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# PHILOSOPHY-OF-GOD, THEOLOGY, AND THE PROBLEMS OF EVIL

Michael VERTIN

## INTRODUCTION

Let me begin by recounting two facts.

<sup>10</sup> For the past few years one of my academic responsibilities has been to conduct an undergraduate course entitled "Philosophy of Religion". Until recently I labored under the difficulty of not having found a really adequate approach to several of the issues treated in this course, a difficulty typically reflected in the students' reactions to my discussion of *evil*: while admiring my approach for its rigor, many students found it "too abstract", "too theoretical", "lacking concreteness". Still more precisely, for at least a few it was "insufficiently religious" or even "insufficiently Christian".

<sup>20</sup> At a 1970 congress of scholars interested in the work of Bernard Lonergan, the philosophy-of-God that had been outlined by Lonergan in chapter nineteen of his book *INSIGHT*<sup>1</sup> was subjected to severe criticism.<sup>2</sup> The critics, focussing mainly on the account of God's existence and attributes, accused Lonergan of inadequacy for making no appeal to the theist's concrete context, the context of religious experience. This objection occasioned a later response in which Lonergan agreed that an adequate philosophy-of-God — and, all the more, an adequate theology — must be based upon religious experience; and he went on at some length to develop his notion of this relationship.<sup>3</sup>

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1. *INSIGHT: A STUDY OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1957.

2. A good deal of this criticism occurred in the discussions rather than in the published papers. See, however, the following: Langdon GILKEY, "Empirical Science and Theological Knowing", esp. pp. 77-84, and David TRACY, "Lonergan's Foundational Theology: An Interpretation and a Critique", esp. pp. 217-21, in Philip McShane, ed., *FOUNDATIONS OF THEOLOGY*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1971; and Schubert ÖGDEN, "Lonergan and the Subjectivist Principle", esp. pp. 229-34, in Philip McShane, ed., *LANGUAGE, TRUTH AND MEANING*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1972.

3. *PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973. See esp. pp. 11-13, 41-42. Cf. "An Interview with Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J.", esp. pp. 224-25, and "Natural Knowledge of God", esp. pp. 131-33, in Bernard TYRRELL and William F.J. RYAN, eds., *A SECOND COLLECTION*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974; *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, London:

Now, it recently occurred to me that Lonergan's later explanation of the characteristics and relationship of religion, philosophy-of-God, and theology provides the most adequate framework yet available for treating, among other issues, the problems of evil. At least to my knowledge, however, little work had been done to exploit that explanation in this area — i.e., to develop in explicit and detailed fashion an updated "tract on evil". Consequently, I began attempting on my own to determine just what the shape of such a treatment might be; and to the extent that this allowed me to offer a somewhat revised consideration of evil in my most recent philosophy course, I found that the students' earlier complaints tended to dissolve.

In this article, then, I should like to sketch the results of my rough and preliminary effort at revising the traditional treatment of evil. Specifically, my aim is fivefold: (i) to delineate in cursory fashion the problems that are posed for human intelligence, reflection, and deliberation by the fact of evil; (ii) to describe a first approach to meeting those problems; (iii) to recall Bernard Lonergan's mature account of the characteristics and relationship of religion, philosophy-of-God, and theology; and (iv & v) to outline, in two steps, a second approach to the problems of evil, an approach suggested by Lonergan's account.<sup>4</sup>

## I. EVIL: THE FACT AND THE PROBLEMS

### A. *The Fact of Evil*

An individual need not be especially perceptive in order to be aware that reality is not perfect. There are the anomalies and breakdowns of nature: earthquakes and tornadoes, floods and droughts, physical and mental illnesses, birth defects and death. There are the moral failures on the part of other persons, failures to will what ought to be willed and to avoid willing what ought not to be willed. And, most proximate if not always most readily admitted, there are the major and minor aberrations in one's own pattern of choices.

Nor is this all. For besides natural faults and the moral faults of others and of oneself, there is the suffering that these bring in their wake. There is the pain of one injured in a landslide and the grief of one whose child has died of leukemia. There is the agony of one subjected to physical torture and the frustration of one subjected to racial discrimination. And there is the character deformation undergone by one who lies and cheats, with a heightening of his tendency to perform further such acts.

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Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972, esp. pp. 101-124; and Lonergan's comments during the fifth question session of the Lonergan Workshop at Boston College, June 17-21, 1974, pp. 15-16 of the typescript made from the tape (available at the Lonergan Centre, Regis College, Toronto).

4. I must add two qualifications. First, with the exception of its third section, this article is not intended to be mainly an exposition of Lonergan's own views. It is obvious that Lonergan is by far the most dominant of my sources, but my overriding aim here is systematic rather than exegetical; and, save for that third section, the positions which I express are mine and not necessarily his. Secondly, the article is intended to spell out the general relationship of the problems of evil, on the one hand, and various approaches to them, on the other, but by no means to portray exhaustively either those problems or those approaches. This emphasis on breadth rather than depth means that certain topics perhaps quite familiar to individual readers are treated either in very incomplete fashion or not at all, a feature which I hope will not be found unduly distracting.

In short, if we label natural faults, moral faults (others' and one's own), and one's consequent suffering "evil", we must say not only that evil is a fact but that it is one of the most obvious and striking features of the topography of reality.<sup>5</sup>

### B. *The Problems of Evil*

Let us use the term "problem" to name a question whose answer has not as yet been clearly and unambiguously determined. Again, let us use the term "God" to name a supreme being, the ultimate object of philosophical inquiry and/or of religious devotion.<sup>6</sup> Finally, let us use the term "contradictory" as a substantive to designate something opposed so radically to something else as to exclude totally the latter. (Thus, e.g., untruth is the contradictory of truth.)<sup>7</sup>

Now, if one posits that evil really exists, that evil is to be understood as the contradictory of good, and that God really exists, then one is confronted with two problems that may aptly be labelled "the problems of God": (1) How is God to be understood?<sup>8</sup> (2) How ought God be responded to? And whatever the suggested answers to the first (and key) question, one answer that is inadmissible is that God is to be understood as both all-powerful<sup>9</sup> and all-good. For if evil is the contradictory of good, then God must be at least either incapable of excluding his contradictory

5. Rather than beginning with an *explanatory* notion of evil, in this section I have attempted merely to elaborate a simple *descriptive* notion of evil: the task of explanation remains to be done. (On the distinction between description and explanation, see LONERGAN, *INSIGHT*, esp. pp. 291-92. Cf. pp. 10-13.) This strikes me as the preferable way of approaching the present topic, given the confusing variety of explanatory notions of evil that have been proposed during the long history of reflection on it.

I suggest the following (at least rough) terminological parallels: my "moral fault", Aquinas' "*malum culpae*", and Lonergan's "basic sin"; my "suffering consequent on moral fault", Aquinas' "*malum poenae*", and Lonergan's "moral evil"; and my "natural fault and suffering consequent on it", Aquinas' "*malum naturae*", and Lonergan's "physical evil". (See AQUINAS, *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*, I, qq. 48-49, and LONERGAN, *INSIGHT*, pp. 666-68.)

My own further distinctions of "moral fault" into "one's own" and "others" and of "suffering consequent on moral fault" into "one's suffering consequent on one's own moral fault" and "one's suffering consequent on others' moral fault" will, when taken with the previous distinctions, facilitate precise consideration of the question of the concrete relationship of one's total suffering and one's own moral fault. (See below, Section II.)

6. I speak broadly of "a supreme being, the ultimate object of philosophical inquiry and/or of religious devotion" in an effort to keep my initial discussion open to persons of as many different basic persuasions as possible, both philosophical and religious. The expression, however, is not without its ambiguities; and therefore let the following points be understood: (1) My "supreme being" is taken to be uniquely supreme, not just one of two or more. (2) It is understood to be not merely the greatest of whatever beings anyone (e.g., even a professed atheist) might assert actually to exist; rather, it is taken as having specifically divine characteristics. (3) To speak of the supreme being as "an object" is not to imply that it might not also be fundamentally a conscious subject (or even, as in the Christian theological tradition, trisubjective). (4) I am not unaware of (and in fact, when speaking more exactly, quite agree with) the Thomist aversion to characterizing the divine as "a" being.

7. See below, n. 15.

8. In its full form, this question really is twofold: How is God to be understood, and is that understanding true? The shorter form of the question, however, illustrates and emphasizes the general point that in the treatment of that which is (taken as) *fact* it is UNDERSTANDING that is at a premium: the question of that understanding's truth, while by no means unimportant and of course not ignored, is not the characteristic question of the inquiry. By contrast, there is a prior inquiry that begins from *mere data* and aims to determine what is and is not fact, and here the question of TRUTH is characteristic. (See LONERGAN, *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, pp. 347-50.)

from the cosmos, and thus not all-powerful, or such that evil is not his contradictory, and thus not all-good.

If, on the other hand, one posits that God really exists, that God is to be understood as both all-powerful and all-good, and that evil really exists, then one is confronted with two problems that may aptly be labelled "the problems of evil": (1) How is evil to be understood?<sup>10</sup> (2) How ought evil be responded to? And whatever the suggested answers to the first (and key) question, one answer that is inadmissible is that evil is to be understood as the contradictory of good. For if God is all-powerful, then he excludes his contradictory from the cosmos; so that if, in addition, he is all-good, then evil cannot be the contradictory of good.<sup>11</sup>

Our concern in this article is not with the problems of God, as we have characterized them, but rather with the problems of evil. That is to say, although some would challenge the adequacy of such a course,<sup>12</sup> we mean to take it as given that God really exists and is both all-powerful and all-good, and to consider the fact of evil within the parameters dictated by those suppositions. And thus our problems take the following specific form:

(1) How is evil — natural fault, moral fault, and consequent suffering — to be understood as other than the contradictory of good?

(2) How, in the light of the foregoing, ought evil be responded to?

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9. Though they are sometimes distinguished in discussions of the present sort, in this paper we take "all-powerful" (or "omnipotent") to include "all-knowing" (or "omniscient"); for it seems that a God who did not "know all things" would in an important way be unable to "do all things". To say that God is omnipotent does not, of course, mean that he is literally able to "do all things", if that expression be taken to include, e.g., creating square circles or willing himself out of existence; for *not* to be able to do such things is a perfection rather than a limitation. (For a good illustration of a misdirected view of this matter, see J.L. MACKIE, "Evil and Omnipotence", *MIND*, 64 (1955), 200–12. Reprinted in Pike, ed., *GOD AND EVIL*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964, pp. 46–60.)

10. In its full form, this question really is twofold: How is evil to be understood, and is that understanding true? (See above, n. 8.)

11. In our view, the heart of the God/evil problem-complexus may be expressed concisely by stating that it is *inconsistent* to hold *all four* of the following positions at the same time:

a) God — a supreme being — really exists.

b) God is to be understood as both all-powerful and all-good.

c) Evil — natural fault, moral fault, and consequent suffering — really exists.

d) Evil is to be understood as the contradictory of good.

Consistency may be achieved by substituting *any one* of the following four positions for its correlate in the first set (i.e., the first set becomes consistent if one substitutes *a'* for *a*, OR *b'* for *b*, OR *c'* for *c*, OR *d'* for *d*):

a') God — a supreme being — does not really exist.

b') God is not to be understood as both all-powerful and all-good.

c') Evil — natural fault, moral fault, and consequent suffering — does not really exist.

d') Evil is not to be understood as the contradictory of good.

12. Perhaps the most significant contemporary objectors would come from the ranks of the "process" philosophers and theologians, most of whom maintain that God is not all-powerful. (See, e.g., Charles HARTSHORNE, *THE DIVINE RELATIVITY*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.) And, in a somewhat different line, there is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's poignant image of a suffering God, a God who is limited in power but not in concern, a God who "permits" infant suffering only because he cannot prevent it. Thus, "Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving." (See BONHOEFFER, *LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON*, New York: Macmillan, 1972, pp. 348–49, 361–63.)

## II. EVIL: A FIRST APPROACH TO RESOLVING THE PROBLEMS

### A. "Older" Philosophy-of-God on Evil

The question "How is X to be understood?" breaks down into three sub-questions: "WHAT is X?", "HOW does X come to be?", and "WHY does X come to be?"<sup>13</sup> Thus, the complex response of traditional or "older" philosophy-of-God<sup>14</sup> to the question "How is evil to be understood as other than the contradictory of good?" may be presented as a reply to three sub-questions with regard to each of the following: moral faults, one's suffering from moral faults, and natural faults and one's suffering from them.

First, then, WHAT are *moral faults*? They are privations of right choices. In the broad sense a privation is simply the absence of some positive factor in a thing and thus is a somewhat weaker opposition than is a contradiction: from the explanatory standpoint cold, silence, and darkness are not positive factors but the absences of heat, sound, and light, respectively.<sup>15</sup> In the strict sense, however, a privation is the

13. These three questions, of course, regard X's formal, efficient, and final causes.

14. The "tradition" here indicated is, broadly, the Aristotelian-Thomist one. The following formulation of the tradition's position on evil is our own, though we rely extensively on Jacques MARITAIN, *GOD AND THE PERMISSION OF EVIL*, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966, Charles JOURNET, *THE MEANING OF EVIL*, London: Geoffrey CHAPMAN, 1963, and LONERGAN, *INSIGHT*, pp. 666-68. (The basic locus in Aquinas is *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*, I, qq. 48-49.) The listing of these works together occasions a further — and quite important — point, however, and to make that point we anticipate part of our later discussion.

One may differentiate three progressively-less-abstract, progressively-more-adequate ways of doing philosophy-of-God: (1) one which does not explicitly take account of the conscious subject at all; (2) one which explicitly takes account of the conscious subject but merely as intellectual; and (3) one which explicitly takes account of the conscious subject not merely as intellectual but also as moral and especially as religious. The first way is illustrated by the approaches of most Neo-Thomists: see, for example, D.J.B. HAWKINS, *THE ESSENTIALS OF THEISM*, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1949. The second way is illustrated by the approach of Lonergan in chapter nineteen of *INSIGHT*. And the third way is illustrated by the approach of Lonergan in his more recent works, such as *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*.

Now, the first two ways may be grouped together over against the third, inasmuch as the former do not consider the conscious subject as religious, while the latter does; and it is upon this difference that LONERGAN lays the most emphasis in *PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY*, the work which provided the initial inspiration for the present paper. It is in that work that he designates the third approach as "newer" philosophy-of-God.

What, then, of the difference between the first two approaches? In *PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY*, Lonergan tends on occasion (see, e.g., p. 13) to assimilate the second approach to the first, which he designates as "older" philosophy-of-God; and this is the practice which, in order to focus attention on the other difference, we adopt in this paper. Thus, any philosophy-of-God which does not explicitly take account of the conscious subject as religious is "older". Moreover, we do not distinguish sharply between the first and the second approaches in our present formulation of the position of "older" philosophy-of-God on evil. The perceptive reader, however, will not lose sight of the fact that both in general and as regards the particular topic of evil the first approach manifests the characteristic — and eventually somewhat negatively assessed — features of "older" philosophy-of-God much more fully than the second approach does, and that the significance of the differences which make the second approach much closer to the most adequate — third — approach is by no means negligible.

15. "Philosophy... distinguishes four types of opposition: first, the opposition of *contradiction*, which is the most radical, in which one of the terms automatically excludes the other: not-man as opposed to man; second, the opposition of *privation*, which allows the common element of both terms to subsist, but destroys a generic quality possessed by one of them: in man, blindness destroys sight, and in an

absence of not just any positive factor but rather of one that ought to be present: blindness in a human being is a privation, though blindness in a stone is not. It is in the latter — strict — sense that moral faults are privations: they are inappropriate defects of will, failures to choose what is morally mandated and to avoid choosing what is morally prohibited.

HOW do moral faults arise? The issue here is not so much efficient causality as deficient causality. Moral faults, inappropriate “nothings” at the level of human voluntary *operation*, are due entirely to man: they come about fundamentally because of bad will, a more radical “nothing” at the level of human voluntary *disposition*. God neither directly nor indirectly wills moral faults but merely permits them.

WHY do moral faults arise? Ultimately, the answer to this question is that there is no answer. There may be excuses of ignorance, passion, or habit, and there may be mitigating circumstances of temperament, age, or social milieu; but properly speaking there are no reasons for moral faults. For moral faults are precisely those non-events which are characterized not by having reasons but by having no reasons, not by making sense but by making no sense whatsoever. However, they are permitted by God out of respect for human freedom, a respect that militates against divine intervention even when that freedom is abused.

Secondly, WHAT is *one's suffering from moral faults*? It is a privation. Though pain, sorrow, frustration, a heightened tendency to moral fault, etc., are surely not without descriptive reality, in the explanatory order they, like cold, silence, and darkness, are not positive but negative: they are the absences of factors required for one's physical and/or psycho-spiritual wholeness, integrity, well-being.

HOW does one's suffering from moral faults come about? Obviously, it arises *directly* from the moral faults themselves. And it arises *indirectly* from (a) the human will whence those moral faults arise and (b) the divine will, since God, though neither directly nor indirectly willing the moral faults but merely permitting them, nevertheless wills that suffering follow on them.

WHY does one's suffering from moral faults arise? Insofar as it comes about directly from moral faults and indirectly from the human will, one's suffering from moral faults has no more reason than the faults themselves do — that is to say, none at all. But insofar as it arises indirectly from the divine will, one's suffering from moral faults has the character of punishment — fundamentally, retribution for the faults themselves.

Thirdly, WHAT are *natural faults and one's suffering from them*? They are privations and their privative consequences. In the explanatory if not the descriptive order, so-called natural disasters, disease, decay, death, and the suffering that follows

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object black destroys white, assuming that black is not taken to be a colour, as it is for a painter, but as the privation of all colour, as it is for the physicist; third, the opposition of *contrariety* as between two qualities of the same generic type, such as red and green; and fourth, the opposition of *relation*, the weakest of all, which does not necessarily involve a lack in either of the two terms — e.g., the relations of equality or similarity...” (Charles JOURNET, *THE MEANING OF EVIL*, pp. 37-38. Cf. ARISTOTLE, *METAPHYSICS*, V, 10, & X, 4; and AQUINAS, *META.*, V, n° 922).

on them are the often-progressive absences of positive factors, factors that are necessary for the harmony, health, and perceived well-being of this or that.

HOW do natural faults and one's suffering from them come about? They are indirectly willed by God: he wills them insofar as he directly wills the entire cosmic order of which they are parts.

WHY do natural faults and one's suffering from them arise? They are for the good of the cosmic order as a whole. That which from the restricted viewpoint of this or that particular thing is but a defect is, from the universal viewpoint of the cosmic order as a whole, a contribution to the perfection of that whole, such that to eliminate the particular defect would be to eliminate a certain amount of cosmic perfection. Thus, somewhat as moments of silence are part of the integral beauty of a symphony, so natural faults and one's suffering from them are part of the integral splendor of the cosmos; or, again, somewhat as pruning a tree occasions the development of better fruit, so natural faults and one's suffering from them occasion the development of such virtues as courage, perseverance, and kindness.

The reply of traditional philosophy-of-God<sup>16</sup> to the question "How, in the light of the foregoing, ought evil be responded to?" may be summarized in three steps. First, one should strive to eliminate one's moral faults. Secondly, one's suffering from moral faults, as punishment for the faults themselves, should be willingly accepted. Thirdly, natural faults and one's suffering from them should be eliminated insofar as possible and willingly accepted insofar as such elimination is not possible, all as contributions to cosmic perfection.

### B. *Merits and Difficulties*

As regards content, perhaps the principal merit of traditional philosophy-of-God in its treatment of the problems of evil is the thoroughness with which it exploits the notion of *privation*. By understanding the various forms of evil not as positive factors but rather as the absences of positive factors which ought to be present, traditional philosophy-of-God clearly distinguishes evil from good without — as would be inconsistent with the suppositions of God's real existence, omnipotence, and all-goodness — making evil the contradictory of good (and thus of God).

At the same time, the content of that treatment is not without significant difficulties. Let us consider two areas.

First, it is difficult to understand how one's *suffering from* moral faults could be *punishment for* moral faults. For it is not obvious even in principle either that an all-powerful God would be bound to require punishment or that an all-good God would desire it. Again, even if the necessity of punishment for moral faults be granted, the frequent (and frequently gross) disproportion between one's actual suffering from

16. Strictly speaking, the reply is not that of traditional *philosophy-of-God* but rather of traditional *natural ethics* FOLLOWING ON philosophy-of-God (and, as well, on philosophy-of-man). Here in the text we make this mild distortion in order to stress the real solidarity of practical with theoretical considerations (or, in Lonergan's terms, of the fourth level of consciousness with the first three) on the part of the conscious subject. And on the solidarity of practical considerations in another line, see below, n. 30.



moral faults — one's own *and* others' — and one's own moral faults makes quite untenable the notion that that suffering is an all-powerful and all-good God's punishment for one's own faults. For the relatively innocent (most obviously, children) often suffer much, and the relatively guilty often suffer little and, indeed, even flourish.<sup>17</sup> Nor is it ultimately any less mind-boggling to suggest that God often punishes the innocent instead of the guilty, though in such a way that the suffering which may outweigh the guilt of some individual never outweighs the guilt of his group (or, in the limit, mankind) as a whole.<sup>18</sup> And, finally, insofar as one's suffering from moral faults cannot be understood simply as punishment for moral faults, the appropriateness of the practical admonition to accept that suffering willingly falls open to challenge.

Secondly, it is difficult to understand how natural faults and one's suffering from them could be necessary contributions to the perfection of the cosmos. For it is not obvious even in principle that an all-powerful God would be unable to cause a finite material cosmos at least equal in perfection to the present one but without natural faults and consequent suffering. Moreover, even if it be granted that in a finite material cosmos natural faults and consequent suffering are necessary to the perfection of the whole, it is not obvious even in principle that an all-good God would desire to cause such a cosmos rather than none at all. Again, even if both preceding points be granted, it is still not clear that the natural defects and consequent suffering with which the present cosmos is actually shot through are not well beyond the minimum to which an all-powerful God would be bound and which an all-good God would choose. And, finally, insofar as natural faults and one's suffering from them cannot be understood simply as contributions to cosmic perfection, the appropriateness of the practical admonition to accept willingly whatever cannot be eliminated falls open to challenge.

17. This disparity — at least apparent — is, of course, one of the evidences advanced in certain arguments for an afterlife in which the virtuous are definitively rewarded and the unvirtuous are definitively punished. (See, e.g., Immanuel KANT, *THE CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON*, Part I, Book II, esp. Chapter II, Sections I-IV. Cf. George P. KLUBERTANZ, *THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953, pp. 315-16.) But even if one posited such an afterlife and thus envisioned the unvirtuous but prosperous man finally receiving his just deserts, he would still be left with the difficulty of understanding how the suffering of one who did not deserve to suffer in the first place could ever be "offset" by any "reward", no matter how great.

18. That this aspect of the problems of evil tends to reopen the problems of God is a familiar theme in literature:

For the hundredth time I repeat, there are numbers of questions, but I've only taken the children, because in their case what I mean is so unanswerably clear. Listen! If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me, please? It's beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they, too, furnish material to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future? I understand solidarity in sin among men. I understand solidarity in retribution, too; but there can be no such solidarity with children. And if it is really true that they must share responsibility for all their fathers' crimes, such a truth is not of this world and is beyond my comprehension... Too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket."

"That's rebellion," murmured Alyosha, looking down. (From Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*, Book V, Chapter IV. Cf. the stance of Doctor Rieux in Albert CAMUS' *THE PLAGUE*.)

As regards method, perhaps the principal merit of traditional philosophy-of-God in its treatment of the problems of evil is its logical rigor. It systematically seeks clarity in its concepts, consistency in its contentions, and exhaustiveness in its arguments; and if in this or that respect it does not completely achieve those goals, still the direction of its tendency is never in doubt.

On the other hand, traditional philosophy-of-God has two serious deficiencies in its method. First, its emphasis upon logical rigor is not only vigorous but also virtually exclusive: in its close attention to contents of thought it fails to advert to the concrete conscious subject who is the thinker and thus to take account of how his subjective disposition can affect his response.<sup>19</sup> Hence the not untypical student lament, forcefully if not altogether accurately expressed, "This is too philosophical!" The second deficiency is inherent to philosophy-of-God as such: there is a systematic prescinding from the contents of formal divine revelation. While quite appropriate to philosophy-of-God as distinct from theology, this restriction can appear as artificial and even frustrating for the student who, as a — say — Christian believer, is interested in bringing all of his personal reflective resources to bear upon the problems of evil; and thus he will, not surprisingly, complain about the "non-religious" character of the treatment.

### III. LONERGAN ON RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY-OF-GOD, AND THEOLOGY

The preceding section of this article outlined the approach of traditional philosophy-of-God to the problems posed for human intelligence, reflection, and deliberation by the fact of evil, along with the merits and difficulties of that approach. The present section describes Bernard Lonergan's mature view of the characteristics and relationship of religion, philosophy-of-God, and theology; and the two subsequent sections, drawing out the implications of that view, will sketch the two stages of an alternative approach to the problems of evil.

#### A. Religion

We may review Lonergan's notion of religion by considering his accounts of, in turn, two kinds of disciplinary inquiry,<sup>20</sup> three kinds of conversion,<sup>21</sup> and two aspects of religion.<sup>22</sup>

The first kind of disciplinary inquiry adopts the static, immobile viewpoint of *logic*. It concerns itself exclusively with real and/or mental objects, expresses these in terms of abstract concepts, and then seeks to determine the mutual relations of those

19. Recall that this indictment applies to the *first* way of "older" philosophy-of-God far more than to the *second* way. See above, n. 14.

20. See PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 13, 31-35, 45-50. Cf. METHOD IN THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 6, 94, 265, 292, 305, 338.

21. See PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 12-13, 40-41. Cf. METHOD IN THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 115-24, 130-31, 237-44, 298-99, 330.

22. See PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 10, 18-20, 67. Cf. METHOD IN THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 105-109, 112-13, 119, 283-84, 327.

concepts within a fixed conceptual system. Its ideal is conceptual clarity; and it is likely to maintain that the pathway to genuine objectivity is careful looking and rigorous inferring. It is aptly illustrated by, among other things, traditional or "older" philosophy in general and philosophy-of-God in particular.

The second kind of disciplinary inquiry, by contrast, adopts the dynamic, moving viewpoint of *method*. It concerns itself not merely with real and/or mental objects but also with the dispositions, intentions, and operations of the conscious subject. It employs concrete symbols as well as abstract concepts; and it seeks not merely to relate these to each other within the static systems which they may comprise but also to chart the process from one static system to the next within a dynamic system, a system on the move, a system whose developmental structure is fundamentally a function of the ever-expanding horizon of the conscious subject himself. Its ideal is not just conceptual clarity but, more broadly, conscious and intentional adequacy; and it holds that the pathway to genuine objectivity is, most basically, nothing other than authentic subjectivity — experiencing that is attentive, understanding that is intelligent, judging that is reasonable, deciding that is responsible.

Now, when undertaken with regard to the conscious subject himself, the second kind of disciplinary inquiry — much to be preferred, by reason of its greater adequacy — reveals the presence or absence of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.

In general, a conversion is a radical transformation of the subject's consciousness, resulting in a new horizon that is not just a development from, but rather involves a repudiation of, characteristic features of the subject's old horizon.

The subject who has undergone *intellectual* conversion has outgrown the ocular myth that the activity of knowing is fundamentally like seeing, that objectivity results exactly from seeing what is there and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is the "already out there now" waiting to be seen. Through appropriation of his own cognitional performance, he has come to the recognition that the activity of knowing is a formally-dynamic compound of activities of experiencing, understanding, and judging, that cognitional objectivity results exactly from experiencing attentively, understanding intelligently, and judging reasonably, and that the real is the compound content that is thus cognitively achieved.

The subject who has undergone *moral* conversion has made the discovery that in large part it is he himself who by the choices he makes today determines the self he will be tomorrow, and in light of that discovery has undertaken to replace selfish satisfactions with self-transcending values as the standards to which he refers in deciding and choosing.

And the subject who has undergone *religious* conversion is in a state of total self-surrender, of complete self-transcendence, that can best be characterized as unrestricted being-in-love. Unrestricted being-in-love is a dynamic state that, though it can and indeed demands to be expressed and fostered by deliberate acts, is perceived as fundamentally prior to those acts, a given, a gift.<sup>23</sup> It brings deep joy and profound

23. On the distinction between the gift as offered and the gift as accepted, see below, n. 43.

peace. And it reveals vital, social, cultural, and personal values not previously esteemed.<sup>24</sup> But of itself it does not involve knowledge in the strict sense: it stands as the major exception to the dictum that nothing is loved that is not already known, for who it is that is loved is not yet known; and thus there remains a conscious pressure in this regard to inquire and understand, to reflect and judge, and, perhaps, to believe. Such a cognitional effort, however, goes forward within a context that is dominated by the fact of the love itself, so that all conclusions that would impugn the unrestricted lovability of the beloved are virtually if not formally ruled out, and this even in advance, as it were, of any inquiry. The effort is not to determine *whether* there is a beloved who is unrestrictedly lovable, for this is not at all in doubt; rather, it is to determine just *who* that unrestrictedly lovable beloved is, and ultimately to resolve all other issues in that light.<sup>25</sup>

The distinction between the experience of unrestricted being-in-love and the public body of knowledge, belief, and practice to which one may turn in cognitively elaborating that experience is the distinction between two aspects of religion. Unrestricted being-in-love is the inner word, the prior word, that is religious experience. It pertains to the world of immediacy: it is the unmediated experience of unbounded love for the mysterious beloved. Of itself, it is highly unspecified in character and thus possesses a fundamental similarity from one group, culture, and age to the next.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the public body of knowledge, belief, and practice is the outer word, the outwardly spoken word, that is religious tradition. It pertains to the worlds mediated by meaning: basically, it would presume to *name* the mysterious beloved. Religious traditions arise and develop in the context of the particular times, places, persons, and events that provide the outward occasions of the inward experience; and thus they are historically conditioned and may vary from one group, culture, and age to the next.

The foregoing distinction, already important for the phenomenologist of religion, has an added significance for the Christian theologian.<sup>27</sup> For the latter, the distinction between the fundamentally transcultural religious experience and the historically conditioned religious tradition is the distinction between the inner core and the outer manifestation of God's gift of his love. The inner core, the inward gift,

24. The apprehension of values that is an aspect of unrestricted being-in-love is designated by Lonergan as *faith*. It is to be distinguished from *knowledge in the strict sense*, judgment based upon evidence whose sufficiency one grasps personally. And it is to be distinguished as well from *belief*, judgment based upon evidence whose sufficiency one grasps not personally but rather through the mediation of one or more other conscious subjects. It is, nonetheless, a precondition of religious belief. (See *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, pp. 41-47, 115-24.)

25. As regards the order of *exposition*, intellectual conversion is best treated before moral, and intellectual and moral before religious. In the concrete order of *occurrence*, however, religious conversion commonly precedes moral, and religious and moral commonly precede intellectual. (See *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, pp. 241-43, 267-68, 272-81, 283, 327; and *FOUNDATIONS OF THEOLOGY*, pp. 233-34.)

26. For a discussion of the common, if very general, features of unrestricted being-in-love, see *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, pp. 108-109.

27. Lonergan customarily makes this distinction in expressly theological rather than merely phenomenological terms. In a discussion context where one does not wish to presuppose that others have explicit religious stances (such as would justify speaking easily of God's gift, etc.), however, the more minimal approach often is useful.

is offered, at least, to all men; and it is the element common to all religions. By contrast, the outer manifestation, the outer expression of God's gift of his love, is the word of formal divine revelation and summarily the Word who is Jesus Christ; and this is the unique and characteristic element of Christianity. Hence, as cognitively elaborated (and, subsequently, as practically implemented), the religious experience of the Christian expressly involves an intersubjective relationship with God as given in Jesus Christ, a feature that makes that experience specifically different from all other forms of religious experience.

### B. *Philosophy-of-God and Theology*

Our brief review of Lonergan's notion of religion puts us in position to recall his notions of philosophy-of-God<sup>28</sup> and theology.<sup>29</sup> (For a guide in what follows, see below, Figure 1.)

FIGURE 1

*The Relationship of Religion, Philosophy-of-God, and Theology,  
according to Bernard Lonergan*

RELIGION	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p>CHRISTIAN RELIGION</p> </div> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p>unrestricted being-in-love: the inner word, the inner core of God's gift of his love</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 10px 0;">+</p> <p>Christian revelation: the outer word, the outer manifestation of God's gift of his love</p> </div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>COMMON ASPECT OF ALL RELIGIONS</p> </div> </div>
THEOLOGY (REFLECTION ON RELIGION)	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p>CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY</p> </div> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p>reflection on unrestricted being-in-love</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 10px 0;">+</p> <p>reflection on Christian revelation</p> </div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>PHILOSOPHY- OF-GOD</p> </div> </div>

"Newer" philosophy-of-God is a discipline which, by contrast with traditional or "older" philosophy-of-God, proceeds not from the static, immobile viewpoint of logic but from the dynamic, moving viewpoint of method; and thus it concerns itself

28. See PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 1-20, 50-59. Cf. METHOD IN THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 24-25, 337-40.

29. See PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 15, 22, 33, 34, 50, 56. Cf. METHOD IN THEOLOGY, esp. pp. xi, 138-40, 170, 267, 331, 355.

not merely with objects but also, and more fundamentally, with the conscious subject. Specifically, it is a reflection on the conscious subject's religious experience in terms of its *common* aspect, the aspect under which the religious experiences of all conscious subjects are similar. That is to say, it is a reflection on unrestricted being-in-love, the inner word — or, as the Christian theologian expresses it, on the inner core of God's gift of his love. Thus, "newer" philosophy-of-God is theology, taking the latter in the broad sense of "reflection on religion".

Theology in the strict sense — Christian theology — as envisaged by Lonergan likewise proceeds from the dynamic, moving viewpoint of method. Like philosophy-of-God it is a reflection on the conscious subject's religious experience; but it considers that experience in terms not merely of its *common* aspect but also of its *specifically Christian* aspect. That is to say, it is a reflection both on unrestricted being-in-love, the inner core of God's gift of his love, the inner word, and on Christian revelation, the outer manifestation of the divine gift, the outer word whence the Christian cognitively elaborates and practically implements his primitive religious experience. Thus theology in part is methodically and performatively, though not logically, solidary with philosophy-of-God: indeed, the former can be viewed as the preserving but perfecting sublation of the latter.<sup>30</sup>

#### IV. EVIL: A SECOND APPROACH TO RESOLVING THE PROBLEMS (1)

##### A. "Newer" Philosophy-of-God on Evil

"Newer" philosophy-of-God is a reflective explicitation of the ultimate implications of the dynamic structure of the conscious subject who has undergone religious conversion.<sup>31</sup> More exactly, it is a reflective bringing-to-light of what is ultimately implied by inquiry, by reflection, by deliberation, and — most basically — by unrestricted being-in-love. It uncovers and manifests the performative self-contradiction in which the subject would be involved, were he to deny that there is an intelligent ground of the universe, a ground that is world-transcending necessary being, the universal moral ground and goal, the unrestrictedly lovable beloved.<sup>32</sup> "Newer" philosophy-of-God thus arrives at a position that includes the affirmations by traditional philosophy-of-God that God really exists and is both all-powerful and all-good. And, as regards evil, this leads to the further affirmation that although evil

30. Of precisely which functional specialty of a functionally-differentiated theology is philosophy-of-God a performative part? Lonergan argues that it is part of Systematics. (See, e.g., *PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY*, esp. pp. ix-x, 13-14, 16, 19-20, 34-35, 40-42, 45-59.) And he maintains that natural ethics, as well, is part of that same functional specialty. (See, e.g., *PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY*, pp. 15-16.)

31. Religious conversion modifies the conscious subject's dynamic *structure* or *state*, but of itself it brings no new *object*. (See *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, pp. 106-107, and *PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY*, pp. 38-39.) From an exclusively philosophical standpoint it is an open question how many persons undergo religious conversion; but see below, n. 43.

32. Cf. *PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY*, pp. 52-56, and *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, pp. 101-103. Note that the procedure of "newer" philosophy-of-God is not fundamentally one of inferring conclusions from premises but of uncovering, explicitating, thematizing what is already performatively, implicitly, operatively present in the concrete conscious subject.

really exists<sup>33</sup> it is not the contradictory of good; and that, in turn, eventually gives rise to the traditional conclusions as to how evil is to be understood and how it ought to be responded to.<sup>34</sup> On the present approach, by contrast with the traditional one, however, both the general affirmations about God and evil and the specific theoretical and practical conclusions about evil are grasped as functions not just of the *reasonable* but also and more fundamentally of the *lovable*; and they are maintained not as “merely abstract” but rather as finally implied by the eminently concrete and full-blooded religious experience that provides the characteristic tone and color of the subject’s entire conscious life. Consequently, though there is no significant advance toward formal resolution of such theoretical and practical difficulties as those presented by the conclusions that one’s suffering from moral faults is punishment for moral faults and that natural faults and one’s suffering from them are contributions to the perfection of the cosmos,<sup>35</sup> and though these difficulties thus remain as enigmatic as ever, they now are — to use Newman’s terminology — not just *notionally* but *really* apprehended as at least virtually resolved in such a way as not to be at odds with the real existence, all-powerfulness, and all-goodness of the unrestrictedly lovable beloved.

### B. *Merits and Difficulties*

With respect to content, “newer” philosophy-of-God retains both the principal merit and the most significant difficulties of traditional philosophy-of-God in regard to the problems of evil. For in understanding evil as possessing privative rather than positive reality it distinguishes it clearly from good without making it the contradictory of good and thus transposing the problems of evil into the problems of God. But, on the other hand, it still is confronted with the theoretical and practical difficulties that flow from understanding suffering as punishment and/or a contribution to cosmic perfection.<sup>36</sup>

The superiority of “newer” philosophy-of-God over its predecessor in treating the problems of evil derives not from its content but from its method. For inasmuch as it grows out of a reflection on the dynamic structure of the concrete conscious subject, it eliminates the dry, remote, abstract character possessed by the affirmations regarding evil when they are reached via the traditional approach. Without in any way sacrificing logical rigor, it manifests those affirmations as escapable only at the price of denying the unrestricted being-in-love that is the conscious subject’s most basic dynamic feature; and thus it overcomes the objection that the affirmations are “too philosophical”.

Still, “newer” philosophy-of-God does not take account of the characteristic (by contrast with common) assertions which the Christian religious tradition makes with respect to evil;<sup>37</sup> and thus it remains open to the charge of inadequacy by the

33. Recall above, Section II.

34. Recall above, Section II.

35. Recall above, Section II.

36. Recall above, Section II.

37. More generally, “newer” philosophy-of-God *as such* does not take account of the characteristic (by contrast with common) assertions of *any* religious tradition. On the other hand, one should recognize

conscious subject who precisely through reference to that tradition has cognitively elaborated and practically implemented his primitive religious experience. The discipline in which this deficiency is rectified, however, is not philosophy-of-God, it is Christian theology; and to a consideration of its stance regarding evil we now turn.

V. EVIL: A SECOND APPROACH TO RESOLVING  
THE PROBLEMS (2)

A. *Systematic Theology on Evil*

Theology — more exactly, Systematics, in the functionally-differentiated theology that we are presupposing<sup>38</sup> — maintains the concrete, dynamic approach of “newer” philosophy-of-God, sublating the latter’s reflective explicitation of primitive unrestricted being-in-love, the inner word of God’s gift of his love, and complementing it with a reflection on Christian revelation, the outer expression of the divine gift.<sup>39</sup>

The theological reply to the question of how evil is to be understood may be indicated briefly by touching three topics: personal sin, original sin, and redemption.<sup>40</sup>

Traditional philosophy-of-God understands moral faults basically as being *irrational* acts, transgressions of the moral order that is discovered by right reason. “Newer” philosophy-of-God takes over that notion but goes on view moral faults more basically as *unloving* acts, acts in tension with the dynamic thrust of unrestricted loving that underpins the religious subject’s conscious life. Theology, in turn, takes over both notions and goes on to specify those unloving acts more precisely as acts tending ultimately toward rejection of God’s love offered to men in Jesus Christ; and in this sense it designates moral faults as personal sins.<sup>41</sup> Nor does it view at least a certain amount of suffering from moral faults as surprising: one deserves to be punished for one’s sins.

Besides the free, contingent, “ethical” aspect of evil, however, evil as directly or indirectly chosen, evil as personal sin and deserved punishment, there is the necessary, inherited, “tragic” aspect of evil, evil as given prior to one’s choice and thus as somehow beyond one’s control;<sup>42</sup> and theology understands this in terms of

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that a discipline of such “purity” is at least a mild abstraction: concretely, even “newer” philosophy-of-God does not develop in a vacuum, and virtually all people are in fact influenced by the characteristic and not just the common features of their existential religious contexts. (See PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY, p. 55.)

38. See PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY, esp. pp. 21–35.

39. See above, Figure 1.

40. What follows is, to be sure, but the barest of sketches. In working up this sketch we have referred, among other works, to the following: Karl RAHNER, “Guilt-Responsibility-Punishment within the View of Catholic Theology”, THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS, vi, 197–217, “The Sin of Adam”, THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS, xi, 247–62, and “Original Sin”, SACRAMENTUM MUNDI, iv, 333ff.; Piet SCHOONENBERG, MAN AND SIN, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965; and Paul RICŒUR, “The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection”, INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY, 2 (1962), 191–218.

41. One might argue, of course, that the notion of “sin” as “offense against a (transcendent) person” arises already at the level of “newer” philosophy-of-God. On what is, in effect, this issue, see RICŒUR, “The Hermeneutics of Symbols”, esp. pp. 193–200, 209–210.

42. For this distinction, see RICŒUR, “The Hermeneutics of Symbols”, esp. pp. 200–208, 214–18.



original sin. Adam's personal sin has tragic consequences for the entire cosmos, consequences which thus radically qualify the situation in which each individual "born into Adam" exercises his personal freedom. These consequences involve an original state of guilt for all of Adam's progeny, together with a dynamic inclination to ratify that original state of guilt by personal sin. They involve a heightening of natural faults and one's suffering from them. And though they bring to light a solidarity among men, they specify that solidarity as one in which one person may be required to suffer for the personal sins of another.

Correlative to Adam's sinful act and its cosmic consequences, however, is Christ's redemptive act and *its* cosmic consequences. As Adam's act of lovelessness has deleterious effects on the situation in which human freedom is exercised, so Christ's act of supreme love has salvific effects on that situation. As in virtue of Adam's sin all men are originally sinful and inclined toward personal sin, so in virtue of Christ's vicarious suffering all men are objectively redeemed and given God's gift of unrestricted being-in-love.<sup>43</sup> Thus the concrete conscious subject has not merely the opportunity freely to appropriate and ratify his state of original sin by acceding to his sinful inclination through personal acts of sin but also the opportunity freely to appropriate and ratify his state of objective redemption by accepting God's gift of unrestricted loving through personal acts of Christ-like love. And it is precisely insofar as men thus "put on Christ" that creation as a whole tends toward the Day of the Lord in which not just the "ethical" but also the "tragic" aspect of evil will be eradicated.

The theological reply to the question of how, in the light of the foregoing, evil ought to be responded to is threefold.<sup>44</sup> First, one should strive to eliminate his personal sinning, responding instead to God's gift of love by modelling himself on Christ. Secondly, one should willingly accept that suffering which he perceives to be deserved for his personal sins, the "ethical" aspect of suffering.<sup>45</sup> Thirdly, one should willingly accept as well that suffering which he does not perceive to be deserved for

43. It is a theological position that every person is given grace sufficient for salvation, but that every person is free to accept or reject that gift. (See, e.g., *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, pp. 108-109, and *PHILOSOPHY OF GOD, AND THEOLOGY*, pp. 18-20, 36-38.) Now, the metaphysical distinction between grace as given, operative grace, and grace as accepted, cooperative grace, may be translated into the categories of intentionality analysis as the distinction between the two moments of religious conversion: religious conversion as it is defined and as it is achieved, or, again, as it is recognized and as it is accepted. (See *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*, pp. 241, 283-84, and *FOUNDATIONS OF THEOLOGY*, pp. 225-26.) It is but stating the traditional theological position in contemporary terms, then, to say that every person is given the divine gift of unrestricted being-in-love, with the option of accepting or rejecting that gift.

44. As natural ethics is solidary with philosophy-of-God, so moral theology is solidary with speculative theology. (Recall above, p. 21, n. 16.) And performatively, at least, these all come together in the functional specialty that is Systematics. (Cf. above, p. 27, n. 30.)

45. Needless to say, one inclined to conclude that his suffering is personally undeserved should consider whether it is indeed sinfulness or perceptiveness that he lacks: the traditional view that the greatest saints are the most keenly aware of their personal sinfulness is a venerable one. On the other hand, it is difficult to maintain that absolutely all suffering is personally deserved, since at least the suffering of children is a clear counter-example. Moreover, that position, one of the claims of Job's comforters, appears — if we may play light with the Scriptures for a moment — to be rejected by the most eminent of authorities on the topic! (See Job 42: 7ff.)

his personal sins, the "tragic" aspect of suffering: he should strive to endure such suffering as Christ endured it, meeting the evil that is suffering and sin with the good that is love, returning not evil for evil but good for evil and thus transforming the evil into good by making it an occasion for love.<sup>46</sup>

### B. *Merits and Difficulties*

As to content, theology in its treatment of the problems of evil preserves the chief merit of philosophy-of-God in that regard by understanding evil as privation.<sup>47</sup> But it also makes a considerable contribution of its own by explicating the Christian revelation that illuminates the way in which fault and suffering are, at a deeper level, sin and punishment and the way in which their positive counterparts are love and redemption. And in this respect it somewhat moderates the incomprehensibility of the "tragic" aspect of one's suffering, the aspect that is beyond one's control, portraying it as a function of solidarity in sin with Adam and as an opportunity for solidarity in vicarious and loving suffering with Christ. Nonetheless, this two-directional invocation of human solidarity does not set the anguishing theoretical difficulties to rest; and mystery remains.

As to method, theology not only is capable of responding to legitimate demands for intellectual rigor, and not only takes account of the conscious subject in the plenitude of his concrete experience, but also gives full regard to the word (Word) of the Christian religious tradition; and thus it considers the problems of evil in the fullest and most complete way normally available for intellectual inquiry *in via*.

46. LONERGAN develops this point beautifully in terms of "the Law of the Cross". (See DE VERBO INCARNATO, editio tertia, Romae: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1964, Thesis 17a, pp. 552-93.)

And in the same regard, note the complement to our earlier (above, p. 22, n. 18) literary excerpt:

"Tell me yourself, I challenge you — answer. Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature — that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance — and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth."

"No, I wouldn't consent", said Alyosha softly.

"And can you admit the idea that men for whom you are building it would agree to accept their happiness on the foundation of the unexpiated blood of a little victim? And accepting it would remain happy for ever?"

"No, I can't admit it, Brother", said Alyosha suddenly, with flashing eyes. "You said just now, is there a being in the whole world who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? But there is a being and He can forgive everything, all and for all, because He gave His innocent blood for all and everything. You have forgotten Him, and on Him is built the edifice, and it is to Him they cry aloud, 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed.'" (From Fyodor DOSTOYEVSKY, THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV, Book V, Chapter IV.)