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**RELIGIOUS FAITHS AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL:
A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Introduction

Beyond these introductory remarks, this paper, on the enigma of the existence of evil, proceeds in four stages.

Stage One

Stage one presents definitions of three terms—‘theodicy’, ‘pain’, and ‘suffering’. Needless to say, agreement on the meanings of these terms allows reader and writer to stand on common ground with regard to their use throughout the paper.

Stage Two

In stage two, following the definitions, and under the rubric of “Some Religious Perspectives on Pain and Suffering”, the paper reviews a number of faiths, ancient and modern, on their attitude to pain and/or suffering. The review serves to locate the paper’s subsequent arguments on suffering and evil within a global perspective.

Stage Three

Thereafter, discussion on suffering and evil reflects on a pair of ironies I find of considerable significance for Christian theodicy. Note that this paper offers no exhaustive answer on theodicy [as defined below]. Rather it proposes the *sine qua non* for beginning any biblically based Christian theodicy. Theodicies in general are doomed to fail to the extent that they give inadequate address to the question of evil’s origins. In Bart Ehrman’s opinion, humanity’s most important question concerns why we suffer. As Ehrman has found, absent a biblical answer to that question there is no good reason left for unique faith in the Bible’s God.¹ This paper seeks to

address that question. In a previous draft it bore the less sophisticated, but quite explicit title: “I Believe in God. So Why Is There Evil?”

Stage Four

At the end of its definitions, faith review, and reflection on ironies, the paper concludes with a note of encouragement. For it is my belief that this paper’s interpretation on evil’s origins may profit not only biblical studies and Christian theology, but also the spiritual experience of all humans in search of clearer insight into one of life’s unfathomable mysteries—the problem of evil.

Definitions

Theodicy

The term issues from the Greek words for ‘God’ (*theos*), and ‘justice’ (*dike*), and involves attempts to show why, given the world’s evil, God may still be seen as good. Theodicy seeks, with John Milton, to “assert Eternal Providence, And justify the ways of God to men.”² Theodicy then, should proceed on the presumption that God is responsible—both a responsible being, and a being bearing responsibility for the world; further, that God’s rulership ought to make some significant difference to the world’s condition. Nagging questions arise about the world’s condition, questions inescapably relevant: If God is good, then why is the world so evil? But the term ‘evil’ may not itself be specific enough. A question more comprehensible to more minds might then be: Why pain and suffering?³ Linked to ‘theodicy’, such a query actually probes concerning what justice there might be, if any, in pain and suffering as part of creation’s order? If there is a God who is good, why should nature involve pain and suffering, and so much of it? Which requires of us definitions of ‘pain’, and ‘suffering’.

Pain

Distinguished from “suffering”, pain commands the more physical focus. One example of its definition reads: “An unpleasant sensation occurring in varying degrees of severity as a consequence of injury, disease, or emotional disorder.”⁴

Suffering

Suffering as concept, need not involve physical or emotional disorder. In fact very orderly folks suffer. One may be accused of suffering fools gladly without necessarily experiencing any physical pain. A more linguistically responsible example would be anemia. People suffer from anemia. And earth, since the fall, has endured much non-physical evil. Anemia and evil are both to our detriment though not necessarily physically painful. A specific illustration, borrowed from Herwig Arts’s book, *God, the Christian, and Human Suffering*, may further clarify. Arts reproduces an ad from a Flemish newspaper:

In our family, we are searching painfully for a new balance without Joe. It is five years since our dearly beloved son and brother was taken from us. Thanks to all who continue to keep him in mind.⁵

While this ad speaks of “searching painfully,” it is evident that the pain being felt for a son and brother five years lost, is something more than, and other than, merely physical. This is an example of what I refer to as “suffering.”

Pain certainly is part of suffering. Pain almost inexorably leads to suffering. But suffering, of which physical pain is but a portion, is a rather more widespread phenomenon, one that reaches beyond our realm, whether physical, or natural:

Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God. Every departure

from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him.⁶

The definition of *pain* involved in the quotation just cited is not as particular as my own. I offer the quote nevertheless because a) our common intent is to show that what sin does to humanity brings grief to God; and b) only the most extravagant anthropomorphism and distortion of the quotation would posit that God's anguish (*pain*) comes to him "as a consequence of injury, disease, or emotional disorder"—to quote again Houghton Mifflin's American Heritage Dictionary.

Dwellers in the human realm are well enough aware of a wide range of experiences included in suffering. They vary from empathy with animals or loved ones in physical agony, to indignation at perceived injustice, to nagging doubt about personal salvation. The reality of suffering does not require the presence of physical pain. The link between God and these—suffering and/or pain—varies significantly from one religion to another. Indeed, the following review shows that not all who probe for answers about pain and suffering believe God to be either responsible or sovereign.

Some Religious Perspectives on Pain and Suffering

Deistic faiths

Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism, ancient and current religion of Persia [modern Iran], named for its prophet Zarathustra, has often been said to have much in common with biblical teaching.

Many scholars hold that Jewish beliefs on Satan and spirits good and evil, and especially eschatological beliefs such as judgment, resurrection, heaven and a fiery burning hell, came into Judaism from Zoroastrianism during the exilic period through Israelite contact and association with the Persians.⁷ This religion's eschatology seems to point to the same restoration of idyllic

perfection as does the book of Revelation, when good conquers evil. But it is important to distinguish between the Bible's attitude to pain and that of Zoroastrianism. In the latter Angra Mainyu [later spelled Ahriman], the destroying spirit, equated with the Bible's devil, is a primordial being equal in power to Ohrmazd [Ahuramazda].⁸ Highlighting their complementarity, prophet Zarathustra could declare that "when these two spirits first came together, they created life and death."⁹

The analysis of parallels between Zoroastrianism and Bible Christianity involves not only remark on similarity, but also on difference. Like Zoroastrianism, the Bible does speak of opposing forces of evil and good. Biblical evil is acknowledged to be mystery (2 Thes 2:7—"the mystery of lawlessness"), daring enough to usurp the position of God. But faithfulness to *Sola Scriptura* does not allow for the conception of the trinity (or of any one of its members) as the adversary's twin, or functioning with the devil in the role of co-creator.

Kushner, Swinburne, and Deism: As with Persia's long established religion, pain is an inevitable element in the thinking of Harold Kushner, philosopher Richard Swinburne, and the maturing God of process theology. Kushner's God cannot prevent pain because, though he is good he is not quite strong enough. Kushner draws inspiration from his reading of the book of Job, where "Forced to choose between a God who is not totally powerful, or a powerful God who is not totally good, the author of the Book of Job chooses to believe in God's goodness."¹⁰ And Christian philosopher Richard Swinburne subscribes to a logic in which though evil itself is inevitable,¹¹ "death is not in itself an evil."¹² Deism's deity, by contrast, simply does not care what is or is not evil. Having started the motor of life he has now left it to run on its own and has no commitment to interfering in its operations.

Hinduism: Pain is a prominent feature of Hinduism, manifesting itself in an abundance of vicarious sacrifices. States the *Bhavad Gita*, “The demigods, being pleased by sacrifices, will also please you.”¹³ Again, “. . . the demigods, being satisfied by the performance of *yajZa* [sacrifice], supply all needs to man.”¹⁴ And the pervasiveness of the sacrifice principle shows up in the statement that “All living bodies subsist on food grains, food grains are produced from rains, rains come from performance of sacrifice, and sacrifice is born of prescribed duties.”¹⁵

We should note that sacrifice here is not automatically synonymous with the taking of life. The term applies to two primary categories, viz., the sacrifice of worldly possessions, and the pursuit of transcendental knowledge.¹⁶ The second of these categories is further subdivided into two areas, viz., understanding one’s own self [one’s constitutional position], and understanding the truth about the Supreme Personality of the Godhead.¹⁷ Sacrifice itself takes at least three different forms: sacrifice of possessions; study of the Vedas or philosophical doctrines; and performance of the yoga system,¹⁸ with the sacrifice of knowledge deemed higher than that of material possessions. Indeed

The whole purpose of different types of sacrifice is to arrive gradually at the status of complete knowledge, then to gain release from material miseries, and ultimately, to engage in loving transcendental service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Krsna).¹⁹

Notwithstanding the possible painlessness of *yajZa*, the concept bears directly on our study. For one thing, *yajZa* or sacrifice is intimately bound up with the entire cycle of life. As stated above, “All living bodies subsist on food grains, food grains are produced from rains, rains come from performance of sacrifice, and sacrifice is born of prescribed duties.”²⁰ More fundamentally, all this sacrifice is based on Vedic understandings of origins. Human sacrifices are metaphorically

linked “with the original sacrifice by which the universe was created, namely the dismemberment of the *Purusha*, the primal Being, by the gods.”²¹

Indigenous American Religions: In the Americas, either for purification or substitution, practitioners of indigenous religions endure considerable privation for the sake of the community or of individuals who need help. Men and women participate in sun dances, continuing for up to four days, despite the thirst and exhaustion. This voluntary sacrifice on behalf of others is augmented by piercing. Sharpened sticks are inserted into a dancer’s body. Ropes attached to these are thrown over trees, and the individual is pulled up, simulating flight by flapping eagle wings, until the sticks to which the ropes are attached break through the skin.²²

Another process for tearing through the skin, reserved for chiefs, involves dragging buffalo skulls attached to the ropes tied to the sticks in the chief’s body, representing his bearing of the burdens of all the people.²³

William Madsen reveals more on the place of pain in Native American religion, when he discusses Roman Catholic appropriation of pre-Columbine cult and custom in Mezo-America. Speaking of the Aztec mother god who was replaced by the virgin of Guadalupe,²⁴ Madsen remarks that

The pagan [mother of the gods] Tonantzin [also called Coatlicue] was a dual-natured earth goddess who fed her Mexican children and devoured their corpses. She wore a necklace of human hands and hearts with a human skull hanging over her flaccid breasts, which nursed both gods and men. Her idol depicts her as a monster with two streams of blood shaped like serpents flowing from her neck. Like other major deities in the Aztec pantheon, Tonantzin was both a creator and destroyer.²⁵

In Aztec faith, “the strength and functioning of the gods depended on their regular consumption of blood and hearts obtained through human sacrifice.”²⁶ Mayan civilization exhibited its own similarities in this regard:

When the Maya prayed for rain, crops, or health they customarily sacrificed small animals and made offerings of their own blood drawn from various parts of the body, in addition to offerings of food and copal incense. Only in case of community disaster such as a famine were human beings sacrificed to the gods. In time of drought the Maya threw live victims into sacred wells in order to obtain rain.²⁷

Referring again to Aztec beliefs,

Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec tribal patron [son of Tonantzin] who was also the god of war and sun, required enormous meals of human blood and hearts to give him strength for his daily battle with the forces of darkness. . . . There is evidence that before the [Spanish] conquest there was growing discontent with the excessive demands of the priests for human sacrifices, but the Aztec people still believed such sacrifices were necessary for the preservation of the cosmic order.²⁸

Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes' destruction of the indigenous deities, or rather, of their physical representations, brought the Aztecs' faith to a point of crisis since they believed

that these idols gave them all their temporal means and, in allowing them to be ill treated, they would be angry and would give nothing, and would take away all the fruits of the soil and cause the people to die of want.²⁹

These brief references to indigenous American religion disclose a faith in deities whose satisfaction continually required animal and human flesh and blood. Arguments for physical, mental, psychological, or other conditioning, may diminish the pain felt by worshipers who mangled their own bodies or sacrificed those of others to placate the gods. But at the very least, the faiths here considered involve continued seasons of mental anguish—of fear of offending the gods, as well as fear that the gods have already been offended.

Atheistic faiths

J. L. Mackie's bald acknowledgment could well serve as the first and last word on atheistic involvement in discussion of evil:

The problem of evil . . . , is a problem only for someone who believes that there is a God who is both omnipotent and wholly good. And it is a logical problem, . . . : it is not a scientific problem that might be solved by

further observations, or a practical problem that might be solved by a decision or an action.³⁰

For Mackie, evil is problematic only for those who believe in a God of omnipotent goodness. God, if he is, must be in some sense incompetent. More probably, he is neither competent nor incompetent. He simply is not, as is the case with the following religions.

Jainism: The religion of Jainism exhibits considerable sensitivity to pain. Jains believe that the universe is filled with living beings, from higher to lower life forms, possessed of corresponding degrees of sensitivity. The lowest forms, including plants and the elements, possess only the sense of touch, with three thousand of these beings contained in a single drop of water. But even these one-sensed beings are vulnerable to pain, except that, like a blind and mute person, they can neither see their assailant nor express their pain.³¹ Jains go to great lengths to avoid inflicting such pain, including a vegetarian diet, which spares animals' lives, and wearing a cloth over the mouth to avoid inhaling and thus destroying living organisms.³²

Whereas the principle of non-violence (*ahimsa*) dominates Jain thinking and behavior, inspiring gentleness toward the rest of the universe, Jain initiates subject themselves to extreme acts of self denial, including a notable indifference to pain. Practitioners endure any kind of weather, and pull their hair out by the roots instead of being shaved. For Jains, who neither have, nor desire, a caring heavenly father, "the way to spiritual liberation lies in non-attachment and patient, indifferent forbearance of all difficulties."³³

Buddhism: *Dukkha*, the first of the Buddha's four noble truths, teaches "that life inevitably involves suffering . . ."³⁴ Unfortunately for some Buddhist scholarship, the translation of *dukkha* as signifying nothing but suffering and pain has led to seeing Buddhism as a pessimistic religion. But this is not the case. Walpola Rahula uses the metaphor of the diagnosing physician

to clarify the meaning of the term. There are extremes, he shows, between grave exaggeration of a patient's illness and ignorant denial of a real problem. Between these poles of pessimism and optimism is the balance of realism which acknowledges the illness, and administers the correct course of treatment. Buddhism, says Ruhula, is realistic. So that whereas the Pali term *dukkha* ordinarily means 'suffering,' 'pain,' 'sorrow,' or 'misery,' its deeper meanings of 'imperfection,' 'impermanence,' 'emptiness,' or 'insubstantiality' should not be overlooked or subsumed in the one word 'suffering.' Better to leave the term untranslated.³⁵ Rahula's discussion surely clarifies the centrality of *dukkha*, whether as pain, sorrow, suffering, misery or emptiness to Buddhist conceptions of the human order of life.

Summarizing on a Variety of Views

This limited survey of world views shows how some human beings have related to the presence of pain in the world in general, and in their own world in particular. Responses where the cult integrates procedures that apparently involve pain and suffering [e.g., indigenous American religion, Hinduism, Buddhism], include some [Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism] with carefully developed philosophical systematizations on suffering as a part of their religious experience. Across the range of integrative attempts there appears to be some general distinction between those whose response is "God-bound", and others whose view is atheistic. In which regard Mackie's declaration on the problem of evil may be in need of modification: "The problem of evil . . .," he contends, "is a problem only for someone who believes that there is a God who is both omnipotent and wholly good."³⁶ What Mackie seems to want to say is that the problem of evil is only a problem for someone who believes that God is sovereign, in control. For it would be no more or less a problem if God, however conceived, were incapable of control, than if he is simply denied existence. Life as random happenstance leaves no room for the notion

of tragedy. Nor should life in association with an incidental deity, however talented, be expected to be much if any different from life with an incompetent one, or life with none at all.

This is why the words of a believer, Herwig Arts, may be juxtaposed against those of J. L.

Mackie in such apparent concord:

Suffering is not a psychological problem, but a religious one. Anyone who reflects on suffering outside of a religious context will readily agree that it is an insoluble problem. Psychologists look for remedies to suffering. They try to combat it, seeing in suffering the greatest enemy of the human race. The ideal of someone who only psychologizes can best be summed up by the title of the well-known best-seller, *I'm OK, You're OK*. But the believer *cannot* feel OK as long as somewhere on earth there are still people struggling on, laden with a cross.³⁷

And we may add, 'nor can a caring God however limited her competence or his.'

Whether pain becomes rationalized as normal or alien, desirable or repugnant, systematized into some religious construct or indifferently contemplated for its inevitability, what is clear is that it cannot be ignored. Guru Swami Prabhupada, one of India's greatest exporters of Krishna consciousness to the Western world, speaks for those thinkers who recognize the crucial position of suffering to a proper understanding of life. For him, absent a preoccupation with suffering, one has not attained to life's ultimate: "Unless one is inquiring as to why he is suffering, he is not a perfect human being."³⁸

With the words of Swami Prabhupada and Herwig Arts we may again appreciate the difference in this paper's usage of the terms "pain" and "suffering." Pain, as we have said, is part of suffering. But for those who do not care about pain, or propose indifference to physical agony, for these, emotional distress and psychological anguish—suffering, in short, is effectively invalidated. We may not be able to demonstrate that they experience none. But we may responsibly argue that it would be out of place within their scheme of things. By contrast, there is

suffering for those who care about pain. These truly suffer, not only physical pain, but mental anguish. Their suffering is born of a sense of the wrongness of things, the inappropriateness of two month old babies being attacked by massive cancerous growths, of infants coming into the world with one arm and a half, of strength instead of loving compassion being life's ultimate determinant. To these, out of their sense of life as intentional and moral, come the questions of justice and choice, of God's fairness and human options in the face of what comes to us as life.

The Real Distinction

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, the clearest division between inquirers on cosmic morality, does not appear to lie in the acceptance or rejection of God. Comparison between the godlessness of Jainism or Buddhism, on the one hand, and the "godfullness" of Hinduism, on the other, examples clearly enough the insignificance of the god notion in terms of our human experience of pain. Jainism, much like its fellow non-Vedic Indian religion of Buddhism, advocates obliviousness to suffering as the way of liberation from suffering. Jain positions exclude possibility of any meaningful discussion on other standard terms of theodicy such as "justice" or "fairness." Clearly, also, they do not admit the term "Christian." In relation to demonstrating God's justice they might be called anti-theodicies, except that none of the two religions involves personal deities either culpable or justifiable. At the same time it becomes evident that Hinduism's ubiquitous sacrifice makes no attempt to absolve its deities from accusations of injustice. Sacrifice, Hinduism teaches, is how the universe began; worship of the goddess Kali may even involve human sacrifice.³⁹ Thus, contrary to the expectations of some, godliness and godlessness do not necessarily present us with the appropriate alternatives for relating to the misery of pain.

Again, Mackie has released us from perplexity concerning atheists' anguish at the existence of evil. He is categorical: "The problem of evil . . . , is a problem only for someone who believes that there is a God who is both omnipotent and wholly good."⁴⁰ His comment exposes the *non-sequitur* of atheistic anguish over evil. There is, inherently, no reason to it. The lordship of chaos makes mayhem the standard, leaving no room for the concept of tragedy or the possibility of regret. A declared commitment to origins or destiny by random happenstance is clearly incompatible with lament over the physical pain or mental suffering of the objects of such chance. I speak of "the objects" rather than "the victims" of such experiences because the notion of victimization may include a sense of being taken advantage of. But random happenstance allows neither for purpose nor for advantage. Note again that I do not speak of random selection, since selection means choice and suggests, if not implies, reason; there can be neither reason nor choice nor purpose to randomness—only happenstance. As R. C. Sproul remarks: "If the phrase *random selection* is used as a synonym for action-without-a-cause, then it is illogical."⁴¹

Why then do 'godful' religions not necessarily save humanity from mental anguish--suffering as here defined? And why do godless humans, advocates of the rule of mindless matter, express such horror over the eventualities of this mindless matter? And how does our topic on the origins of evil address this question of anguish 'godful' or godless? I incline toward an answer suggested by Paul's diatribe in the opening paragraphs of his letter to the Romans, specifically Ro 1:21: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor [glorify] Him as God . . ." Suffering, it seems, is a function of divine knowledge, that knowledge being both the creature's consciousness of God, and God's own total knowledge, consciousness, awareness of Himself. It is because God is who he is that injustice makes him suffer. And it is specifically creaturely intelligence, conscious or otherwise, about God, that grants the capacity for mental

anguish over life's inequities. Witness again, Rom 1:21: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened [NAU]."

John Murray, quotes H. A. W. Meyer, on this Scripture, as noting that

heathenism is not the primeval religion, from which man might gradually have risen to the knowledge of the true God, but is, on the contrary, the result of a falling away from the known original revelation of the true God in His works.⁴²

The reader unduly worried about Meyer's political incorrectness may be reminded that, writing in the 19th century, this divine was not obliged to advance an objective, non-discriminating view of comparative religions. Instead he insists on a biblical understanding that reproaches some religious forms and practices as debauched perversions of an original ideal. And given the illogic of atheistic anguish over the eventualities of happenstance, his conviction merits some investigation. Meyer finds that atheistic positions are not prior in the human consciousness. What atheistic anguish over suffering suggests is a knowledge of God diminished but not obliterated, a sense of justness missing from the present disorder of things, an instinct of fairness, unobserved but longed for, in the law of tooth and claw.

This consideration helps us answer another question, namely, why any religious faith should seem more callous than irreligion. The answer suggested by Meyer's reading of Rom 1, would be that it is not religion or irreligion that determines human compassion, but greater or lesser knowledge of God, whether consciously or unconsciously held. This reading of Paul argues that the greater the repudiation of God, the greater the degradation of humanity whether religious or non-religious. It is equally true that the more the degradation of religion, the less it will properly reflect of the character of God. Religion need not bear the name in order to more or less reflect the deity. Religions, ethical, or moral attitudes, which claim no relation to any

personal God are not thereby, of necessity, more or less degraded than others which still articulate such a concept. The possibilities for distortion are infinite. Nevertheless, if John is correct in 1 Jn 4:8, then the less religion reflects God's character, the greater the likelihood of indifference to the realities of physical pain and mental suffering so alien to the God who is love.

Hopefully, I am not hereby perceived as making a claim for expertise either in comparative religion or a history of religions approach that progresses toward Seventh-day Adventist Christianity. But based on their own confessions, a continuum which delineates the thesis here argued produces some ironies: Such a continuum may possess as many as six positions [see table--next page], beginning, not with atheistic irreligion, but with godless religions such as Jainism and Buddhism which, self-evidently, do not involve systematizations on the relation of God to suffering. These religions produce what may be called anti-theodicies. Its next position would be that of godless non-religion where, despite the denial of God, humans agonize over life's unfairness and injustice. The next position would be occupied by the polytheistic uncertainty of Hinduism, animism and indigenous religions. A fourth position would be occupied by the dualism of Zoroastrianism, while the final two positions would both be held by Christian theodicies, by Bible believers attempting to show where salvation by grace integrates with the presence in the world of physical pain.

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------|--|---|--|---------------------------------|--|
| position 1 | | | | | | | |
| GODLESS RELIGIONS | | | | | | | |
| Jainism, Buddhism, etc. | | | | | | | |
| | | position 2 | | | | | |
| | | GODLESS NON-RELIGION | | | | | |
| | | atheism agnosticism | | | | | |
| | | | | position 3 | | | |
| | | | | POLYTHEISM | | | |
| | | | | Hinduism animism indigenous religions | | | |
| | | | | | | position 4 | |
| | | | | | | DUALISM | |
| | | | | | | Zoroastrianism | |
| | | | | | | position 5 | |
| | | | | | | CHRISTIAN THEODICY--A | |
| | | | | | | double predestinarian Calvinism | |
| | | | | | | position 6 | |
| | | | | | | CHRISTIAN THEODICY--B | |
| | | | | | | Arminianism | |

Table I—religions continuum on “Religious Faiths & the Problem of Evil”⁴³
 [Symposium IV, The Bible and Adventist Scholarship—Cancun, 3/08]

Two Major Ironies

This paper's proposal on biblical understanding about evil's existence contrasts directly with the just concluded review of various non-Christian faiths. These faiths reveal frequent and close integration between acts of service and of physical abuse on the part of deity. In the Zoroastrian order of things, rather than being irreconcilable adversaries, the good Ohrmazd [Ahura Mazda] works with destroyer Angra Mainyu [Ahriman], his equal in power, to create heaven and earth. Again, Hinduism can scarcely define pain and suffering as evil when creation of the universe depends on it. Nor may indigenous American religions repudiate pain and suffering as evil when their divinities consume human and animal sacrifices as the price of maintaining good order, whether agricultural or cosmic. Biblical understandings on the problem of evil, on the presence, in our world, of pain and suffering, will be seen to contrast directly with any of these views.⁴⁴ Biblical teaching on the question begins with two positions already stated:

- a) Paul's explanation that knowledge of God is prior, and
- b) John's claim that God's clearest self-definition is love.

At the same time, a proper grasp of the Bible's thought exposes two of the greatest ironies of Christian theodicy.

Naming the Ironies

From one point of view, there may appear no clear connection between these two ironies. And yet, from another, it may not be entirely possible to disentangle them from one another. Nevertheless, however intricately bound up, they are recognizable as distinct realities. Again, however disconnected they may strike some as being, they serve a mischievous and common purpose. I refer to the ironies of Christian speech a) against the fact of a personal devil, and b) in

favor of a supremely mean divinity. Elaborations on these two ironies now appear under the general headings “Evil As Hostile Intelligence”, and “Christians for a Callous God.”

Evil As Hostile Intelligence

A Great Reluctance: Christian scholarship has shown some considerable reluctance about granting any personhood to evil. N. T. Wright shows in his recent work on *Evil and the Justice of God*, how clear it must now be to survivors of the twentieth and inhabitants of the twenty-first centuries, that evil is much more than mere philosophical abstraction, that it is not limited to the dislocations of our physical environment, but dwells in humans too. More, he makes clear that the line between the good and the evil among humanity does not run “between ‘us’ and ‘them’”, but through every individual and every society.”⁴⁵ People, not just political, economic, or weather systems, people—we—are corrupt, bad, evil, Wright would have us understand. His review of the OT material shows that “human responsibility for evil is clear throughout.”⁴⁶ Touching on the supernatural reality of evil, however, Wright is rather more cautious. “Evil has a hidden dimension; there is more to it than meets the eye.”⁴⁷ There is the biblical figure called “the satan.”⁴⁸ Now this satan is no “vague or nebulous force”; but yet a phenomenon Wright has preferred to speak of as “quasi-personal”,⁴⁹ “important but not that important.”⁵⁰ In context of which, evil itself may be described as “the moral and spiritual equivalent of a black hole.”⁵¹ It is

an uncertainty factor, a *je ne sais quoi*, in all our moral and spiritual equations, so that however well we organize, however much we pray, however sound our theology and however energetically we go to work, there will be negative forces, perhaps we should say a Negative Force, working against us and for which we must allow.⁵²

Perhaps an upper case entity, Wright grants, but more the absence of good than evil in person.

Robert Alden’s New American Commentary on the book of Job runs in a more startling vein, disconcertingly at one with unions of Angra Mainyu and Ohrmazd, or the schizophrenic

Tonantzin. It joins an illustrious line of exegetes who posit that the roles and purposes of Satan and God are a scriptural unity. For Alden, Satan is part of a divine cabinet in which all the members are not good.⁵³ To support this, Alden cites 1 Kgs 22:20-23 where the prophet Micaiah describes a member of God's court as going out to be "a deceiving spirit" among Ahab's prophets.⁵⁴

Interpreters' puzzlement is considerable, over the role and function of the biblical character fourteen times identified in *Job* as *hassatan* (1:6-9, 12; 2:1-7). For some he is distinguishable from the rest of the company in which he appears, "distinct from the sons of God."⁵⁵ For Wright, however quasi-personal, he is "flatly opposed to God, . . ."⁵⁶ But as Alden already shows, the satan figure evokes varied reaction. With James Crenshaw he is at one time identified as "a child of God in the employ of the divine court . . ."⁵⁷ A later Crenshaw modifies his view, believing that the Hebrew adverb *gam* (also—Job 1:6) "almost identifies *haśś~t~n* as an intruder."⁵⁸ And Nahum Tur-Sinai thinks he may or may not belong.⁵⁹ Reactions to the Satan in *Job* range from seeing him as good and belonging, to bad and belonging, to perhaps or perhaps not belonging, to absolutely not belonging. From doing God his master's bidding to being flatly opposed to God. We may gape in literary wonder at the author of the book of Job, for the inscrutability of his depiction, and in theological dismay at the character of our focus, for the Machiavellian intrigue that cloaks him. But our primary choice should always be to return to the text, seeking a personal understanding of its message concerning the satan. The very mystery, and the numbers of the mystified declare together the power of the book, and invite new delving in search of its truth.

Markers of Separation: My own exploration has provided me with three points in the text of Job 1:6 where the narrator's expressed attitude is specific to the Satan's presence in the divine court.

These are a repeated waw consecutive (*wayyabo'* - -“and he came”), an adverb (*gam*--“also”), and a prepositional phrase (*b^etokam*—“among them”). What they say, taken together, is: “And he also came among them.” By stating this in context of the already reported assembly of the court, the three elements together, particularly the adverb “also”, depict the Satan’s presence as remarkable, as not expected, or natural, or to be assumed, within the divine assembly.⁶⁰

Other data also highlight a separation between God and the Satan. For one thing, the Hebrew meaning of the term *satan* is “adversary.” Nor need we tarry long to know against whom this adversary direct his interests, so uniformly malevolent. God, he suggests, should convert his bloom to blight in order to test Job’s integrity. The absurdity of this recommendation scarcely draws the comment it deserves. The fact is that God’s care for Job (1:10) is hardly as remarkable as the adversary suggests. It is what God does for all humanity. “He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:25). Nor is divine providence confined to humans. The words of the 104th psalm apply to the whole animal creation: “You give to them, they gather it up; You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good” (v. 28).

By contrast, the Satan’s hand is the conspicuous agent of harm. This the dialogue of Job 1:11, 12 makes most clear. The play on “hand” is sometimes lost in translation, given the standard explanation that biblically “hand” stands for power. As true as that may be, the literal rendering is worth attention: “How about stretching out your hand and touching him . . .”, the adversary proposes (v. 11), implying that God’s is a withering, blighting touch. Whereupon God responds, literally, “he is in your hand.”⁶¹ Then, as the adversary’s evil intention and capacity become explicit in his treatment of Job, of sheep and camels, of donkeys and children, he exposes the incompatibility which exists between him and the Lord into whose court, in the words of Edouard Dhorme, he has “insinuated himself.”⁶² For his dramatic juxtaposition over

against the Lord in the book's opening scenes he shows himself to be God's adversary. For his sustained aggression against the Lord's servant, he shows himself to be Job's adversary. His swath of destruction against dumb creatures, one young man's domicile, and the celebrating youth in it, shows him to be the adversary of humanity, the animal kingdom, and the physical order. For his insatiable appetite for cruelty, and the brazenness of his return after causing much pain and suffering and yet totally failing of his stated objective, he shows himself to be the adversary of discretion and candor. For the strictures that must continually be placed on him lest he cause even greater havoc (1:12—'do not touch him'; 2:6—'I will not let you kill him') he shows himself to be adversary of peace, health, and existence itself.⁶³

Against a Personal Satan: Bruce Baloian,⁶⁴ D. E. Hiebert,⁶⁵ and Peggy Lynne Day,⁶⁶ are among those who do not see a personal satan in pre-exilic OT times. Instead, the notion of a negative personal force only emerges in Jewry as a result of Israel's sixth century contact with the Persians, under the influence of Zoroastrian dualism. Allegedly, by the time of Isaiah's eighth century monotheism (Isa 45:5-7) it was impossible or unnecessary to propose any spirit who might stand against or challenge divine sovereignty during most of the OT pre-exilic period. Before that, God, considerate of Israel's gullibility, kept from them the knowledge of his archenemy.

The argument for a sixth century Satan consciousness points mainly to 1 Chr 21:1, as compared with its parallel account in 2 Sam 24:1. The post-exilic Chronicler attributes to Satan a temptation of David that the pre-exilic book of 2 Samuel attributes to God. The comparison is intended to show that before the exile Israel knows of no conflict between Yahweh and a personal archenemy called Satan. Persian dualism allegedly changed all that by its awareness of

distinctly evil agencies. And under Persian influence a personal Satan shows up in the Hebrew Scriptures in such a passage as 1 Chr 21:1.

There are limits to the theory. For one thing, peerless Isaiah commentator J. Alec Motyer exposes the tenuousness of such arguments when he observes that the very materials that supposedly establish Judah's monotheism have been "seized upon" by some to prove Zoroastrian light/darkness dualism.⁶⁷ These contrasting positions seem more the result of externally imposed humanistic interpretative frameworks than the evidence of the biblical text itself. Again, the OT books most expected to reflect Persian religion do so not at all. Apart from 1 Chr 21:1, post-exilic works of history (Nehemiah, Ezra, Esther), as of prophecy (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi), are equally devoid of dualistic sentiment. Added to that, the intertestamental Qumran texts, famous, *inter alia*, for their depictions of a confrontation between sons of light and darkness, between the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness, refer only thrice to any kind of satan, and never as a personal name.⁶⁸ Beyond this, the post-exilic location of Satan's personal emergence disregards the antiquity of the Zoroastrian texts which may date as early as the end of the thirteenth century B. C.,⁶⁹ a fact with possible implications for dating the book of Job. A late date for Job has been supported by the alleged lateness of Zoroastrian material on which its *satan* depends. But the Persian material held by some to have inspired *Job*, is six to seven centuries earlier than previously argued. In addition to these considerations, a study of this being's actions, when he is specifically exposed, permits sufficient character identification. He is sometimes explicitly identified as "*the Adversary*" by OT delimitation of the term *satan* through the use of the article. Hiebert knows that "With the article, "*the Adversary*," it [*hassatan*] becomes a proper name and denotes the personal Satan."⁷⁰ Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar* speaks pointedly to those who seek to diminish satanic personhood because of the presence of the

article, reading *hassatan* as the satan, the adversary, rather than Satan. He shows that both in Hebrew Bible and beyond, the article is at times present “When terms applying to whole classes are restricted to particular individuals”—Homer is simply *o poietes* [the poet], the Canaanite god’s proper name is *habba’al* [the Baal], the Euphrates River is simply *hannahar* [the river], and as *ha’el* is the one true God, so Satan, as being the ultimate and one true adversary, is *hassatan*.⁷¹ Far from diminishing the significance of the individual, the presence of the article constitutes his most particular identification. He, of all beings, is *the* Satan. So that apart from his identification in *Job* and *Zechariah*, multiple biblical cases of adversaries never use the article (1 Kgs 11:14, 23, 25; Psa 109:6; or, for that matter, 1 Chr 21:1). In the OT, it is, exclusively, when he is directly engaged against the Lord, confronting deity and the people and salvific purposes of deity, that this individual is called *the adversary*. *Job* and *Zechariah* are the only books of the Hebrew Bible that record dialogue between God and the being explicitly called Satan. In terms of ratios, *Job* contains the disproportionately larger share of such dialogue. Indeed, *Job*’s uniqueness includes the fact that it is the only book of all Hebrew Scripture where war between God and Satan breaks out into explicit back and forth contention. Satan, very present in *Zechariah*, never speaks. In *Job* he quarrels, is proved wrong, and returns for more argument.

On Satan’s Opaqueness: The book of *Job* establishes a clear disjuncture between the dialogue in Yahweh’s court, and the book’s first four swaths of destruction (Job 1:13-15; 1:16; 1:17; 1:18-19). Satan, the perpetrator, remains unidentified through the havoc wrought on *Job*’s property and children. The opaqueness of his role, the obliqueness of his operation, these underline the fact of oblivion among earth’s inhabitants as to the actual source of such mischief. But the reader fails as reader if she surrenders to *Job*’s sentiment at the end of the chapter. For the reader, privy to that which *Job* does not know, has seen that it is not God who has taken away (v. 21). The

reader realizes that beyond the celestial court there is no awareness of the evildoer's identity.

By contrast with earth's oblivious inhabitants, God is aware and much more. He is indignant and outraged (2:3). He alone knows who Satan really is, and what he really seeks to accomplish. He wants Job destroyed, and God lets him know that he knows this, even as he expresses outrage at the fact and the shameless strategy employed: 'You have incited me to destroy him' (2:3). Further, Satan's desire is unwarranted. He seeks to provoke God 'to swallow him up for nothing' (2:3). Job's existence inconveniences Satan, simply because Job is as good as Satan argues none can be. God's prohibition shows that Satan will kill Job if he can (2:6). This is because Job's elimination would significantly help Satan's argument. God would no longer be able to hold him up as proof of creaturely virtue. Remarkably, all the evil of the book's first chapter is not enough to modify Satan's argument that Job's goodness is purchased. As the guilty and corrupt Ahab accuses the godly Elijah of being Israel's problem (1 Kgs 18:17), so the shameless adversary insists, as long as Job remains alive, that God is being unfair. But God insists that Job's life be spared.

This in turn has produced its own philosophical crisis: To be preserved to be tormented may well seem the greater cruelty. One wonders how much Job must suffer for God to win an argument. The query is profoundly meaningful. But it seems to argue implicitly either for Job's absolute protection from evil, or his deliverance by death. To that extent it must be deemed profoundly distracting from discussions of reality. It would either require Job's life to be so uniquely cocooned as to be irrelevant to human experience; or it would entitle the enemy of life to destroy whom he wills by claiming he was merely testing for goodness. As if assaults on Job's property, servants, children, and person were insufficient, it would be somewhat like a prosecuting attorney electrocuting the accused in an attempt to decide guilt or innocence.

The degree of satanic commitment to remaining unidentifiable as divine adversary is also suggested by his responses to God in Job 1:7; 2:2. His ‘going to and fro’ reminds of the Lord’s role in searching for, and strengthening those who are committed in heart to him (cf. 2 Chr 16:9). The expression also reminds of 1 Pe 5:8, where the devil is said to go back and forth “looking for someone to devour” (1 Pe 5:8 [NET]). It may be noted that Satan’s second verb (*emperipaten*) is the identical verb used of God four of the seven times it appears in the Greek Bible—either the LXX or the New Testament. There are six occurrences in the LXX: Two Job instances are of Satan, while three elsewhere are of God (Lev 26:12; Dt 23:15; 2 Sam 7:6), with the other emphasizing the dignity of the strutting rooster (Pro 30:31). In the single NT reference, God promises to walk among his people and be their God (2 Co 6:16).⁷² Satan’s use of language otherwise principally used for God suggests imposture in his self-description in *Job*, a strategy which might be expected to increase the difficulty of distinguishing him from the one his language shows he pretends to be.

Summing up on Satan: It may now be appropriate to summarize our findings on the Satan of *Job*, making use of, and reference to, Scripture in general. We may mention six explanatory points he contributes, in *Job*, upon the issue of the presence of suffering in the world. These six are 1 & 2) his name and his personhood—he is called, and is, *the* adversary,⁷³ a fact to be borne in mind in context of 3) the one who is his antithesis—Scripture’s God who is love--1 Jn 4:8, as well as 4) a relation of his activities--unwarranted assaults against human and animal life, 5) his opaqueness—his operations involve considerable deception—including anonymity, misplaced blame (whether to Sabians, Chaldeans, or God) and imposture (speaking of himself in terms belonging to God), and 6) his callous determination—the holocaustic destruction of 1:13-19 does not satisfy his craving for blood, neither does Job’s undiminished reverence in response to

horrible loss persuade him of his error. He returns with the same unconscionable claim, speaking, in Job 2:2 the identical lines he first does in 1:7. The narrative implication may well be that stolen cattle, slaughtered servants, sheep and employees devoured in the ‘fire of God’, children wiped out all in a single blow—notwithstanding all this, for Satan, nothing has changed. Nothing, it seems, has happened. Beyond this, the rarity of cognate occurrences of the Hebrew term *satan* among ancient Semitic languages⁷⁴ underlines the distinctiveness of theological insight which in yet another way sets the Hebrew Bible apart from other religious documents of its ancient environment.⁷⁵

Taken together, 1 Pe 5:8 and Rev 12:9 indicate that *the devil, the adversary, the ancient serpent, and the dragon*, are all names which may be applied to this same being, Satan, *the Adversary*, the being who, defeated by Michael and his angels, “was thrown down to the earth”, where he is now said to get the whole world in trouble (Rev 12:10, 9, 12). And though Elaine Pagels has contested this view,⁷⁶ she is nevertheless capable of admirable insights into the nature of this adversarial being. He is, as she detects, the intimate who becomes the enemy, the one next to God, who becomes his archrival.⁷⁷ His origins are traceable back to early OT times, with his presence manifest in the very early chapters of the human story, for, as the *Diccionario de la Biblia* recognizes, the paradise garden snake is one more of his identities.⁷⁸ Rev 12 links him by name, ‘the ancient serpent’, to the Garden of Eden. It also links him to heaven in terms of his origins. And it is one of several biblical references, inclusive of vivid prophetic oracles by Isaiah and Ezekiel we may not now explore, to his having been cast down to earth (v. 9; Lk 10:18; Isa 14:12-14; Eze 28:12-19).⁷⁹ In its characterization of his role as master deceiver, the chapter well unites with and underlines our finding on Satan’s behavior in *Job*, a conduct impenetrable enough to baffle continuing generations of *Job* scholars. Nor is there any good reason to separate

Scripture from itself, as some are wont, by distinguishing between his OT behavior, and his NT persona.⁸⁰

Nothing gives him away, though, so effectively as his violence, explicit both in Rev 12 and Job 1, 2. Except, of course, we were to overlook our second irony: Christian speech in favor of a naturally violent God. But before addressing it, I shall conclude on this first, the Christian denial of a personal Satan, in relation to my study of the book of Job.

Some Implications for the Book of Job

According to Crenshaw, “The actual date of composition of the book [of Job] cannot be determined.” However, in context of

- a) the scope and relevance of its revelation on confrontation between God and his adversary,
- b) ample arguments for the antiquity of the text,⁸¹
- c) the overall biblical characterization of Satan (OT, NT)—reading according to *Tota Scriptura*,
- d) the disproportionate level of explicit involvement by Satan, and between Satan and God in the book, and
- e) the present phenomenon of Christian scholars’ continuing reluctance to grant Satan a personal identity,

in view of all these—a reconsideration of the purpose of the book of Job may be not inappropriate: OT theology has long operated with the explanation that God did not reveal to his people the truth about Satan because he sought to preserve them from living in awe of mighty, evil powers. The biblical, historical, and archaeological testimony, however, shows Israel sufficiently well surrounded and bombarded by false religion to repeatedly develop allegiance to false gods and evil powers. Besides, the position of Job as late is challenged by Talmudic tradition⁸² and by this quotation as well:

The long years amid desert solitudes were not lost. Not only was Moses gaining a preparation for the great work before him, but during this time, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of

Job, which would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time.⁸³

Set over against the conventional explanations is the likelihood that God's revelation of the book of Job was originally designed to instruct the human family concerning the conflict between the Lord of the universe and a highly placed, personal, and Machiavellian opponent whose evil will expresses itself not only in insidious mischaracterizations of the deity, but in cruelties as vicious as possible and allowed against both God's children, formed in his image, and against the physical order which God has designed and provided for the mutual benefit of intelligent and mute creation. The absence of further and similar biblical revelation may be seen, not as divine inadequacy, or as divine caution vis-à-vis Israel, but rather as emphasizing the significance of the message and book of Job. Evil and Satan do not suddenly become of significance in post-OT times. And "the only place where anything like the problem of evil is explicitly addressed at length in the Old Testament is the book of Job."⁸⁴ In *Job*, then, God has already spoken. It is not the lack of revelation which keeps many in the dark about Satan, whether in Old or New or post-testamental times. It is the enemy himself who, full of astuteness, has worked assiduously among believers and unbelievers, through time, to obscure the truth of and about himself, while simultaneously attributing to the one true God those very traits which are the proof of his evil character—a line of speculation that brings us to consider the second of our ironies: Christians for a callous God.

Christians for a Callous God

In addressing this irony, I return, as promised [see, above, on "Evil As Hostile Intelligence," subheading "A Great Reluctance"—n. 54], to the question of God's involvement in moral mischief and physical mayhem. We have already commented on the propensity of non-

Christian gods to act in both kind and cruel ways: Hindu gods dismember the Purusha to bring the universe into existence. And Mayan gods required human sacrifice at times of community crisis, or in order to end famine or bring rain. Among Christians too, much speech continues to be uttered in favor of a God as hardhearted as these not-Christian deities. We have already cited Swinburne as dismissing the idea that death is, per se, an evil.⁸⁵ For Ehrman, one of the Bible's "most common explanations—it fills many pages of the Hebrew Bible . . . is that people suffer because God wants them to suffer."⁸⁶ Witness, also, the following reflection by C. S. Lewis on the doctrine of Satan:

. . . the doctrine of Satan's existence and fall is not among the things we know to be untrue: it contradicts not the facts discovered by scientists but the mere, vague "climate of opinion" that we happen to be living in. . . . It seems to me, therefore, a reasonable supposition, that some mighty created power had already been at work for ill on the material universe, or the solar system, or, at least, the planet Earth, before ever man came on the scene: and that when man fell, someone had, indeed, tempted him.⁸⁷

Lewis' concession that some mighty power for evil seems to have influenced humanity's rebellion against God (Gen 3:1-6), well computes with Greg Boyd's path breaking works on *God at War*, and *Satan and the Problem of Evil*.⁸⁸ Indeed, Boyd is categorical where Lewis is tentative: His sense of ongoing, cosmic war, "requires, as a central component, a belief in angels, Satan and demons as real, autonomous, free agents"⁸⁹

N. T. Wright does not yet appear to have grasped some of the implications of Boyd's war thesis for his study on evil and God. Wright is not wrong to see the enormity of evil as more than all humanity's powers of comprehension. But sadly, he cannot be in the right with his contention that "We are not told—or not in any way that satisfies our puzzled questioning—how and why there is radical evil within God's wonderful, beautiful and essentially good creation."⁹⁰

However, as Boyd puts it, "in any state of war, gratuitous evil is normative."⁹¹ But "Once the

intelligibility of the war itself is accepted, no other particular evils require explanation.”⁹²

Beyond that understanding, continuing dissatisfaction with inadequate information finds no proper grounding in Scripture’s purported lack of revelation. While sin, if explained, would thereby be justified, God has said enough about sin’s origins and final disposition.⁹³ The problem may be, then, that abiding uncertainty about the reality of God’s antagonist may mean that the concept of war has not adequately taken hold. That abiding uncertainty relates, in fact, to both the Satan’s character and the character of God. Failure to appreciate either diminishes ability to do one’s part and play one’s proper role in the struggle.

According to the Bible’s story, sin entered the world through Adam’s disobedience, and death by sin (Ro 5:12). The narrative on Adam’s sin, in Gen 3, situates him in a place of unimprovable perfection, and informs, that as a result of his disobedience to God, humanity’s self-image, social interaction, relation to nature, and connection with God were all undone. For Scripture, flaw and pain and suffering are consequences of sin, and as such can be traced directly to the tempter, the ancient serpent, the devil, the dragon of Revelation, the devourer of 1 Pe 5, the Adversary, Satan. By contrast, the quote just shared from Lewis, one of Christianity’s most celebrated voices of his time and ours, holds that “some mighty created power had already been at work for ill on the material universe, or the solar system, or, at least, the planet Earth, before ever man came on the scene. . . .”⁹⁴ For Lewis, planet Earth was subject to mischief “before ever man came on the scene.” Lewis cannot be correct without diminishing the perfection of creation’s original environment. True, he does not explicitly credit God with such mischief.

Other Christians do. George Morrison places “pain at the root of life and growth,”⁹⁵ thus crediting it with the production of all progress. Morrison includes at least three remarkable submissions:

1) “. . . our capacity for pain is deeper than our capacity for joy.” Which proves “that we are so fashioned by the infinite, that the undertone of life is one of sorrow”;⁹⁶

2) self flagellation and such self abuse give evidence that pain is either pleasing, or at least acceptable, to God, offering

some hope of fellowship with heaven. You may despise the hermit, and you may flout the saint when the weals are red upon his back but an instinct which is universal [practiced by Romans, Indians, Christians, and savages] is something you do well not to despise.⁹⁷

3) Finally, Morrison asserts that

though the fact of death troubled [Jesus’] soul, there is no trace that the dark fact of pain did so—and yet was there ever one on earth so sensitive to pain as Jesus Christ? Here was a man who saw pain at its bitterest, yet not for an instant did he doubt His Father.⁹⁸

Christian apologists who speak on behalf of God by attributing to him insensitivity, or while deeming that humanity was introduced into a tampered Earth environment, or believing that at bottom the universe is dangerous or distressing—that “the undertone of life is one of sorrow,”⁹⁹—such Christians are hard to distinguish from those who speak against God’s existence because of what they observe of life’s misery. One wonders how such pessimism relates to the biblical account of flawless origins and to the great Originator of that flawlessness. “If a theodicy is successful, it solves the problem of evil for a particular theological system.”¹⁰⁰ What success or satisfaction is there in explanations where evil remains vague and indeterminate, “a black hole” or the missing rung halfway down a ladder?¹⁰¹ Or where death is described as not evil after all? Or where destruction and nurture intertwine as one in the ‘demonic-in-Yahweh’, the Aztec goddess Tonantzin, and her human flesh and blood devouring son Huitzilopochtli? What success can there be when God must be absolved by being a stoneface? What, moreover, might Morrison mean when he presents us with a deity unmoved by suffering, who,

simultaneously, accepts self-flagellation as a way to greater intimacy with himself? It would appear self evident, that if pain does not impress the deity, then it simply does not. If God is unimpressed by pain then he is.

A satisfactory biblical position seems to me to run directly contrary to such misunderstandings. It begins with God's clearest self-definition in all of Scripture, 1 Jn 4:8: "God is love." That love first shows himself and itself to humanity in the perfect creation of Eden. That perfection was marred by a willful intruder now named Satan. But God has continued to sustain the revelation of his love through the providences of daily human life. His love achieves ultimate expression in the sacrifice of the life of the Son of God specifically for the purposes of taking away the guilt and bearing the punishment of those who rebelled against him (Jn 1:29; Isa 53:4, 5, 6, 9, 12), correcting all the dislocation resulting from our rebellion, and restoring his people and his world to Eden's bliss again (Ro 5:10; Rev 21:1-5). According to the Bible it is God, not his children who get flagellated:

The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured--the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face--speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise.¹⁰²

For Seventh-day Adventists, this scenario, beginning in Eden, is continuous and unbreakable.

Our understanding of Calvary is inextricably bound up with our understanding of Eden:

It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. "His strength setteth fast the mountains." "The sea is His, and He made it." Ps. 65:6; 95:5. It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And

upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father's love¹⁰³

We know that

The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.¹⁰⁴

The biblical framework of Creation-redemption, Eden-to-Eden is the framework within which Seventh-day Adventists do theodicy. It is not the general model. I quote again:

. . . most people who have written about ‘the problem of evil’ within philosophical theology have not normally grappled sufficiently with the cross as part of both the analysis and the solution of that problem. The two have been held apart, in a mismatch with ‘the problem of evil’ on the one hand being conceived simply in terms of ‘How could a good and powerful God allow evil into the world in the first place?’ and the atonement on the other hand being seen in terms simply of personal forgiveness, . . .¹⁰⁵

And because the question of theodicy has, philosophically, been divorced from the question of salvation, and because theodicy’s first question remains unanswered even within Christianity, the world today has its fair complement of anguished atheists, to whom many believing Christians are hard pressed to speak. And Christian efforts to offer to the religious and philosophical community a satisfactory insight into the mystery of suffering, are doomed to failure while we fail to recognize Satan for who he is.

Concluding Encouragement

We have already cited Ehrman’s finding that in the absence of a biblical answer to the question of suffering there is no good reason left for unique faith in the Bible’s God. This paper states, that as an option for a single, unique, biblical book that grapples with this question, the book of Job appears to be a most worthy recommendation. Working principally from that book, I have sought to show Satan as God’s mighty spiritual enemy in the universe, and the originator and architect of evil, and at war with the God and Lord of life and love. The implications for

classical-philosophical theology of Boyd's concept of God at war have already been well laid out by Boyd himself. At the same time, the book of Job, perhaps Scripture's most explicit single volume exposé on that war, has not been allowed to make the contribution God must have intended when he gave it to Moses. And while its philosophical and literary value enjoy continuing acclaim, its spiritual and theological purpose is circumscribed by late dating, diminution of the personhood of Satan, and remarkable efforts to integrate the mischief of God's adversary into the will and purpose of a loving God.

In context of all this, I entitle my conclusion as I do, "A Note of Encouragement". This is because Seventh-day Adventist understandings on the question of suffering, the origin of evil, and the person of Satan, are certainly as clear as any in Christendom. We know what many do not, Christians as well as non-Christians. And what they do not know is hurting them:

There is little enmity against Satan and his works, because there is so great ignorance concerning his power and malice, . . . Multitudes are deluded here. They do not know that their enemy is a mighty general, who controls the minds of evil angels, and that with well-matured plans and skillful movements he is warring against Christ to prevent the salvation of souls. . . . [E]ven . . . ministers of the gospel . . . overlook the evidences of his continual activity and success; they neglect the many warnings of his subtlety; they seem to ignore his very existence.¹⁰⁶

Here is no appeal for a Satan centered preaching. Rather it is gratitude that because of divine revelation "we are not ignorant of his schemes" (2 Co 2:11, NAU). And because we know, we will be happy if we do what that knowledge requires. Seventh-day Adventists can preach the gospel from the book of Job as well as anyone can. This closing note is a word of encouragement to do so as much as possible, much more than we now do. The solidity of our protology is in direct proportion to our clarity on the person and character of Satan. Nor can we

surrender our understanding of the origin of evil without compromising our soteriology.

Chuck Colson's discussion of "A Snake in the Garden" offers the following categorical declaration:

God is good, and his original creation was good. God is not the author of evil. This is a crucial element in Christian teaching, for if God had created evil, then his own essence would contain both good and evil, and there would be no hope that good could ever triumph over evil.¹⁰⁷

The truth of Colson's statement means, at least for some, the necessary falsification of theories on the eternity of evil, found at times within as well as outside of Christianity, such as those which allow for the existence of pain and death before humanity's creation.¹⁰⁸

In 1998, Bruce Chapman recorded this eloquent and optimistic view of the twenty-first century and the new millennium:

A new century and millennium have already begun, not just temporally but also intellectually. Just as the nineteenth century closed in a burst of fashionable despair mixed with exciting new ideas about nature, humanity and society, so too we are already witnessing the rejection of many of the prevalent ideas of the twentieth century and their replacement by new ones.¹⁰⁹

Chapman's comment on replacing prevalent ideas with new ones refers to no less than reclaiming the natural world from a materialism which imposes meaninglessness on our most rigorous logic, and dismisses as fluke the artistry of color, sound and motion so present in the physical world. It is Chapman's sense that natural sciences and social sciences, affected as they all are by the theories of such materialism, will all be reshaped by the new ideas being advanced in the intelligent design movement.¹¹⁰ If I understand Chapman correctly, I hear a clarion call to Seventh-day Adventist scholars in all fields, to effectively portray the character of our artistic, intelligent, and caring God, full of meaning and endlessly loving, before frightened modernists and empty postmoderns that need an anchor or a friend.

The search for a philosophical resolution of the problem of suffering, a problem inseparable from the problem of evil, is doomed to failure if it must rely on ingenuous rationalizations which modify Scripture's testimony in order to be believed. Boyd has stated that when the Bible's worldview is respected the problem of theodicy is no longer unanswerable.¹¹¹ And that answer derives significantly from the conclusion toward which Colson points, that evil with its attendant pain, suffering, and death are intruders on God and his originally flawless creation. By delivering biblical studies from 'demonic in Yahweh' mythology, and reducing the company of "Christians for a Callous God", we are on the way to presenting to the world a clearer articulation on the God of love, and Satan, the intelligent opponent of that love. It must further be insisted, that only when the Bible's worldview on God's character and the enemy's challenge is freely acknowledged, might the student of Scripture begin to put into proper perspective such issues as the flood, the conquest, the need for cosmic judgment, and other aspects of God's arbitrating role, through time, and at the climax of world history.

Drawing to a close I quote from Kenneth Surin,

. . . theodicy is a form of speech that must be moved away from philosophical theology (where in current practice it takes the form of the articulation or defence [sic] of an Enlightenment or post-Enlightenment 'theism') into the realm of dogmatics which understands theological truth as precisely that which gives voice to the history of the crucified Nazarene.¹¹²

Paraphrased, Surin might be heard to say, "The answer is not rationalistic philosophy, but divine revelation." The book of Job, brilliant and difficult, is a key component of that divine revelation. Its spiritual and theological value must never be slighted or ignored. Enemy stratagems to belittle its importance must be exposed for what they are. God gave the book that we might pore over it with the greatest of interest until the close of time.¹¹³ Job is gospel for our time, for it gives some

of the keenest insights into one of time's most troubling questions: Why do we suffer?

Borrowing from Ehrman we may assert that the wisdom we derive from its pages confirms the validity of our faith in the Bible's unique and uniquely caring God.¹⁴

¹ "I came to a point where I could no longer believe. . . . I realized that I could no longer reconcile the claims of faith with the facts of life. In particular, I could no longer explain how there can be a good and all-powerful God actively involved with this world, given the state of things. For many people who inhabit this planet, life is a cesspool of misery and suffering. I came to a point where I simply could not believe that there is a good and kindly disposed Ruler who is in charge of it. . . . After many years . . . I came to realize that I could no longer believe in the God of my tradition" Bart D. Ehrman, *God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008), pp. 3, 4.

² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1:25, 26.

³ David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), p. 285: "The usual, simple statement of the problem of evil states as one of the premises: 'If God is all-good, God would want to prevent all evil.' The 'evil' that is normally in mind is discord—pain and suffering."

⁴ *American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

⁵ Herwig Arts, *God, the Christian, and Human Suffering*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 3.

⁶ Ellen White, *Education*, p. 263.

⁷ See Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), pp. 458-66.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 460. Those who see Zoroastrianism as monotheistic teach that Ahuramazda created twin spirits, Spenta Mainyu [the "holy spirit" and Angra Mainyu [the "fiendish spirit"], Yamauchi, p. 437. In this view the supreme god deliberately creates an inherently evil being.

⁹ Yasna 30, trans. Stanley Insler, in *The Gathas of Zarathustra*, p. 34, quoted in Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, 3rd ed., (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), p. 207.

¹⁰ Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1981), p.43.

¹¹ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), as also its 1991 revision in Clarendon paperback, the latter including a response [Appendix A] to criticisms of his book by John Mackie. To speak of evil's inevitability (*Existence*, p. 200) is, of course, to justify the devil taking "the wrong turn" (p. 157). It also means failing to distinguish between temptation, an option available to free beings, and yielding. The determinism of inevitable evil may undo the very freedom for which Swinburne argues. Swinburne also denies predictive prophecy. With regard to divine omniscience, he reasons that "it is logically impossible to know (without the possibility of mistake) what someone will do freely tomorrow—(*Is There a God?*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 7). With regard to divine omnipresence, he rejects a synonymy of eternal existence and timelessness [the view of great philosophical theologians from the 4th to the 14th century—Augustine, Boethius, Aquinas]. How can God, timelessly know, simultaneously, asks Swinburne, what happens at all points in history? Equally, how can he know what is happening in 587 B.C. and AD 1995? These are different years! Therefore God is everlasting rather than timeless: "He exists at each moment of unending time" (*Is There a God?*, p. 9).

¹² Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?*, p. 97.

¹³ A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*, abridged, (Los Angeles, New York: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1972), chap. 3:11, p. 49.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:12, p. 50.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:14, p. 50.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:14, p. 50.

²¹ Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, 3rd ed., (NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), p. 75.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 65.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ The Indian Virgin of Guadalupe is reported to have appeared to one Juan Diego, speaking to him in Nahuatl, on Dec 9, 1531, at a place where the Aztec mother goddess had usually appeared in the past.

²⁵ William Madsen, "Religious Syncretism," in *Social Anthropology*, Handbook of Middle American Indians, vol. 6, gen. ed., Robert Wauchope; vol. ed., Manning Nash (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1967), pp. 369-91; p. 378.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

²⁹ H. Cortes, 1908, 1:260-62, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 370.

³⁰ J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in *The Problem of Evil*, Marilyn McCord Adams & Robert Merrihew Adams, eds., Oxford Readings in Philosophy (Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 25-37; p. 25.

³¹ Fisher, p. 116, 117.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁵ Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, rev. & expanded, with texts from Suttas and Dhammapada; foreword by Paul Demieville, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1974), pp. 16, 17.

³⁶ Mackie, *ibid.*

³⁷ Arts, *ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁸ Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita*, Introduction, p. xxi.

³⁹ Fisher, *ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴⁰ Mackie, *ibid.*

⁴¹ R. C. Sproul, *Not a Chance* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). p. 163.

⁴² H. A. W. Meyer, *Über den Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (Göttingen, 1872), on 1:22, in John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), 1:41.

⁴³ A more nuanced continuum might conceivably include such other staging points as process theology or open theism, both involving a God of less moral culpability than the table's first five positions, given the limits of his foreknowledge. For me, a God of unmodified omniscience, power, and love, within the context of Arminian free will, would still present the most gracious option.

⁴⁴ "The 'demonic-in-Yahweh' position, . . . is not an option for one who holds to a high view of Scripture"--Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), p. 145.

⁴⁵ N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), p. 43.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁴⁹ Wright, p. 111; "The biblical picture of the satan is thus a nonhuman and nondivine quasi-personal force"—p. 109; he speaks of Jesus' victory over a "negative force", or a "shadowy being or beings"—p. 114.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵³ Robert Alden, *Job*, New American Commentary, vol. 11, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, (Broadman Publishers, 1993), p. 53. See also See Emil G. Kraeling, "A Theodicy and More," in *The Dimensions of Job: A Study and Selected Readings*, ed. Nahum H. Glatzer, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 205-214; p. 208; Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1973).

⁵⁴ Alden, *ibid.* The passage draws attention to the broader issue of God's involvement with moral mischief and physical mayhem, an issue to which we must return.

⁵⁵ "The Satan is an equivocal figure, distinct from the sons of God . . ." *New Jerusalem Bible* (New York, London: Doubleday, 1985), p. 757, note g.

⁵⁶ Wright, p. 111.

⁵⁷ J. L. Crenshaw, "Introduction: The Shift From Theodicy to Anthropodicy," in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, Issues in Religion and Theology, vol. 4; ed. James L. Crenshaw, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 1-16; p. 11.

⁵⁸ Idem, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, rev., enlarged (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), p. 92.

⁵⁹ N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary*, (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1967), p. 11.

⁶⁰ I discuss the intrusive character of the Satan in relation to the divine court in Lael Caesar, "Character in Job," unpublished dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1991, pp. 76-83. His moral culpability for evil—as opposed to God's, I address in "The Issue of Suffering: Nine Christian Responses," *JATS* 10/1 (1999), pp. 73-89; see particularly pp. 81-87.

⁶¹ The NET rendering "All right then" goes too far: "All right then everything he has is in your power".

⁶² Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), p. 5.

⁶³ Ehrman, *ibid.*, p. 165, seems not to be aware of all these markers of separation, hostility, and irreconcilability between God and Satan. He still thinks of the adversary here "as one of God's divine council members, a group of divinities who regularly report to God and, evidently, go about the world doing his will."

⁶⁴ Bruce Baloian, *stn*, in *New International Dictionary of OT Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren, 5 vols., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:1231-1232; p. 1231: "The OT does not see the satanic aspect as forming part of its theodicy. A 'satan' is not portrayed as the origin or cause of evil."

⁶⁵ D. E. Hiebert, "Satan", in *The Zondervan Pictorial Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 5:282-286; p. 282: "It is a remarkable feature of the theology of the OT that so little mention is made of Satan as the great Adversary of God and His people."

⁶⁶ Peggy Lynne Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, #43, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988).

⁶⁷ See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), p. 359.

⁶⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, "Satan", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed., David Noel Freedman, 6 vols., (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:985-989; p. 988.

⁶⁹ Motyer, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Hiebert, *ibid.*

⁷¹ GKC126d. Overlooking this, Boyd considers him "a relatively minor figure, being mentioned by name only once (1 Chr 21:1)"—Boyd, *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁷² An equivalent of *emperipateo*, the much more frequent *peripateo* [95 times in the NT], also hints at this contrast when 1 Pe 5:8, of the devil's walking about is seen over against Christ's walking among the seven candlesticks in Rev 2:1. But the much more general usage of *peripateo* does not support the precise contrast of *emperipateo*.

⁷³ Dhorme's description is personal: ". . . it is Satan, the ancient enemy of mankind, who will perform the nefarious deeds." Dhorme, *ibid.*, p. xxxiii.

⁷⁴ The evidence is uncertain: Hamilton, *ibid.*, p. 985, finds no cognate for *satan* in any of the Semitic languages, while Baloian, *ibid.*, proposes Arab. *shaitan*, Eth. *s/shaitan*; Tigr. *shetan*; W. Kirchschräger, "Satan (et démons)", *Supplément au dictionnaire de la Bible* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928-), xii:1-47; col. 1, suggests Akk. *shatanu*, "to attack", which is rare, as Ludwig Koehler & Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958) observes, and *may [shatanu]* mean just that; see s.v. *stn*, where, as with Hiebert, *ibid.*, Judeo-Aramaic *sitna* is also suggested.

⁷⁵ Crenshaw, *ibid.*, p. 110, n. 4.

⁷⁶ Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, Vintage Books edition, (New York: Random House, 1996), p. xviii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷⁸ *Diccionario de la Biblia* (Barcelona: Herder, 1981); s.v. "Diablo", cols. 465-467.

⁷⁹ On these, see Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, vol II: Isaiah to Malachi* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 1551-53; and Gregory Boyd, *ibid.*, pp. 157-62.

⁸⁰ Wright, *ibid.*, p. 72, speaking of the OT satan: "We are still some way from the dragon of Revelation or even from the sinister figure whispering in Jesus' ear on the Mount of Temptation." And Ehrman advises that Satan only becomes the devil at a later stage in Israelite religion—when apocalypticism arises, during the Maccabean revolt, some 150-170 years before Jesus' birth. This is where he dates the book of Daniel—Ehrman, *ibid.*, pp. 165, 201-208. Jewish apocalypticists saw the world in dualistic terms, with God in charge of good, and his evil opponent, the Devil, Satan, in control of evil (p. 215). We not only separate Scripture from itself, we also make it contradict itself

if, when it says the ancient serpent, and Satan, and the Devil, and the dragon are all one, we insist that they cannot be.

⁸¹ Pastoral setting typical of patriarchal period, with wealth measured chiefly in livestock, Job as priest of the family, the absence of reference to any of the major events of OT history—Israelite or otherwise, mention of the *kesitah*—a coin (42:11) mentioned besides only as money Jacob used (Gen 33:19; Josh 24:32).

⁸² *The Talmud*, Tractate Bava Batra, 15a-b; on the web at *Jewish Virtual Library*, chapter 1:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Talmud/bavabatrato.html>

⁸³ Ellen White's Comments, 3SDABC 1140, quoting ST Feb. 19, 1880.

⁸⁴ Boyd, *ibid.*, p. 165.

⁸⁵ Swinburne, *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Ehrman, *ibid.*, p. 27. For Ehrman, the view of prophet and sage, "the point of view of the majority of authors who produced the biblical texts" is that "people go hungry, experience bodily harm and personal misfortune, come under God's curse, get into trouble, and die . . . [B]ecause they are wicked: they do not obey God. How does one avoid suffering? . . . By obeying God." *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63. We may also cite him at this point as insisting that Satan, in *Job*, "is not an adversary to God" (p. 165). The integrated positions on God as wanting people to suffer and Satan as no enemy of God together give increased urgency to my appeal to those who wittingly or unwittingly labor as 'Christians for a Callous God'.

⁸⁷ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*. (New York: Macmillan, 1944), pp. 122, 123.

⁸⁸ Boyd, *God at War*; idem, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy*, (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

⁸⁹ Boyd, *God at War*, p. 32. See again, *Diccionario, ibid. Contra Boyd*, a divine choice to limit his knowledge of the future is not a required condition for the rise of cosmic conflict to which Boyd so eloquently speaks. When he grants that God "foresees every possibility as though it were a certainty", he does not yet grant enough. See Gregory A. Boyd, *Is God to Blame?* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), p. 116. For God does not merely encompass all likelihoods, he possesses all data. More than knowing what may, he knows what will transpire—he declares the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10).

⁹⁰ Wright, p. 164.

⁹¹ Boyd, *God at War*, p. 20.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 21. Unfortunately, though Boyd has much to teach on the reality of cosmic conflict, his explanation of its origins diminishes the God of Scripture by denying him his own claims to foreknow all things (Psa 139:16; Mat 10:30; Luke 12:7).

⁹³ Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 492, a passage of valuable counsel and warning that explains our lack of comprehension as the fruit of either inappropriate inquisitiveness, or faith in misguided traditions and biblical explanations: "There are those who, in their inquiries concerning the existence of sin, endeavor to search into that which God has never revealed; hence they find no solution of their difficulties; and such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and cavil, seize upon this as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ. Others, however, fail of a satisfactory understanding of the great problem of evil, from the fact that tradition and misinterpretation have obscured the teaching of the Bible concerning the character of God, the nature of his government, and the principles of his dealing with sin." It seems possible, from this, that the doubts of some may even be the downfall of others ("such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and cavil, seize upon this . . .").

⁹⁴ Lewis, *ibid.*

⁹⁵ George H. Morrison, "The Problem of Pain", in *Classic Sermons on Suffering*, compiled by Warren Wiersbe, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1984), pp. 145-152; p. 148.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-51.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁰⁰ G. Mattingly, "The Pious Sufferer: Mesopotamia's Traditional Theodicy and Job's Counselors," in *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature: Scripture in Context III* [ed. W. W. Hallo, B. W. Jones, & G. Mattingly; ANETS 8; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990] 312. Quoted in Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), p. 324, n. 1.

¹⁰¹ Wright, p. 113.

¹⁰² Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 755.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ Ellen White, *Education*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁵ Wright, p. 77.

¹⁰⁶ Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 507-08.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), p. 194.

¹⁰⁸ See for example, Mark A. Noll & David N. Livingstone, eds., *B. B. Warfield: Evolution, Science, and Scripture—Selected Writings*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), which shows how this theological giant strove to achieve a reconciliation between the theory of evolution and the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. See also Swinburne's works, cited earlier where arguments for theism operate on evolutionary and other rationalistic presumptions.

¹⁰⁹ Bruce Chapman, "Postscript: The Twenty-first Century Has Arrived," in *Mere Creation: Science, Faith and Intelligent Design*, ed. William A. Dembski, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), pp. 454-59; p. 459.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 454-59.

¹¹¹ Boyd, *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹² Kenneth Surin, *Theology & the Problem of Evil*, (Oxford, UK; New York, NY: Blackwell, 1986), p. 198.

¹¹³ 3SDABC 1140.

¹¹⁴ Ehrman, *ibid.*