

**Discussion Notes (Handout 1)**  
**Series: The Problem of Evil**

**Jack Crabtree • Reformation Fellowship, May-June 2012**

**Part 1: Defining the Problem of Evil**

**A. Bible's View of God: "Biblical divine determinism" = divine determinism + divine goodness**

1. Divine determinism: God causes and determines every aspect of everything that is and of everything that occurs (like an author).
2. Divine goodness: God is purely good and has no hint of evil in his being.

**B. Problem of Evil**

1. The nature and extent of actual evil that exists in created reality makes our belief in and/or our submission to this biblical God unjustified.
  - a. In view of the nature and extent of the evil in the world, it is not reasonable to believe that God is both good and the cause of everything that occurs.
  - b. In view of the nature and extent of the evil in the world, it is not good and right that we should submit to the creator of this reality.
    - i. *Even if one could argue successfully that the creator is both good and the cause of everything, it is unacceptable (morally?) to submit to him.*
2. Problem of evil as the basis for a philosophical argument: "The argument from evil"
  - a. As an argument for ATHEISM (on the assumption that theism entails both divine determinism and divine goodness).
  - b. As an argument against biblical divine determinism (against the claim that the Bible advocates both divine determinism and divine goodness).
    - i. *The evil in the world does not permit one to believe in divine determinism AND in divine goodness. (Since God is good, divine determinism is wrong.)*
3. Problem of evil as the basis for a psycho-emotionally compelling appeal to refuse to acknowledge God.
  - a. Usually advanced in literature, not philosophy.
  - b. Distinction between an *argument* not to submit to God and a compelling *appeal* not to submit to God.
  - c. Failure to understand this distinction is the source of a great deal of confusion:
    - i. *One could successfully rebut the philosophical argument against biblical divine determinism without, in the least, motivating a person to submit to God.*
      - (A) An argument can only demonstrate what is reasonable, and therefore what is likely to be true. An argument cannot make one believe. Nor can it make one choose to act in accord with what is true.

- (B) NO PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT that establishes the rationality of believing in the goodness of God can ever make a person willing to believe that he is good, willing to like God, nor willing to submit to God.
- ii. *If an argument fails to remove a person's dislike for God and for what he has caused to be in created reality, that does not mean that the argument has failed to successfully rebut the argument from evil.*
  - (A) Nothing in the Bible would suggest that we must LIKE what God is doing in our lives and in created reality.
    - (1) Indeed, there would be something ungodly about us if we did, in fact, LIKE the evil and suffering in the world.
  - (B) If a person chooses to hate God because he does not like the reality that God has made, no philosophical argument could possibly convince him not to do so.
  - (C) When a rebuttal to the problem of evil fails to remove a person's dislike for what God has brought about, that person can deceive himself into thinking that the "failure" of the rebuttal (to mollify his dislike) somehow justifies him in holding God in contempt. (He thereby rationalizes his failure to acknowledge God.)
    - (1) It does not follow from the failure of argument A to remove my disdain for God, that my disdain is justified.
    - (2) Disdain is a choice I make; not a conclusion that I reach. Therefore, disdain is not the sort of thing that can be removed by AN ARGUMENT.