinlessness of Mary may generate two distinct problems for a broad defense.

The first potential worry is that one may wonder why Mary was able to remain free from sin her entire life, but other human agents are not able to do so. As we have seen, central to free will defenses is the idea that in order for moral goods to come about, God had to create a world in which it is also possible for moral evils to come about. But, when it comes to Mary, it looks as if it was either not possible for her to do moral evil, or that it was possible, but God intervened to prevent that possibility from becoming actual. Whichever route one takes, problems arise. If it was not possible for Mary to do evil then why was it not possible for God to create all human agents with the same type of will that Mary had? This worry is distinct from that raised in chapter four

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3. Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabillis Deus* (1854): DS 2803, cited in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 491.

above because in this scenario all the agents in question are human. If it was possible for Mary to sin, but God intervened, then why would God refrain from intervening every time anyone was about to do evil?

A second problem that arises is more specifically related to Plantinga's free will defense and its use of the concept of transworld depravity.[4] According to Plantinga, an individual is transworld depraved if it turns out that any world in which that person exists with morally significant freedom is a world where that person goes wrong with respect to at least one significantly free action. What enables Plantinga's defense to succeed is the possibility that every creaturely essence suffers from transworld depravity. But if Mary was actually sinless then she clearly does not actually suffer from transworld depravity and so the defense, broadly construed, would fail. This is only a problem for a Plantinga-style defense in general if Mary's not actually being transworld depraved means that it is impossible for her to be so depraved. If it remains possible, then the narrow defense may still succeed. Whether this fallback position would be rationally persuasive is unclear.

Much more can be said about this problem, including potential responses by adherents to the sinlessness of Mary. However, the issue is raised simply as a demonstration that what one initially finds to be unrelated to a free will defense may turn out to be incompatible with it, broadly construed. The burden of the broad free will defender is to examine these sorts of beliefs whenever found.

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4. I would like to thank Richard Davis for bringing this to my attention.

*Expanding the Strategy of a Broad Defense*

Some, theists and non-theists alike, have objected to the Christian concept of hell because it would be unjust for a person to be eternally punished for a finite wrong. The problem that hell presents for Christian theism is exacerbated by the fact that not everyone has the opportunity to accept an offer of salvation that would prevent such eternal punishment. It is the latter worry that William Lane Craig attempts to address by making use of God's middle knowledge. According to Craig, the problem that the doctrine of exclusivism raises for Christian theism is this, "Why did God not supply special revelation to persons who, while rejecting the general revelation they do have, would have responded to the gospel of Christ if they had been sufficiently well-informed concerning it."[5] If it is true that some person would have responded to the gospel had they been informed of it, then how is it just to punish that person given that she had nothing to do with not being so informed?

Craig's response to this worry is twofold. First, he shows that the problem has the same structure as the logical problem of evil. Second, he attempts to solve this soteriological problem in the same way that Plantinga attempted to solve the logical problem of evil.[6] According to Craig, the problem can be stated as follows:

(1) God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent

is inconsistent with

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5. Craig, "No Other Name," 176.

6. Craig actually refers to this problem as the "soteriological problem of evil," but since the term 'evil' never actually appears in the problem I prefer simply the 'soteriological problem'.

(2) Some persons do not receive Christ and are damned.[7]

Utilizing Plantinga's strategy of defense Craig argues that there is some third proposition such that, when conjoined with (1), entails (2). If this third proposition is logically possible, then one can confidently conclude that (1) and (2) are logically consistent. Just as with the logical problem of evil, this third proposition "need not be plausible or even true; it need be only a possibly true proposition, even if it is contingently false."[8] But what might such a proposition be?

According to Craig, it is possible that:

> (3) God has actualized a world containing an optimal balance between saved and unsaved, and those who are unsaved suffer from transworld damnation.

By "transworld damnation" Craig means the property "which is possessed by any person who freely does not respond to God's grace and so is lost in every world feasible for God in which that person exists."[9] According to (3), any person who is lost, and thus damnable, would have been lost in any world in which they exist. But notice, this alone does not explicitly answer the initial worry about those who are lost *because* they are never informed of the need to respond to God's grace. How might one use (3) to explain away that worry?

According to Craig, there simply are no people who would have responded to God's grace, had they been informed of it. He writes, "If there were anyone who would have responded to the gospel if he had heard it, then God in His love would have

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7. Ibid., 180.

8. Ibid., 183.

9. Ibid., 184.

brought the gospel to such a person." He concludes, "All who want or would want to be saved will be saved."[10] So, while it is true that some never hear of God's grace, and thus do not respond to it, they are proper recipients of eternal damnation because God, using his middle knowledge, could have simply created a world in which anyone who does not hear of God's grace would have rejected it even if they did.

A wholesale critique of this defense to the soteriological problem is not necessary in the present context. It will do to simply note two things. First, it is not clear why people who never hear of God's grace, and thus never respond to it, are damned in the actual world. Are such people damned for never responding to the offer of salvation, because they never hear it, or are they damned for rejecting the offer of salvation in other possible worlds in which they do hear it? The first response seems most plausible, but recall that Craig's argument is designed to explain away difficult cases of people not responding solely because they have not had the opportunity to respond. But to say *those* people are damned for what they do in some other possible world, not what they do in this world, means that God is engaging in counterfactual moral appraisal of those individuals. And this, as we have already noted, runs contrary to our moral intuitions.[11] Until we have reason to think such practice is acceptable for God, given that it is not acceptable for humans, then this response is unsatisfactory. What role is this supposed to play in expanding the distinction between broad and narrow defenses to other alleged problems?

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10. Ibid., 185.

11. See page 68 and following above.

It turns out that even Craig finds such counterfactual moral appraisal problematic. In discussing an objection raised against his argument by David Hunt,[12] Craig agrees with Hunt that, "it would be unjust to judge a person on the basis of what he would have done rather than on the basis of what he actually did."[13] But this appears to be exactly what he advocates regarding those who would have rejected had they heard. The only reason to make use of the subjunctive is that in the actual world, it is postulated, that the reason these people are damned is that they never heard of God's grace and so never had the opportunity to respond to it. Craig, for his part, must not recognize that this is what he is committed to. Later in the same paper he writes, "neither Molinism nor the middle knowledge perspective I defended implies that God judges people on any basis other than their actual acceptance or rejection of God's grace."[14]

If it turns out, protestations otherwise notwithstanding, that Craig's Molinist solution to the soteriological problem commits one to this counterfactual moral appraisal, something that we have reasons to reject, one can still employ the account as part of a narrow defense to the problem. Unless it is logically impossible that God could engage in counterfactual moral appraisal, the concept can still be employed as part of a narrow defense. It would not, however, be of any use to a broad defense.

In the context of a broad defense one may still be able to retain the general

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12. David Hunt, "Middle Knowledge and the Soteriological Problem of Evil," Religious Studies 27 (1991): 3-26.

13. William Lane Craig, "Middle Knowledge and Christian Exclusivism," *Sophia* 34, no. 1 (1995): 126.

14. Ibid., 131.

Molinist solution to the soteriological problem and simply deny that those that are damned in the actual world would have accepted God's grace had they heard of it. This would require one to spell out how it is that one could accept God's grace without ever hearing of it, but it seems there are resources available already present in the concept of general revelation. Those who never hear an explicit account of God's grace are still able to, in a limited way, respond to it based on the general revelation they do have access to.

In this case, the response to the soteriological problem still need not be proffered as being *true* in the actual world, just consistent with what we take to be true in the actual world. And, of course, this runs directly parallel to what we have pursued in discussing the logical problem of evil. Instead of resting content with a merely narrow defense, and without having to assume the burden of claiming to know what is, or probably is, God's actual reasons for allowing evil, or for the damnation of some that never respond to his grace, we are able to provide a more persuasive account that is true, for all we know. And, if we are honest with ourselves, what we *know* of God's reasons may not be as much as we would like.

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