

Discussion Notes (Handout 2)
Series: The Problem of Evil

Jack Crabtree • Reformation Fellowship, May-June 2012

Part 2: Can a Good God Create Evil?

A. How should we assess the goodness of God?

1. God will and must be judged by the same concept of goodness (and the same standard) that we use in ordinary, everyday life.
 - a. The problem of evil assumes the ordinary standard of goodness when it presents evil as a problem for our concept of God.
 - b. Humans being made in the image of God implies that we have been created to judge with the same concept of goodness as that by which God himself judges.
 - i. *Humans being morally depraved implies that human beings are capable of having their ability to judge by God's standard of goodness skewed and perverted by their own proclivity to sin and unrighteousness.*
2. No act can be accurately judged to be evil (or to be good) unless it has been accurately and fully described.
 - a. What act is being described by "cutting his abdomen open"?
 - an appendectomy?
 - a knife-assault by a mugger?
 - what?(different acts of "cutting open his abdomen" will receive different moral judgments)
 - i. *An accurate moral judgment with regard to an act requires an accurate description of that act.*
3. No act can be accurately judged to be evil (or to be good) unless one has rightly understood the role, authority, and prerogatives of the one doing the act.
 - a. What is the right moral judgment on the act of "being sexually intimate with a woman"?
 - i. *It depends upon who the person is who is "being sexually intimate." Is it the woman's husband? Or, is it the woman's adulterous neighbor?*
 - b. What is the right moral judgment on the act of "treating her as a child"?
 - i. *It depends upon who the person is who is "treating her as a child." Is it a little girl's father? Or, is it a woman's husband?*
4. No act of God can be accurately judged to be evil (or to be good) unless (1) it has been accurately and fully described, and (2) we have taken full account of who God is and what prerogatives he has.
 - a. What is the right moral judgment on the act of "purposely causing an automobile accident"?

C. How ought we to assess the worthiness of the Story (or of the stories within it)?

1. The Story (and each individual storyline) of created reality is good, right, and worthy to the extent that it reflects something meaningful, significant, and true about its morally good author, God.
 - a. The purpose of the story that God is creating, centered in me, is to bring “glory” to him, not to bring benefit to me.
 - b. The goodness and worthiness of any storyline is NOT dependent upon whether its resolution benefits all the actors within the story.
 - i. *If one rejects this perspective on God and reality, then there is no answer to the problem of evil.*
 - (A) The nature and extent of evil in the world just is incompatible with God being good in the sense that he is a creator who desires to bring benefit to each and every one of his creatures. If that is how we insist on defining “good,” *THEN GOD IS NOT GOOD.*
 - c. This is the most significant stumbling block within the biblical worldview.
 - i. *We strongly resist the idea that reality is absolutely theo-centric (God-centered) is in this way.*
 - (A) We naturally gravitate toward a creature-centric (and especially a **me**-centric) perspective.
[Namely: If **I** do not benefit by my existence, then it is **not good** that God created me. If my “story” does not end well for me, where I ultimately benefit, then my story cannot be judged to be a “good” one.]

<p>Five Important Implications of the Most Obnoxious Truth of Biblical Divine Determinism</p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God did not create reality to bring benefit me; he created reality to reflect who he is.• By the very nature of who God is and what created reality is, God is fully within his rights to “use” me to fulfill whatever purposes he chooses. If those purposes are good, then God is good—regardless of whether the outcome is good for me.• The moral goodness of God is found in the moral goodness of the story of reality as a whole; it is not found in whether he brings benefit to me and mine.• Creating me does not obligate God to bring me benefit. God can be perfectly good and, at the same time, bring nothing but harm to me.• If I concede that God is under no obligation to benefit me, then, in the end, I will be given an end that benefits me. But if I insist that God is under obligation to benefit me, then, in the end, I will not be given an end that benefits me. |
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