## God’s Sovereignty: The Problem of Evil

Our next topic presents biblical scholars and thinking persons in general with possibly the most difficult and perplexing riddle to solve – the so-called “problem of evil.” This is one of the atheist’s main objections to God’s existence. The premises of the problem of evil are as follows: (1) if God is good, then He must eliminate evil; (2) if God is almighty, then He is able to eliminate evil; (3) evil exists; (4) therefore, a good and almighty God does not exist.

The “philosophical problem of evil,” reflected in this set of premises, is discussed in book 1 of this series. Our aim in this chapter, however, is the discussion between believers in God as to why He allows suffering and evil. The focus is not proving God’s existence, but discovering what goal He is pursuing. This is known as the “religious problem of evil.”

Evil has two forms: moral evil resulting from wrong human choices, and natural evil caused by natural phenomena. In regard to moral evil, in our previous chapter we have already dismissed the possibility that God causes people to sin. Yet, the question remains as to why He *allows* people to make wrong choices. Our dual task, then, is to address the questions why God allows people to sin (moral evil), and why nature sometimes manifests destructive tendencies (natural evil).

### А. Biblical Survey and the Intertestamental Period

**1. Old Testament**

Opening the pages of the Old Testament, we immediately discover that, in the beginning, evil had no existence. God made all things “very good” (Gen 1:31). Only beginning with the Fall and due to its consequences people began to sin and nature began to manifest the destructive powers, with which we are all well acquainted (Gen 3:16-24). Even Satan, whom we may associate with the sly serpent, was originally created without fault (сf. Ezek 28:12-15).[[1]](#footnote-1)

The book of Genesis contains many examples where the Lord used the sinful choices of people to advance His purpose. The classic case is when Joseph’s brothers, out of envy, sold him into slavery in Egypt. Yet, as a result of his misfortune, Joseph ended up in a position to save his family from famine (Gen 37-45). Joseph assessed the situation as follows: “As for you, you meant evil against me, {but} God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Gen 50:20).

In addition, in Genesis 21:12 when Sarah insisted that Abraham drive out Hagar and Ishmael, God instructed him to let her have her way, although her motives were wrong. By this means, God was preserving the inheritance for Isaac (Gen 21:10-12). Rebekah and Jacob acted wrongly in deceiving Isaac, but as a result, God secured the inheritance for Jacob (Gen 27).

Furthermore, God took advantage of Rachel’s barrenness and Leah’s fertility to incline Jacob’s heart to the latter (Gen 29:31-35). God turned Laban’s unfair treatment of Jacob into prosperity for the latter (Gen 31:6-9). In connection with this, Laban’s unjust behavior toward Jacob prompted the latter to return to Canaan, the Promised Land (Gen 31:2-3).

The book of Job is a key to understanding the issue of God and evil. The opening scene depicts Satan challenging God to text Job’s fidelity (Job 1-2). The narrative continues that God accepted Satan’s challenge and allowed him to afflict Job. We can safely assume that God meant this situation to serve as a lesson for future sufferers to learn from as well. An important feature of this account is the God limited the damage Satan was allowed to do. This shows that in executing his evil devices, Satan does not enjoy complete freedom. He can function only within the parameters that God allows, which are in accord with His divine purpose, and not beyond.

Job responded to his suffering in various ways. At first, he stood fast in faith, trusting the Lord (Job 1:10). Yet, after a long period of suffering he began to waver in his confidence in God’s plan for his life: “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, and the night {which} said, ‘A boy is conceived’” (Job 3:3). Job’s “friends” blamed Job for his troubles – he surely must have sinned (Job 4:7-11). However, Job insisted on his innocence and believed that he was suffering unfairly (Job 10:1-7, 13-17). Job believed that God had appointed his afflictions: “For He performs what is appointed for me” (Job 23:14). He came to the point of wanting to dispute with God (Job 13:3, 18-19: 23:1-6). Elihu, having heard Job out, rebuked him for ascribing injustice to the Lord (Job 34:18-20, 29).

Finally, after a long period of divine silence, God answered Job (Job 38-41). Interestingly, the Lord never explained to Job who was attacking him or why. Instead, he reminded Job of the greatness of His creative genius. It appears that it was more important to God to correct Job’s critical attitude than to give him insight into his dilemma. God’s greatness and wisdom are evident in the created order. Therefore, one should not challenge Him. Also important to note is that eventually the Lord restored Job and blessed him beyond his earlier state.

So then, in the book of Job we witness a typical situation where a person suffers, but does not understand why. We can glean the following lessons: (1) God does not always explain the cause of our suffering, (2) suffering is not always caused by personal sin, (3) Satan is the source of undeserved suffering, (4) God can use affliction caused by the Devil to test faith, (5) God can limit the severity of Satan’s attacks, (6) although we may not always understand the reason for suffering, we can always trust the Lord who will eventually display His saving mercy, and (7) God is greater in wisdom that we are, so we must not challenge Him.

The main point of this biblical book is that trusting God is more essential than understanding what is happening in our lives. Habakkuk expresses this well: “Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, {though} the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in Yahweh, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:17-18).

At the same time, the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, show us many examples of people who complain to the Lord about their miseries. God does not condemn such behavior. Carson comments, “There is no attempt in Scripture to whitewash the anguish of God’s people when they undergo suffering. They argue with God, they complain to God, they weep before God. Theirs is not a faith that leads to dry-eyed stoicism, but a faith so robust it wrestles with God.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Another example of God permitting evil is that the Lord may allow false prophets to arise in Israel and even perform miracles. The reason is this: “Yahweh your God is testing you to find out if you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut 13:3). This verse reminds us of Job, where God allowed Satan to test him with various trials. Yet, in this case, God is permitting not suffering, but deception with the same goal – to test the fidelity of His people.

In the Old Testament historical books, we again encounter instances where God uses evil deeds to advance His plan. In the book of Judges, Samson’s desire for revenge became the means by which God struck the Philistines (Judg 15:1-8). Similarly, through the assassinations of Abner and Ish-bosheth, God delivered the kingdom over to David (2 Sam 3-4). In addition, the Old Testament abounds with cases where the Lord raised up enemies against Israel to discipline them. (e.g. 2 Kin 15:37; Ps 80:6). Curiously, Elisha accessed the siege of Samaria by saying, “Behold, this evil is from Yahweh; why should I wait for Yahweh any longer (i.e. to prophecy deliverance)?” (2 Kin 6:33). Hobbs explains this verse by saying that Elisha perceived God’s hand in the siege, yet understood that God’s purpose in this trial was already accomplished and therefore took initiative to predict deliverance for Israel.[[3]](#footnote-3)

God also used one Israelite to discipline another: “Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet” (1 Kin 16:12). We observe a special case in 2 Samuel 12:12, where God predicted the future defilement of David’s wives by his son Absalom.[[4]](#footnote-4) The unique feature here is that the Lord does not identify Absalom as the culprit, but instead ascribes the event to Himself as an act of disciple: “I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.”

In the historical narratives, we encounter the expression “an evil spirit from Yahweh.” In Judges 9:23, we read, “God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem,” so that through their mutual animosity He might execute judgment on both. Additionally, after the Spirit of God departed from Saul, an “evil spirit from Yahweh” tormented him (1 Sam 16:14; 18:10; 19:9). The Lord also released a “deceiving spirit” into the mouths of Ahab’s prophets to incite the king to go to war and perish in battle (1 Kin 22:23).

In the first two instances, we observe that the word translated “evil” is רָעָה (*raah*), which can refer both to moral and natural evil. When a רוּחַ רָעָה (“evil spirit”) was sent to Saul, it did not prompt him to do an evil act.[[5]](#footnote-5) In the case of Abimelech and the men of Shechem, Keil and Delitzsch believe that God sent “an evil demon, which produced discord and strife.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This would be consistent with our observation earlier, that God may use means to solidify the already ill intention of those stubborn in rebellion.

Keil and Delitzsch deal the same way with the “deceiving spirit” that Yahweh sent to the prophets of Ahab, comparing this event with Paul’s warnings in Romans 1:24-28 that God gives people over to their own persistent rebellion in order to prepare them for judgment.[[7]](#footnote-7) House insightfully notes that, although God sent a deceiving spirit to Ahab’s prophets, He nonetheless warned the king through His prophet Micah that He did so (1 Kin 22:23).[[8]](#footnote-8) So then, Ahab was informed that his prophets were deceiving him, yet he still accepted their counsel.

A similar case is noted in Ezekiel 14:9-10, where God speaks concerning false prophets, “But if the prophet is prevailed upon to speak a word, it is I, Yahweh, who have prevailed upon that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. They will bear {the punishment of} their iniquity; as the iniquity of the inquirer is, so the iniquity of the prophet will be.”

The word translated twice “prevailed” is פָתָה (*pathah*), which can mean “convince” or “deceive.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Therefore, the literal translation would be: “But if the prophet is convinced/deceived to speak a word, it is I, Yahweh, who have convinced/deceived that prophet.” Keil and Delitzsch repeat their earlier defense that God is again allowing the deception of those already intent on evil, as in was in Ahab’s case.[[10]](#footnote-10) Cooper concurs, “This verse clearly states that the deception of these false prophets was allowed by and even encouraged by God as a part of the judgment process.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

The following examples show that God can employ negative natural forces to accomplish His goals. Concerning the famine in Egypt, the psalmist declares, “He called for a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, Joseph, {who} was sold as a slave” (Ps 105:16-17). In addition, God “closed the womb” of Hannah (1 Sam 1:5), but later opened it in answer to her fervent prayer and gave her Samuel. In gratitude, Hannah dedicated her child to Yahweh.

In her expression of gratitude to the Lord, Hannah declares, “Yahweh kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. Yahweh makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts” (1 Sam 2:6-7). Does this mean that the Lord is the instigator of all the harm that occurs on the earth? Taking the context of these verses into consideration, we note that Hannah’s goal here was not to comment on the problem of evil, but to speak of God’s righteous judgment is humbling the proud and exalting the humble.

In some instances, it seems that God allowing evil served no good purpose. For example, His initial choice of king over Israel, Saul, turned away from Him. Moreover, in 1 Samuel 21:7, Doeg, one of Saul’s servants, “was there that day, detained before Yahweh” and discovered David’s whereabouts, after which he informed Saul.

In the first case, God gave Israel a king because they demanded one (1 Sam 8:5). He gave Israel the very type of king that they desired: “He was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see him whom Yahweh has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people’” (1 Sam 10:23-24). Yet, the Lord knew from the start what was in Saul’s heart. Israel (including Samuel) needed to learn that God sees “not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7).

In the case of Doeg, the text does not inform us what exactly it means to be “detained before Yahweh.” It is possible that God was not intentionally detaining Him, but some mitigating circumstances delayed his departure.

In the Psalms, we frequently encounter the cry of a sufferer: “How long, Yahweh? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” (see Ps 13:1; 35:17; 44:24). Everyone asks this same question at one time or another. If God can do all things, why does He not intervene in my situation? When Judah was threatened by Babylon, the prophet Habakkuk made the same complaint (Hab 1:12ff). However, the psalmist himself answers his own question – we must trust in the Lord: “But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation” (Ps 13:5).

The author of Psalm 88 continues our discussion of God and evil, claiming that his own suffering came from the Lord:

You have put me in the lowest pit, in dark places, in the depths. Your wrath has rested upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah. You have removed my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an object of loathing to them; I am shut up and cannot go out.…. I was afflicted and about to die from my youth on; I suffer Your terrors; I am overcome. Your burning anger has passed over me; Your terrors have destroyed me. They have surrounded me like water all day long; they have encompassed me altogether. You have removed lover and friend far from me; my acquaintances are {in} darkness (Ps 88:6-8, 15-18).

In analyzing this passage, we observe, first of all, that the psalmist does not specifically identify the reason for his suffering. Was it discipline from the Lord, or was it for some other reason? In other passages that speak of God bringing calamity on someone, it is connected with correction (see Lam 3:3, 28-38; Jer 9:12-15; 31:28; 45:4; Amos 3:6).

Second, since in Old Testament times there was little revelation about the origin and mechanism of evil, Old Testament writers often ascribe all events to the Lord: both good and harmful. God revealed little about the powers of evil at that time since He wanted to prevent His people from embracing a dualistic worldview with an evil force that could rival Him. In the polytheistic atmosphere of the day, this was a real danger. We recall here God’s dealings with Job – He refrained from identifying Satan as the cause of Job’s miseries.

We extend our survey now to include the prophetic books. We again see that God can use both evil deeds committed by people and natural forces for His purposes. The book of Joel provides us with some fine examples. To discipline His people, God sent both locust (chp. 1) and Gentile armies (chp. 2). However, in chapter 3, He gathers all the nations against Jerusalem to execute judgment on them. At the same time, in these and similar cases there is no indication that God directly caused or prompted an evil action. He simply takes advantage of the opportunity at hand to work into His good plan an evil deed performed willfully by some person or in the course of nature.

In light of God’s holiness and righteousness, we are challenged by the following text:

I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live; and I pronounced them unclean because of their gifts, in that they caused all their firstborn to pass through {the fire} so that I might make them desolate, in order that they might know that I am Yahweh (Ezek 20:25-26).

Commentators correctly observe that the words “I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live” are not referring to the Mosaic Law. If we examine the context, we discover that God declares that the Law gives life (v. 19-21). God’s law is contrasted with the ordinances of the Gentiles (v. 18), which Israel began to observe when they rejected God’s Law. Therefore, the words “statutes that were not good,” which the Lord “gave” to His people, are better understood in the sense that God gave this generation over to observe Gentile ordinances (i.e., gave them over to idolatry), to which they had already devoted themselves. The Lord’s goal was to “make them desolate” so that they would come to repentance.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In the book of the prophet Isaiah, we read the surprising words, “The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am Yahweh who does all these” (Isa 45:7). Does this mean that God is the source of all these evils? Commentators explain that these words were spoken to contrast the true God with false ones, in particular, with the gods of Persia (note the reference to Cyrus, the Persian king, in verse 1).[[13]](#footnote-13) In the Persian system, there were two gods who vied with one another for control of the world. To refute this system (and polytheism in general), Isaiah writes that the true God is one, and that all things in the end trace back to Him. Moreover, the words “darkness” and “calamity” could well refer to His punishment for sin.

Our next passage is taken from Ezekiel 24:16, where God announces to the prophet, “Son of man, behold, I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow.” Did God take Ezekiel’s wife for the purpose of making her a prophetic symbol (see v. 18-24)? The biblical text does not give us adequate information to know the reason for this tragedy. All that we know is that God used this event to communicate His prophetic message.

The book of Ezekiel also contains an interesting claim that Yahweh punishes the righteous and unrighteous together. According to Ezekiel 21:3, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Behold, I am against you; and I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off from you the righteous and the wicked.’” Cooper sees in this case an example of “corporate responsibility” or “corporate personality,” where the Lord deals with an entire group as a single person.

The Old Testament abounds with examples of this phenomenon. In Numbers 16:27-33, we learn that the rebels Dathan and Abiram perished along with their entire families. When Jericho was rebuilt against the Lord’s command, the re-builder did not perish, but only his children (Josh 6:25; 1 Kin 16:34). When David conducted an illegal census of his kingdom, David did not suffer, but rather the inhabitants of Jerusalem (2 Sam 24:15-17; 1 Chr 21:3). Because of Achan’s transgression, his entire family shared his punishment (Josh 7:24-25).

So then, an entire group can share the destiny of its head: both the righteous and the unrighteous in it. Cooper writes, “The wicked were guilty, but many people, including some righteous, would suffer because of the sins of the wicked.”[[14]](#footnote-14) In the next volume of this series, we will investigate in detail the idea of “corporate personality” in our treatment of the topic “Union with Christ.”

Finally, we must mention the suffering God’s people experienced because of their faith in Him. From the beginning of the Old Testament narrative to the end, the righteous suffer either at the hand of Gentiles, or from their own people. Prophets and other faithful followers of the Lord are subject to torments and sometimes death to fulfill their ministry and stay faithful to the Lord. Our chapter on suffering for Christ in volume 5 of this series details this topic.

**2. Intertestamental Period**

Before advancing to the New Testament, we will make a brief stop at the intertestamental literature.[[15]](#footnote-15) Some of these books indict demonic spirits as the cause of evil deeds performed by people: “Thus the actions of powerful and violent human beings are functions of a rebellious spirit world.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Special attention is paid to the time when evil spirits allegedly had intercourse with women (see Gen 6:1-4; *1* *Enoch*, 6-16; *Jubilees*, 10).

In other books, suffering results from punishment for personal sins:

- Because he is our Lord, and he our God, and he our Father, yea, he is God to all the ages: He will chastise you for your iniquities, and will show mercy unto you all (*Tobit*, 13.4-5).

- Now I beseech those that read this book, that they be not discouraged for these calamities, but that they judge those punishments not to be for destruction, but for a chastening of our nation (*2 Maccabees*, 6.12).

- On this account he had aforetime no mercy on His own sons, but afflicted them as His enemies, because they sinned, then therefore were they chastened that they might be sanctified (*2 Baruch*, 13.9-10).

- For the Lord spareth His pious ones, and blotteth out their errors by His chastening (*Psalms of Solomon*, 13.9).

The latter view, that suffering is for discipline and correction, dominates in rabbinic Judaism.

**3. New Testament**

According to New Testament teaching, suffering was never part of God’s original plan for the world. Romans 5:12 clearly states that sin and death entered the world through Adam’s transgression: “Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men.” All evil and suffering among people, therefore, traces back to a single source – the Fall.

Furthermore, as in the intertestamental literature, the New Testament also emphasizes the role Satan and demons play in inflicting humanity. The next volume in this series will devote a chapter to this topic. We can, nonetheless, do a brief survey of their evil activities here. They tempt (Matt 4:1; 1 Cor 7:5), possess people (Mk 5:2; Acts 8:7), spread false teaching (1 Tim 4:1), cause sickness (Matt 9:32; Mk 9:17; Lk 11:14), accuse the saints (Rev 12:10), destroy (Mk 4:36-39), persecute believers in Jesus (2 Cor 12:7; Rev 2:10), hinder the preaching and reception of the gospel (2 Cor 4:4: Mк. 4:15; 1 Thes 2:18), and prompt unbelievers to sin (Col 1:13; Eph 2:2; 1 Jn 5:19).

Why does the Lord allow the powers of darkness freedom to act? What goal is His pursuing? The New Testament sheds some light on this question. When Satan tempts or afflicts a believer, God takes advantage of the situation to test the faith of His people (Rev 2:10; Lk 21:31-32; 1 Pet 1:7). The Lord wants to see how His saints will react to difficulties and suffering. Will they remain faithful in trial or not?

The New Testament also reveals that the destructive and deceptive works of the Devil can be a means for God to punish unbelievers. Paul writes that in the end times God will send a “deluding influence” among those who rejected the love of the truth, leading them on to judgment (2 Thes 2:11-12).

Finally, God may at times used the powers of darkness to advance His redemptive plan. For example, the “rulers of this world” crucified the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 2:8; Lk 22:53). Satan tormented Paul through a thorn in the flesh, which actually benefited Paul by keeping him from exalting himself (2 Cor 12:7-10). Excommunication from the Church can involve delivering the rebellious one over to Satan, which may, in turn, lead to his/her repentance and restoration (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20).

Another aspect of the purpose of pain is that it can lead to the development of Christian character, also called “soul-making.” The classic passage to bring out this truth is in Romans chapter 5:

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom 5:3-5).

James writes in the same vein:

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have {its} perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (Jam 1:2-4).

Following Jesus will unavoidably involve the suffering of self-denial. In Jesus’ words, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” (Mk 8:34).[[17]](#footnote-17) In addition, disciples of the Lord experience the fatherly discipline of God: “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb 12:6).[[18]](#footnote-18)

The word translated “disciplines” is παιδέυω (*paideuo*), which is related to the noun παιδεία (*paideia*), “upbringing.”[[19]](#footnote-19) Therefore, Hebrews 12 is speaking not only of correction for some misdeed, but of the entire process of child raising. In 1 Corinthians 11:30, Paul lists some of the more extreme ways God may discipline His children: “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.”

The New Testament also reveals that suffering may not only benefit sufferers, but also those whom sufferers might aid in the future through their experience (2 Cor 3:1-7).[[20]](#footnote-20)

It is fair to say that in most instances when the New Testament speaks of the sufferings of Christians, it is referring to suffering for Christ, which consists of difficulties directly related to the confession of Christian faith or leading a Christian lifestyle. Peter comments on this:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you (1 Pet 4:12-14, сf. 1 Pet 1:7).

Similarly, in the case of the apostle Paul, “momentary, light affliction,” which “is producing for us an eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor 4:17), consists of troubles encountered in ministry: “{We are} afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus” (v. 8-10, сf. 2 Cor 11:23-29).[[21]](#footnote-21) When suffering for the Lord, believers should rejoice (Matt 5:11-12; Acts 5:41) because this is part of their union with Christ and an integral aspect of following Him (Jn 15:18; 2 Tim 3:12).

On the other hand, in Romans 8:18-23, Paul expands the concept of Christian suffering to include general sufferings common to all:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for {our} adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

In this case, Paul counsels his readers to await the coming of the Lord and the redemption of our bodies that will accompany His appearing.

Next, we recall the words of our Lord regarding the last days. He predicted, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes (Matt 24:7).[[22]](#footnote-22) This indicates that wars and natural disasters will be an inescapable consequence of the last days. We learn more about the natural disasters to come during the Great Tribulation in the book of Revelation. Therefore, “natural evil” can serve as a signal of the soon coming of Christ and God’s instrument of judgment on the world.

Another key passage from the life of our Lord is Luke 13:1-3, where people related to Christ a tragedy that befell certain individuals from Galilee. Jesus used this opportunity to comment on the problem of evil and to summon all people to repentance: “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (v. 3; cf. Lk 13:4-5).[[23]](#footnote-23) This is highly significant for our discussion since it reveals that all people deserve to suffer for their sins, and any relief from the problem of pain comes only by the Lord’s mercy.

In addition, when His disciples asked Jesus why the man born blind was so afflicted (Jn 9:2), His answer did not address the reason for the ailment, but rather the result to come from his healing – the glory of God. It seems that Jesus was more interested in relieving the man’s suffering than in answering speculative questions from His disciples.

We conclude our New Testament survey with John’s Revelation. Those not recorded in the book of life await eternal punishment from the Lord (Rev 20:15). For believers, God has prepared a place where “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be {any} death; there will no longer be {any} mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Rev 21:4). The tree of life will appear for the first time since its loss in the Garden of Eden (Rev 22:2). The Bible both begins and ends with the theme of Paradise on earth (now, on the new earth), that is, the total absence of suffering and pain. Evil exists only for a time and occupies a temporary position between the Fall and the creation of the new earth.

**4. Conclusions**

In summary, we have seen that the experience of evil in the world traces back in its entirety to the Fall, but is eliminated when God makes all things new. This indicates that suffering and pain are merely temporary elements in the experience of the believer. God has included them in His plan for a redemptive purpose.

In addressing the question of evil, however, the Lord emphasizes trust in Him over an exhaustive understanding of the problem of pain. He demonstrated this in His dialogue with Job. Similarly, when His disciples questioned Him about the man born blind, Jesus was more interested in the solution to the problem than in its cause. In Carson’s words, “God is less interested in answering our questions than in other things: securing our allegiance, establishing our faith, nurturing a desire for holiness.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

The presence of moral evil in the world is best explained by God respecting human free will. According to Scripture, God seeks from people a sincere, wholehearted love (Mk 12:30). However, people must be free to show genuine love. Love by coercion is not true love. Yet, if people have genuine free will, there will always exist the possibility for that freedom to be abused. Freedom means having a choice between alternatives. So then, one who possess actual freedom can at any time make a wrong decision and sin against the Lord. Carson concurs, “We could not be people who truly love and obey God unless we are free; and that freedom entails failures, evil, suffering, whose existence is justified in that it is being used to make us mature.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

Although persons make wrong decisions, God often uses their sinful actions to bring about a good result. The Lord even incorporates the action of evil spirits into His good plan.

The action of human free will also explains the sufferings unique to believers in Jesus – suffering for the faith. In the course of human history, the servants of Satan persecute true followers of the Lord. God allows this to be so that His people can participate in the sufferings of Christ, which is a component part of their overall union with Him. Christian suffering also serves as a means for testing our faith.

The presence of natural evil in the world is explained by the following factors. The primary source for natural calamities is the Fall. Due to Adam’s sin, the earth in under a curse (Gen 3:17-19), which is why nature displays destructive tendencies. As a rule, these destructive processes occur randomly, without any particular aim or intention. Scripture states that “creation was subjected to futility” and is in “slavery to corruption” (see Rom 8:20-21). These destructive forces afflict people of all ages, nationalities, social classes, etc.[[26]](#footnote-26)

In addition, the Bible teaches that in the last days, the number of natural disasters will increase, not only as punishment for the world’s sin, but also as marks of Christ’s soon coming.

God may also use natural forces to punish personal sins. Yet, it is misguided to think that all suffering arises from personal sins, as the book of Job convincingly demonstrates. Moreover, according to the principle of corporate personality/responsibility, clearly depicted in the Old Testament, the personal sin of one individual can effect an entire group. On the other hand, one may challenge the claim that this system is still operative in the New Testament.

Finally, one must consider the devil’s activity in the natural world, which is also clearly shown in the book of Job, where Satan brought affliction and destruction on Job and his household (Job 1-2). This and other passages show that the Devil has a certain amount of freedom and power to operate in nature. Yet, his activity is limited by the Lord. As in the example of Paul’s “thorn in the flesh,” God can use the enemy’s attacks to benefit those subject to them.[[27]](#footnote-27)

We must not neglect to mention also that the presence of evil in the world makes possible the development of certain positive character traits that are impossible to develop in the absence of conflict. These qualities include courage, compassion, perseverance, and forgiveness among others. This means that God can use evil in the world to develop good character in His people. In Carson’s words, “This fallen world is the region of soul-making.”[[28]](#footnote-28) Experiencing suffering can equip us to aid others experiencing the same.

### B. Suggested Solutions

**1. Non-Christian Views**

In the non-Christian world, thinkers have long pondered the question of suffering and evil.[[29]](#footnote-29) Plato reasoned that the essence of evil was in the material world. He theorized the existence of a perfect world of “ideas” or “forms,” (also called “universals”) that correspond to objects existing in the natural world (i.e., “particulars”). “Evil,” in his mind, was any deviation from these universals found in the particulars of the material world. For example, there exists a form (or universal) for the concept “chair.” If a certain “particular” chair does not line up with this ideal form, it is defective or “evil.”

Gnostics, and in their wake, Neoplatonists, understood good and evil in a different sense. They felt that the essence of goodness was unity. Unity involved absorption into the “One”, that is, Ultimate Reality. Evil, then was a departure from this unification, resulting in division and separation. Pseudo-Dionysius, who advanced Neoplatonism in the Christian world, taught that the “good” emitted from “the One,” that is, God. The further a creature was from the One, the less the rays of divine goodness reached it (see *On the Divine Names*, 3.20-24).

Another ancient view was Fatalism. According to exponents of this view, there exists an impersonal force called “Fate” that randomly determines the destiny of each person. No one can alter one’s fate. Fate controls all things and is the source of both good and evil.

The ancient Persian religion Zoroastrianism proposed the existence of two rival powers or gods, who vied with one another for control of the world. Buddhism teaches that suffering arises from human desire. If persons would divorce themselves from desire, they would cease to suffer. Among the more modern approaches, humanism asserts that evil and suffering arise from ignorance. More and better education will lead to corresponding improvements in our quality of life.

In short, these views appear to have little in common with biblical thought or revelation, and are therefore unacceptable for Christian faith.

**2. Liberal Views**

Liberals defend several theories that again deviate from the biblical record.[[30]](#footnote-30) Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), working off the theory of evolution, believed that evil was a remnant of that process. Therefore, the world was progressively improving. We response that people were not created from apes, but from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7). In addition, does history confirm that people are improving morally?

The Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) focused on the presence of autonomy in God’s created order. Creation enjoys more freedom, in fact, than God can control. The Bible contradicts this, though, claiming “Whatever Yahweh pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Ps 135:6).

Process theology advances the view that God is still “in process” of His personal development. He is still on the way to complete perfection. Consequently, at the present time He is unable to eliminate evil. In contrast to this, though, the Scriptures testify of an almighty, all-knowing, and absolutely perfect God.

The liberal theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) created his own convoluted system. In his view, God is not a being, but the “ground of being.” When beings appear in reality, they appear as finite beings. *Finite* beings, then, possess not only “being,” but also “non-being.” This “non-being” is present in every creature and is the source of evil in the world. Again, this theory lacks biblical support.

Others postulate that good cannot exist without evil. “Good” makes sense only in contrast to its opposite. In refutation, we respond that God was good before evil ever existed. Therefore, good can exist in the absence of its counterpart and independent of it. Jakob Böhme (1757-1624) went to the extreme of asserting that evil has existed with God from the beginning.[[31]](#footnote-31) Again, Scripture refutes this claim.

Karl Barth (1886-1968) proposed a unique theory that when God created the world, He said “yes” to that which He made. Yet, for every “yes,” there must be a corresponding “no.” God said “yes” to His creation, but “no” to evil. Yet, if He addressed evil, then He recognized its existence, and thereby actually gave it existence. The Devil is the personification of this “no.” Therefore, evil is a necessary “by-product” of creation. Although Barth’s theory is quite creative, it finds no support in divine revelation.

It is fascinating to note that many of these modern liberal views resonate with the system of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Like Barth, Aquinas (following Augustine and the Neoplatonists) taught that evil was the absence of the good.[[32]](#footnote-32) Similar to Tillich, Aquinas reasoned that every finite being contained “non-being,” which was the source of evil. In harmony with Böhme, evil is a necessary element for the perfection of the universe. However, Aquinas’ theory encounters difficulties. God did not create people with some defect, leading them into sin, that is, with “non-being.” All that God initially created was “very good” (Gen 1:31).

**3. Evangelical Views**

What approaches to the problem of evil are employed among evangelical believers? Calvinists believe that God is the primary cause of all that occurs: both good and bad. They distinguish God’s moral (open) will from His operative (secret) will. God desires good, but nonetheless brings about evil deeds as well. According to God’s plan, it was necessary for Him to cause evil so that, through the condemnation of evildoers, He could manifest His wrath and judgment. In this way, God could display all of His perfections. Nonetheless, as we commented earlier, the Calvinist portrait of God is not consistent with the biblical revelation of His love and holiness, which renders this view unacceptable.

Donald Carson advances a more nuanced Calvinistic view.[[33]](#footnote-33) He asserts that believers must hold to several uncompromising positions, which he feels are outlined in Scripture. First, God controls and predestines all things. Second, people are responsible before God for their behavior. Third, God is good.

On the other hand, the logical contradictions created by these claims are obvious. Nevertheless, Carson insists that our theology of suffering must affirm all of these factors. The fact that they are contradictory should not prevent us from fully embracing them all. Carson assigns the reconciliation of these premises to the realm of mystery – a mystery that is “bound up with the very nature of God.”[[34]](#footnote-34) He also claims that this mystery should not surprise us since there are many aspect of God’s nature that are puzzling.[[35]](#footnote-35) Moreover, Carson explains that God relates to goodness and evil differently. He is “for” goodness in a more direct sense, but in relation to evil, His participation is less direct. Thus, the blame for sinful acts lies completely with the person who performed them.[[36]](#footnote-36)

We can subject Carson’s position to the same criticisms as other Calvinistic views (see chp. 18). On the other hand, we applaud Carson’s readiness to admit an element of mystery in his systemization of God’s plan, which anyone dealing with the problem of evil must allow.

Apart from the “necessity” of evil’s existence for the condemnation of the non-elect, Calvinists join other Evangelicals in citing other reasons for God to allow evil and suffering: soul-making, punishment of sin, the activity of evil spirits, etc. These elements, along with acknowledging human free will, are aspects of the Arminian answer to the problem of evil as well.

Another aspect not acknowledged by Calvinists is the possibility of chance occurrences. Calvinists contend that God is always an active participant in all that occurs in the world. Аrminians, though, allow that natural forces may have some autonomy in their operation, which can result in destructive events occurring without God’s direct intervention (we discussed this in chapter 15). Nevertheless, the question remains as to why God does not intervene more often with miracles to prevent chance occurrences. We will return to this topic later.

In his day, John of Damascus outlined the following causes of evil and suffering, which we may consider as well:

- Providence often permits the just man to encounter misfortune in order that he may reveal to others the virtue that lies concealed within him, as was the case with Job.

- At other times (providence) allows something strange to be done in order that something great and marvelous might be accomplished through the seemingly-strange act, as when the salvation of men was brought about through the Cross.

- In another way (providence) allows the pious man to suffer sore trials in order that he may not depart from a right conscience nor lapse into pride on account of the power and grace.

- Again another is permitted to suffer in order to stir up emulation in the breasts of others, so that others by magnifying the glory of the sufferer may resolutely welcome suffering in the hope of future glory and the desire for future blessings, as in the case of the martyrs.

- Another is allowed to fall at times into some act of baseness in order that another worse fault may be thus corrected, as for instance when God allows a man who takes pride in his virtue and righteousness to fall away into fornication in order that he may be brought through this fall into the perception of his own weakness and be humbled and approach and make confession to the Lord.[[37]](#footnote-37)

When the Damascene speaks of God “allowing” sin, he is speaking from (what we would call) an Arminian, not a Calvinistic perspective. According to the latter, God does not “allow” evil, He is the primary cause of all events, be they evil or good.

An extreme form of Arminianism is found in the Word of Faith movement. In this view, when God created the world, He gave *all* authority over it to people. This means that without people’s permission, God can do nothing on this planet. He intervenes only when people invite Him to. Therefore, evil has free reign when God’s people fail to pray.

In refutation of this view, we recall the testimony of Psalm 135:6, “Whatever Yahweh pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” We also note that God allowed Satan to enter the Garden of Eden to tempt Eve. Satan had no right to enter there, and Adam and Eve did not invite him. Additionally, God visited the first family in the Garden after their sin, when they did not want to see Him. Yet, they could not prevent His coming, since He is Lord of all.

### C. Conclusions

In light of the above biblical and theological survey, we will attempt to draw some conclusions to this thorny issue. We embrace the Arminian view that God may allow evil and suffering out of respect for human free will, as a result of the Fall, for the purpose of punishment, or to develop character traits in His people (so-called, “soul-making”). Satan also, at times, uses nature for his designs.

So then, we cannot generalize all negative events and ascribe them to a single cause. Each situation must be analyzed individually. Toward this end, it will be helpful to rehearse the breakdown of possible causal forces we presented in the chapter on divine providence.

In regard to natural phenomena, three causes can be highlighted. First, in line with His special providence, God can directly control events in the natural world. Second, according to the principle of general providence, natural processes can operate with a certain autonomy and, due to the presence and effect of sin and death in creation, can lead to destructive acts. Third, the Devil can at times utilize the forces of nature against humanity.

Regarding the causes of historical events, we must factor human free will into the equation. Out of respect for human freedom, God may allow actions that are not according to His perfect will. Complicating this factor is the influence of Satan on human choices, especially among unbelievers (see 2 Tim 2:26).

Therefore, when some disaster occurs in nature or misfortune in history, the question arises: is this from God, from chance (i.e., autonomous natural forces), from Satan, or from wrong human choices? The solution to this dilemma requires wisdom from God, which He promises to give generously to all who ask (Jam 1:5). Interestingly, this passage promising God’s wisdom in located in a context dealing with trials. So then, whenever we are passing through trails, the Lord is ready to reveal its cause.

Nevertheless, whatever the origin or cause of trouble may be, for the believer in Christ, “all things work together for good” (Rom 8:28). God allows evil with a good goal in mind – to somehow bring blessing to His children. Carson warns, however, that one must accept this by faith. In times of trouble, it becomes easy to doubt God’s love. Yet, the Lord has more than adequately demonstrated His concern for us, so that we can confidently depend on Him whatever may come.[[38]](#footnote-38)

However, the conviction that God works all things for our good should not lull us into passivity. God often allows evil or misfortune in order for His people to learn to resist and defeat it. God may allow Satanic attacks to teach His people spiritual warfare. This was the case in the Old Testament as well, where we read,

Now these are the nations which Yahweh left, to test Israel by them ({that is,} all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly (Judg 3:1-2).

In his contemplation of the problem of evil, Gottfried Lebnitz proposed that God created the best possible world that could be. Contemporary Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga, however, makes the necessary qualification that the present world is not the best of possible worlds, but the world that leads to the best of possible worlds, i.e., the new heavens and the new earth. Here we learn lessons that we could never learn under other conditions and develop qualities that would be otherwise impossible to develop.

For example, consider God’s dealings in the Garden of Eden. He allowed the Devil to enter the Garden and tempt Eve. As Boyd observes, it is unthinkable to imagine that God did not take active part in an event of such magnitude.[[39]](#footnote-39) God did so knowing what the result would be. Nonetheless, He allowed the temptation to take place. One may assume that here God was pursuing a redemptive aim – to develop a certain quality in His people.

 The key to understanding this may be the revelation that Satan, although created without sin, rebelled against the Lord due to pride (Isa 14:13; 1 Tim 3:6). We know that before his fall, the Devil had great glory (Ezek 28:12-15), possibly more than any other creature. God has prepared for us, believers in Christ, glory that far exceeds that which Satan enjoyed. It is very possible that God allowed the Fall to crush human pride and thereby prepare His people to inherit glory while at the same time preventing them from repeating Satan’s mistake. It is notable that even while people were still in their unglorified state, they wanted to be gods (see Gen 3:5: 11:4).

Several observations support this thesis. First, God makes salvation available by faith alone, so that “no one may boast” (Eph 2:8; сf. Rom 3:27; 4:2). Second, God chose “the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not… so that no man may boast before God” (1 Cor 1:28-29). Furthermore, the most prominent of all Old Testament figures, Moses, likely gained that status because he “was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth” (Num 12:3).

Similarly, the most prominent preacher of the gospel, the apostle Paul, in humility considered himself the foremost of sinners (1 Tim 1:15). In addition, he was given a “thorn in the flesh” to keep him from exalting himself” (2 Cor 12:7). Proud Peter was not ready to occupy his post as head of the Twelve Apostles until he was “sifted like wheat” (Lk 22:31).

Scripture reveals the general principle that humility precedes honor: “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time” (1 Pet 5:6); “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (Jam 4:10); “Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave” (Matt 20:27). Can we not on this basis assert that humility, obtained as a result of the Fall, prepares us for future glory?

John of Damascus shared this view. He writes,

For it was no profit to man to obtain incorruption while still untried and unproved, lest he should fall into pride and under the judgment of the devil. For through his incorruption the devil, when he had fallen as the result of his own free choice, was firmly established in wickedness, so that there was no room for repentance and no hope of change: just as, moreover, the angels also, when they had made free choice of virtue became through grace immoveably rooted in goodness. It was necessary, therefore, that man should first be put to the test (for man untried and unproved would be worth nothing).[[40]](#footnote-40)

However, in spite of the benefit the entrance of evil may have for the redeemed, we are still faced with the dilemma of the lost. Scripture seems to indicate that the majority of people will not turn to the Lord (Matt 7:13-14). The introduction of evil into the world is only misery for them. What does God have in mind here? Unfortunately, any answer we suggest would seriously challenge either God’s goodness, or His power, or the reliability of His revelation.

The Calvinist opinion that in eternity God intentionally predestined some for salvation and others for damnation undermines the biblical revelation of God’s goodness and contradicts the clear biblical witness that God wills the salvation of all people. Craig suggests, “A world having more saved but less damned than the actual world was not feasible for God.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Yet, this seems to undermine God’s omnipotence and omniscience. Universalists teach that in the end, all will be saved. However, the Bible does not support that option.

Many Christian thinkers resign this dilemma to the mysterious workings of God. In the words of John of Damascus, “The ways of God’s providence are many, and they cannot be explained in words nor conceived by the mind.”[[42]](#footnote-42) However, Carson assures us that we will someday grasp God’s plan: “Some answers we are not going to receive here; we shall have to wait for the Lord’s return before justice is completely done, and seen to be done.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

So then, in the end we trust in the Lord, that He will bring everything to a perfect result and that we will someday understand it all. Helseth aptly states, “We are called to place our confidence in the character and promises of our Father, even when we have no idea precisely what he is doing as he works out the particulars of his sovereign will.”[[44]](#footnote-44)

1. In our chapter on Satan and demons in the next volume, we will demonstrate that this passage actually does relate to Satan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Carson D. A. How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. – P. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hobbs T. R. 2 Kings // Word Biblical Commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 1998. – P. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Blocher H. Evil and the Cross. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994. – P. 94 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Block D. I. Judges, Ruth // The New American Commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999. – P. 323; Bergen R. D. 1, 2 Samuel // The New American Commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996. – P. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Keil С. F., Delitzsch F. Commentary on the Old Testament. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996. – V. 2. – P. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., v. 3, p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. House P. R. 1, 2 Kings // The New American Commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995. – P. 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Brown F., Driver S. R., Briggs C. A. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (electronic ed.). – Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000. – P. 834. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Keil and Delitzsch, v. 9, p. 104-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cooper L. E. Ezekiel // The New American Commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994. – P. 160-161. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Keil and Delitzsch, v. 9, p. 157-158; Cooper, p. 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Watts J. D. W. Isaiah 34–66 // Word Biblical Commentary. – Dallas,ТХ: Word, 1998. – P. 157; Keil and Delitzsch, v. 7, p. 444. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Cooper, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Material taken from Nickelsburg W.E. Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins. – Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003. – P. 62-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Carson, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid., p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Arndt W., Danker F. W., Bauer W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. – 3rd ed. – Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000. – P. 748. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Cooper, p. 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Paul’s thorn in the flesh, mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, was the difficulties he experienced in connection with his ministry. Our chapter on divine healing in the next volume will defend this view. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Carson, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid., p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid., p. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid., p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For a more detailed discussion of the claim that random processes can cause natural calamites, see chapter 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Carson, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid., p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See Bloesch D. G. God the Almighty. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1995. – P. 128-136; Blocher, p. 20-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See Bloesch D. G. God the Almighty. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1995. – P. 128-136; Blocher, p. 20-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See Hart D. B. Providence and Causality: The Divine Innocence // Murphy F. A., Ziegler P. G. The Providence of God. – London; New York: T.T. Clark, 2009. – C. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. More precisely, Barth spoke not of the absence of good, but of its negation. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Carson, p. 205ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid., p. 213–214. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid., p. 192–193. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., p. 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *An Exact Exposition of Orthodox Faith,* 2:29-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Carson, p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Boyd G. A. Response to Paul Kjoss Helseth // Boyd G. A., Craig W. L., Helseth P. K., Highfield R., Jowers D. Four Views on Divine Providence. – P. 100-101. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *An Exact Exposition of Orthodox Faith,* 2.30. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Craig W. L. God Directs All Things on Behalf of a Molinist View of Providence // Boyd G. A., Craig W. L., Helseth P. K., Highfield R., Jowers D. W. Four Views on Divine Providence. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, Kindle Edition, 1757-1758. Langford also doubts that God could create a world in which free agents would always choose good (see Langford M. J. Providence. – London: SCM Press, 1981. – P. 177). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *An Exact Exposition of Orthodox Faith*, 2.29. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Carson, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Helseth P. K. God Causes All Things // Boyd G. A., Craig W. L., Helseth P. K., Highfield R., Jowers D. Four Views on Divine Providence. – Zondervan, Kindle Edition, 814-816 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)