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THE DOCTRINE OF EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

Thomas Talbott

I argue that, although theism in general is consistent, many of the popular forms, specifically those that include the traditional doctrine of hell, are implicitly self-contradictory. After examining three varieties of theism, each of which involves, I contend, a logical impossibility of one kind or another, I conclude that nothing short of an explicit universalism—that is, nothing short of the view that God will eventually reconcile all persons to himself—is consistent with other doctrines essential to Christian theism.

I. Introduction

As anyone familiar with recent work on the problem of evil knows, the argument that theism is self-contradictory because evil is itself inconsistent with the existence of God has been remarkably unsuccessful; no one, it seems, has managed to deduce a contradiction from doctrines essential to theism, and Alvin Plantinga's proof of consistency,¹ whether successful in every detail or not, remains a formidable obstacle to any *deductive* argument of the relevant kind. But even if theism in general is consistent—and I believe it is—it does not follow that all forms of theism, or even that the most popular forms, are likewise consistent. Take those popular forms of theism that include the traditional doctrine of hell, the doctrine of everlasting punishment. As John Hick has observed, "misery which is eternal and therefore infinite would constitute the largest part of the problem of evil";² and evil of that kind is indeed, I believe, inconsistent with the existence of God. Accordingly, in this paper, I shall examine the traditional doctrine of hell and the various ways in which theists have tried to square this doctrine with other doctrines essential to Christian theism. I shall conclude that *any* form of theism that includes the traditional doctrine of hell, even one that tries to preserve consistency by denying the universal love of God, is in fact logically inconsistent.

By the doctrine of hell I mean the doctrine that, as punishment for their sin, God will consign some persons to a place of everlasting torment from which there will be, very simply, no hope of escape; I mean the doctrine that some of the very ones whom God has commanded us to love, if Christian theology is correct, are thus destined to be, in Peter Geach's horrifying expression, "irretrievably miserable."³ So far as I can tell, not a single passage in the Bible would require a believer to accept such a doctrine and the whole thrust of the New Testament is inconsistent



with it; but that does not seem to be the majority opinion, even among philosophers. According to Geach, “if the Gospel account [of Christ’s teaching] is even approximately correct, then it is *perfectly clear* [my emphasis] that according to that teaching many men are irretrievably lost.”⁴ And Richard Swinburne, another proponent of the traditional doctrine, also seems to rely on the words of Jesus:

It seems to me that the central point of New Testament teaching is that an eternal fate is sealed, at any rate for many, at death, a good fate for the good and a bad fate for the bad. This appears to be the main point of such parables as the sheep and the goats.⁵

But if the main point of this parable were really that the fate of many bad persons is sealed at death, and a bad fate at that, it is strange that the gospel writer should employ a word, *kolasis*, that always implies *remedial* punishment, never retribution; as one Greek scholar, William Barclay, observes, “in all Greek secular literature, *kolasis* is never used of anything but remedial punishment.”⁶ Beyond that is the more fundamental question of how we should understand the words of Jesus, as the gospels have recorded them. Even a superficial reading of the gospels reveals one point very clearly: Jesus steadfastly refused to address in a systematic way abstract theological questions, especially those concerning the age to come. His whole manner of expressing himself, the incessant use of hyperbole and riddle, of parable and colorful stories, was intended to awaken the spiritual imagination of his disciples and to leave room for reinterpretation as they matured in the faith; it was not intended to provide final answers to their theological questions. As Swinburne himself points out, moreover, Jesus never intended for anyone to take the details of his parables literally;⁷ the details merely provided a colorful background for the main point. And as I read the parable of the sheep and the goats, the main point has nothing to do with final judgment or the ultimate fate of the wicked; the main point is simply that “as you did it [i.e., performed acts of kindness] to one of the least of these my children, you did it to me [And] as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.”⁸ the main point, in other words, is a profound observation about the nature of love, one that will play an essential role in my own argument *against* the traditional doctrine of hell.

My aim in this paper, however, is not to assess the biblical warrant, or lack of same, for a doctrine of everlasting punishment; it is to assess the philosophical merits of such a doctrine.⁹ I shall argue that, when the doctrine of everlasting punishment is conjoined with other doctrines essential to the Christian faith, a logical paradox arises that proponents of the doctrine have failed to appreciate; as a consequence, a Christian theist must either reject the doctrine as incompatible with Christianity or else admit that Christianity is itself logically inconsistent.

II. *Some Varieties of Theism*

I shall begin with some distinctions. Anyone who holds the following set of beliefs I shall call a theist:

- (1) God exists.
- (2) God is both omniscient and omnipotent.
- (3) God loves every created person.
- (4) Evil exists.

And anyone who, in addition to the above set of beliefs, also holds the following belief I shall call a *conservative* theist:

- (5) God will irrevocably reject some persons and subject those persons to everlasting punishment.

I choose the term “conservative theist” for this reason: though universalism, the belief that God will eventually reconcile all persons to himself, had many proponents in the early Christian church, the Fifth General Council, held in Constantinople in A.D. 553, officially condemned it; as a result, the confessional statements of most Christian denominations now endorse (5) much more clearly than they do (3). It is conservative theism, then, not theism in general, that contains, I shall argue, an *implicit* contradiction;¹⁰ that is, from the above set of five propositions together with certain necessary truths one can deduce, I believe, an *explicit* contradiction. A reasonable theist who accepts propositions (1) and (2), therefore, must reject either (3) or (5).

Now an interesting point about much of the theological discussion concerning hell is this. In a variety of subtle ways, many theologians do reject one of these propositions, either (3) or (5), sometimes without even realizing it, and they are often especially deceptive about their rejection of (3). Consider the following passage from Aquinas:

God loves every man, and every creature also, in that he wills some good for every one of them. But he does not will every good for every one, and is said to hate some in so far as he does not will for them the good of eternal life.¹¹

Does God love every human being, according to Aquinas? It would seem not. That God should will *some* good for each of them during, say, seventy years of life on earth is hardly evidence of love, not when that seventy years is followed by an eternity of separation or, as Aquinas calls it, an eternity of hatred. At the very least Aquinas seems reluctant to commit himself clearly, in this passage, to the truth of (3). And what is true of Aquinas is also true of Augustine, Calvin, and many other proponents of everlasting punishment; so far as I can tell, very

few mainline theologians are prepared to embrace (3) with any degree of clarity. Many do, it is true, argue that a final rejection of some persons is compatible with God's *justice* and *moral perfection*, but they then simply ignore the implications of such rejection for divine love. Augustine thus writes:

Now, who but a fool would think God unfair either when he imposes penal judgment on the deserving or when he shows mercy to the undeserving? . . . the whole human race was condemned in its apostate head by a divine judgment so just that not even if a single member of the race were ever saved from it (*sic*), no one could rail against God's justice.¹²

Throughout the *Enchiridion* Augustine also says a good deal more in defense of God's justice and moral perfection; he even argues that God can justly condemn those who die in infancy because they are all drawn from a corrupt mass.¹³ Nowhere does he even raise the question, however, of how God could possibly *love* an infant and still condemn (or reject) that infant for an eternity. At least some theologians in the tradition of Augustine and Calvin, moreover, have explicitly denied that God loves all created persons. According to one such theologian, Herman Hoeksema, God restricts his love to a limited elect; the non-elect, those predestined to hell, are subject to the "sovereign hatred of God's good pleasure."¹⁴ Though Hoeksema no doubt accepts the doctrine of God's moral perfection (however confusedly), he does not accept (3); he is at most committed to

(3') God loves *some* created persons but not all.

Accordingly, anyone who, like Hoeksema, accepts all of the above propositions except (3) I shall call a *hard hearted* theist.

Of course relatively few of those who call themselves Christians today could justifiably be called hard hearted theists; most, even those who may wonder about Satan and other fallen angels, would insist that, because the essence of God is love, God truly loves every person that exists. So for them the question is acute: How could a loving God reject *forever* some of those he loves, however evil they may have become, and subject them to *everlasting* punishment? In the face of such a question, some of the more able defenders of everlasting separation modify the traditional doctrine slightly and do indeed reject (5), in effect conceding that conservative theism is inconsistent. According to C. S. Lewis, for example, a loving God would never reject anyone forever, but some sinners do reject God forever and do so of their own free will; according to Lewis, therefore, the gates of hell are always closed from the inside and hell is populated by those free persons (or those formerly free persons) who have chosen to separate themselves from the loving God forever.¹⁵ Richard Swinburne and Eleonore Stump

also seem to hold a similar view, which would replace (5) with

- (5') Some persons will, despite God's best efforts to save them, finally reject God and separate themselves from God forever.

Accordingly, anyone who accepts propositions (1), (2), (3), and (4) and replaces (5) with (5') I shall call a *moderately conservative* theist.

Finally, I should perhaps also mention those Christians who take quite literally a teaching found in the New Testament: the teaching that Christ will continue to reign until he overcomes all opposition and all separation from God—until, that is, every opposing will voluntarily place itself in subjection to him, even as he places himself in subjection to the Father.¹⁶ Such theists reject both (5) and (5') and affirm instead

- (5'') All persons will eventually be reconciled to God and will therefore experience everlasting happiness.

Accordingly, anyone who accepts (1), (2), (3), (4), and (5'') I shall call, as a concession to my own biases, a *biblical* theist.

Now in what follows I shall argue that, though biblical theism is possibly true, each of the other specific forms of theism outlined above involves a logical impossibility of one kind or another. But I shall not, despite the title of my paper, have much to say about the idea of punishment or about theories of punishment; the evil of everlasting separation is itself, I shall argue, inconsistent with the existence of God. Some may regard such separation as *punishment* for sin; others may regard it as a natural *consequence* of sin; and still others may regard it as both. Some may even believe that, as punishment for sin, God will subject the lost to various forms of "physical" torment, as if *separation* from God would not be torment enough. But we must finally reject all such views if, as I shall argue, everlasting separation is itself inconsistent with the existence of God.¹⁷ In an effort to show that it is inconsistent with the existence of God, I shall examine conservative theism, hard hearted theism, and moderately conservative theism in that order.

III. *Conservative Theism*

According to conservative theists, God's grace has a built in time limit, which they usually think of as the moment of physical death. At that moment one's eternal fate is sealed; if one has sinned and has died in a state of rebellion, God then withdraws his grace forever and all hope for one's redemption passes away. Peter Geach even imagines that, after the final judgment, the line of time will split into two branches neither of which will bear any temporal relation to the other, and so "The damned will know that there is no conceivable restitution for

them.”¹⁸ Here the difference between (5), which says that God will irrevocably reject some persons, and (5’), which says that some persons will finally reject God forever, is crucial. Conservative theists, as I have defined their position, are committed to more than (5’); they are committed to the idea that God actually *rejects* some sinners (not merely their sin) and thus no longer seeks to bring about their redemption.

But what does it mean to say that God rejects some sinners? Suppose (a) that Rameses freely and forever refuses to be reconciled to God (assuming, for a moment, that this is possible), (b) that nothing God could do would bring it about (in Plantinga’s broad or weak sense)¹⁹ that Rameses freely repents of his sin, and (c) that the following subjunctive conditionals are true:

- (6) If God *could* do something to bring it about that Rameses freely repents of his sin, then God would do it.
- (7) If Rameses *were* to repent of his sin freely, then God would accept him back as a prodigal son.

Given these conditions, we can perhaps say that Rameses freely rejects God but not that God *irrevocably* rejects Rameses; we could hardly say that God irrevocably rejects someone whom he is always prepared to accept back as a prodigal son. But suppose now that God could induce repentance in Rameses only in the following way: if God were to act immorally or to act contrary to the interest of some other loved one—perhaps some Israelite—then and only then would Rameses repent of his sin. Though the supposition here is, I believe, deeply incoherent, the point I want to make about rejection does not require us to challenge it. If God is always prepared to accept Rameses back as a prodigal son but refuses to act contrary to the interest of others in his effort to win back a lost loved one, it still follows only that Rameses has rejected God, not that God has irrevocably rejected Rameses. Perhaps, then, we can distinguish between (5) and (5’) by adopting the following definitions:

- (D₁) For any sinner S and time *t*, S finally rejects God forever at *t* if, and only if, (a) S freely resolves at *t* never to be reconciled to God and (b) there is nothing *both* within God’s power to do *and* consistent with the interest of all other created persons that would (weakly) bring it about, either at *t* or at some moment subsequent to *t*, that S freely repents of S’s sin and is thereby reconciled to God.
- (D₂) For any sinner S and time *t*, God irrevocably rejects S at *t* if, and only if, *either* (a) at *t* and every moment subsequent to *t* God would refuse to be reconciled to S even on the condition that S freely repents of S’s sin *or* (b) at neither *t* nor any moment subsequent to *t* does S freely repent of S’s sin and the following conditions are

met: (i) at t God knows of something both within his power to do and consistent with the interest of all other created persons that would (weakly) bring it about, either at t or at some moment subsequent to t , that S freely repents of S's sin, and (ii) God's immutable intention at t is not to exercise his power in this way.

The idea behind (D₁) is that if, despite God's best efforts to save him, Rameses finally rejects God forever, then he must sustain a commitment to such rejection in the face of all that omnipotent love might do; and the idea behind (D₂) is that divine rejection must involve something more than a sinner's rejection of God. These definitions do, I take it, permit the possibility that God and some sinner might mutually reject each other. If God could do nothing to induce Rameses to repent of his sin freely and (7) were false anyway, then we could say both that Rameses rejects God and that God rejects Rameses. But these definitions also permit the possibility that God and some sinner might, so to speak, reject the other unilaterally, and that is presumably as it should be. Given (D₂), moreover, (5) has serious implications for the doctrine of God's love; in particular, (5) seems to imply that God is prepared to act contrary to the interest of some of those whom he supposedly loves. And that, I contend, is self-contradictory.

Consider first what it might mean to say that God loves a given person. We may be unable to give a complete account, but we can, perhaps, identify some necessary conditions. It would seem, for example, that God truly loves someone only if he desires the good for, and seeks to promote the interest of, that person. This suggests:

- (P₁) Necessarily, God loves a person S (with a perfect form of love) at a time t only if God's intention at t and every moment subsequent to t is to do everything within his power to promote the best interest of S.

Is (P₁) acceptable as it stands? One might object, in the first place, that love for another need not be everlasting; if a person were to die (and cease to exist) or simply to become demented in one way or another, the time may come when that person no longer loves someone whom he or she had previously loved. But that rather obvious point must be set beside another. One very good reason for denying that Johnnie ever truly cared for Suzie is that, at some later time, he consistently acts in unloving ways towards her. Under such conditions, we are apt to say that Johnnie *thought* he had loved Suzie but his love was less than genuine; it was selfish or immature and not true love at all. Even when hatred for another—not anger, but the desire to do irrevocable harm to another—develops at some later time and a genuine offense triggers it, such hatred is incompatible with the kind of love of which the New Testament speaks so clearly. The

command that we love our enemies and do good to those who do evil to us implies a kind of love that endures even in the face of great offense. In the case of an omnipotent and omniscient being, moreover, the claim that such a being loves a person for awhile and then ceases to love that person makes no sense at all. Suppose that for fifty years God were to act towards Smith in exactly the way he would act towards someone he loves, and suppose that God were to do so in the full knowledge that forever afterwards he would act towards Smith in unloving ways. Could we then say that God loved Smith for awhile?—that for awhile he intended to promote the best interest of Smith? Surely not. In the case of God, it surely is a necessary truth that God loves a person at one time (in the New Testament sense of *agape* love) only if he loves that person at all subsequent times.

Another possible objection to (P₁) is this. It is not in general true, one might observe, that a loving person does *everything* in his or her power to promote the interest of a particular loved one; most of us are, after all, limited in both knowledge and power. Because we are limited in knowledge, we cannot always distinguish “a helping hand” from harmful interference; and because we are limited in power, we must parcel out our limited supply of energy, perhaps in equal portions, to all of our loved ones (including ourselves). We cannot devote all of our attention, in other words, to any single individual. But these considerations have no relevance in the case of God, who faces no limits but logical limits and whose responsibility includes the providential control of the entire created order. The only conceivable problem of this kind that God might face would be something like this: If the best interest of one person were logically inconsistent with that of another, then God himself would be powerless to promote the interest of both loved ones and would then be forced to resolve the conflict in accordance with some principle of justice. My own view is that no such conflicts are possible; but for those who think they are, we can alter (P₁) in the following way:

- (P₂) Necessarily, God loves a person S at a time *t* only if God’s intention at *t* and every moment subsequent to *t* is to do everything within his power to promote the best interest of S, provided that the interest of S is consistent with that of all others whom God also loves.

My own view, I repeat, is that the proviso in (P₂) is unnecessary because (P₁) and (P₂) are logically equivalent, but in any event the main point stands: There must be *some* connection between God’s loving a person and his willingness to exercise his power in the interest of that person.

It stands to reason that a loving God would want to promote the best interest of his loved ones, but that may tell us less than we would like to know. A lot

also depends upon how we construe a person's best interest. How should we do that? We might note, initially, that a person's best interest must have *some* connection, however difficult it may be to specify, with the conditions of a happy life. But again, we might not agree on what those conditions are; and as Swinburne points out, not just anything that someone happens to call "happiness" will qualify as the relevant kind of happiness. So what *is* the relevant kind of happiness, the kind that a loving God would seek to promote? Though it may include "the absence of unpleasant sensations," it is not, says Swinburne, essentially "a matter of having pleasant sensations."

There are no pleasant sensations had by the man who is happy in reading a good book or playing a round of golf with a friend, or by a man who is happy because his son is making a success of the business which the father founded. Basically a man's happiness consists in doing what he wants to be doing and having happen what he wants to have happen.²⁰

Nor can the relevant kind of happiness, what Swinburne calls "supremely worthwhile happiness,"²¹ arise from a false belief or from an action that is morally wrong.

However, although someone may be fully happy doing some action or having something happen, this happiness may arise from a false factual belief or from doing an action or being in a situation which, objectively, is not really a very good one. Happiness is surely more to be prized according as the happy man has true beliefs about what is happening and according as what is happening is in fact of great value²²

Nor can the relevant kind of happiness quickly lead to boredom or quickly fade with the mere passage of time. It must be, I think, the kind of contentment and sense of well-being that could quite literally endure forever; the kind of happiness which, according to the New Testament, can exist only when one is loved by others and is likewise filled with love for others. If that is true, if a community of love is a condition of the highest form of human happiness, then that is why, according to the New Testament, God must first purge us of all the selfishness and arrogance and lust for power that separates us from others, the theological name for which is sin. If love, and only love, makes life worth living forever, then we can achieve happiness that is supremely worthwhile only if we repent of our sin and turn away from everything that separates us from others.

One could, perhaps, enumerate many more conditions of the kind of happiness that is supremely worthwhile, and some may want to quibble over one or more of the conditions mentioned above. But whatever is to qualify as such happiness, it must clearly be the kind of happiness that God would seek to promote in those he loves. And this suggests:

- (P₃) Necessarily, God loves a person S at a time *t* only if God's intention at *t* and every moment subsequent to *t* is to do everything within his power to promote supremely worthwhile happiness in S, provided that the actions taken are consistent with his promoting the same kind of happiness in all others whom he also loves.

Once again, the proviso is probably unnecessary, but I include it in order to emphasize the point that God would never promote the happiness of one loved one at the expense of another. So long as God's intention is to do everything he can to promote supremely worthwhile happiness in S—that is, everything that is both within his power to do and consistent with his promoting the same kind of happiness in others—I shall say that his intention is to do *everything he properly can* to promote such happiness in S. Similarly, so long as God meets the condition set forth in (P₂), I shall say that his intention is to do everything he properly can to promote the best interest of S. And that should make the contradiction in conservative theism readily apparent. If God loves all created persons, his intention is to do all that he properly can to promote the best interest of and to cultivate supremely worthwhile happiness in all of them; but if he irrevocably rejects some created persons, it is *not* his intention to do all that he properly can to promote the best interest of or to cultivate supremely worthwhile happiness in all of them. More specifically, conservative theism, as I have defined it, includes both

- (3) God loves every created person

and

- (5) God will irrevocably reject some persons and subject those persons to everlasting punishment.

But given (P₂), (3) entails

- (8) For any created person S and time *t* subsequent to the creation of S, God's intention at *t* is to do all that he properly can to promote the best interest of S;

and given (P₃), (3) entails

- (9) For any created person S and time *t* subsequent to the creation of S, God's intention at *t* is to do all that he properly can to promote supremely worthwhile happiness in S.

But unfortunately for conservative theists, (5) at least *appears* to entail

- (10) There is a person S and a time *t* subsequent to the creation of S such that it is not God's intention at *t* to do all that he properly can to promote the best interest of S;

(5) also *appears* to entail

- (11) There is a person S and a time *t* subsequent to the creation of S such that it is not God's intention at *t* to do all that he properly can to promote supremely worthwhile happiness in S.

Since, moreover, (8) and (10) are flatly contradictory, as are (9) and (11), conservative theism appears to be self-contradictory as well.

Some, however, may want to challenge both the claim that (5) entails (10) and the claim that (5) entails (11). Such persons may concede that everlasting separation from God is in no one's best interest, and that such separation is obviously inconsistent with supremely worthwhile happiness. But the issue, they will point out, is whether God's intention is to do *all that he properly can* to promote the best interest of created persons, or to promote supremely worthwhile happiness in them; and that is a different matter altogether. But here we must remind ourselves of our definition of divine rejection, (D₂) above. (5) obviously entails

- (5a) There is a person S and a time *t* subsequent to the creation of S such that God's intention at *t* is to reject S irrevocably;

and according to (D₂), God rejects a sinner S irrevocably only if either (a) God does *less* than he properly can to bring it about that S freely repents of S's sin or (b) the following subjunctive conditional is true: *Even if S were to repent of S's sin, God would refuse to be reconciled to S*. In neither case is it God's intention to do all that he properly can to promote the best interest of S or to cultivate supremely worthwhile happiness in S. No conservative theist would deny, I presume, that for any sinner S, *genuine* repentance is in the best interest of S and consistent with the best interest of all other created persons; nor would any such theist deny that repentance is (logically) required if a sinner is to achieve supremely worthwhile happiness. So if God does less than he properly can to bring it about that S freely repents of S's sin, he also does less than he properly can to promote the best interest of S and to cultivate supremely worthwhile happiness in S; and if God refuses to be reconciled to S even on the condition that S freely repents of S's sin, then again it is not God's intention to do all that he properly can to promote the best interest of S or to promote supremely worthwhile happiness in S.²³

I conclude, therefore, that conservative theism is indeed self-contradictory, and that is why, I believe, that so many theologians have tried to achieve consistency by taking steps in the direction of either hard hearted theism or moderately conservative theism. Those who hold out for a doctrine of divine

rejection inevitably back away from the claim that God loves all created persons, and those who insist that God loves all created persons inevitably back away from a doctrine of divine rejection. In the following sections, however, I shall argue that nothing short of an explicit universalism will satisfy the demands of logical consistency.

IV. *Hard Hearted Theism*

It is unfortunate that, like many traditional theologians, recent philosophers who have defended the doctrine of everlasting separation have had little to say about the nature of divine love; neither Swinburne nor Geach, for example, finally makes it clear whether he is prepared to endorse

(3) God loves every created person.

The purpose of Swinburne's discussion is "to investigate whether the permanent separation of the good and bad is consonant with the supposed *goodness* of God,"²⁴ and the purpose of Geach's is "to show that God is *not unjust* in respect of Hell"²⁵ (emphases are mine); but neither confronts directly the question of whether God's goodness or justice implies that his love extends to all created persons. Geach is especially fuzzy on this point, as the following passage illustrates:

What I want to emphasize is the moral that if a world perished thus, and all its inhabitants were as if they had never been, it would be nothing against the glory of God. For God a billion rational creatures are as dust in the balance; if a billion perish, God suffers no loss, who can create what he wills with no effort or cost by merely thinking of it²⁶

Though himself a Christian, Geach here articulates an altogether pagan conception of God. A God such as Geach has imagined, one who is utterly indifferent to the fate of billions of rational creatures, is as far removed from the God of the New Testament as heaven is from hell itself. For of course indifference is the very opposite of love. Picture a loving father who sees his son gradually corrupted to the point where the son becomes a vicious murderer, one who is finally apprehended, convicted, and executed. Could the father experience this as anything but a loss? We might even imagine that the father finds it necessary to kill his son, perhaps in order to protect other loved ones; but if the father truly loves his son, or even at one time loved him, he can experience the final separation, the absence of reconciliation, only as a terrible loss. And similarly for God. A loving God could no more watch a billion *loved ones* perish forever and experience no sense of loss than a loving father could suffer the death of a child and experience no sense of loss. Evidently, then, Geach does not take the metaphor of God as a loving father very seriously.

Nonetheless, the harsh tone of Geach's discussion could be deceiving, and he does make one point altogether clear: he rejects as unjust any suggestion that God, having hated some "from the foundation of the world," has *predestined* them to eternal perdition.

some forms of the dogma of Hell really are incredible. Predestinarian theories like those of Jonathan Edwards would be an example. It would be unspeakably wicked to make men's performance of certain actions causally necessary, and then torment the men everlastingly as a punishment for having performed them.²⁷

I doubt that many theistic philosophers writing today would challenge Geach's assessment of such predestinarian theories; such theories are fortunately not as popular today as they once were. But the moral argument against such theories, the claim that they are "unspeakably wicked," is not the one I want to stress here. What I want to stress here are reasons for thinking that all forms of hard hearted theism, whether based upon a predestinarian theory or not, are implicitly self-contradictory because

(3') God loves some created persons but not all

is itself necessarily false.

The first question to ask is whether lovingkindness is an essential or an accidental property of God. If it is an essential property, then it is logically impossible for God to act in an unloving way or for him to bear ill-will towards anyone; it is logically necessary, in other words, that God should love all created persons. So if lovingkindness is an essential property of God, (3') is indeed necessarily false; that, I take it, hardly requires an argument. But suppose now that lovingkindness were merely an accidental property of God, that indifference towards others, or even hatred of them, were at least logically possible for God. Powerful reasons still remain, I shall argue, for denying that God could love *some* created persons without loving *all* of them and for thinking, therefore, that (3') is necessarily false.

Consider again the claim, expressed in (P₃) above, that God loves a person only if God's intention is to do all that he properly can to promote supremely worthwhile happiness in that person. In the preceding section, we mentioned several conditions of such happiness, two of which are critical for our present discussion: first, that the beliefs upon which supremely worthwhile happiness depends must be true, and second, that one cannot possess such happiness unless one is filled with love for others. These are, as I have said, necessary conditions, not sufficient conditions; but as such, they also have some surprising implications and pose some serious difficulties for God. For one thing, if a condition of supremely worthwhile happiness is that one be *willing* to give of oneself freely

in love, then as moderately conservative theists sometimes point out, God cannot simply impose such happiness upon a rational agent by an act of creation; and that difficulty will occupy our attention in the following section. A more relevant difficulty for our present concern is this: A disposition to love, though a necessary condition of supremely worthwhile happiness, can also be an instrumental evil, making a person more miserable, not less; indeed, the more one is filled with love for others, the more one's own happiness is jeopardized by the unhappiness of others. If I should love my daughter as myself, for example, I simply cannot be happy knowing that she is suffering or that she is otherwise miserable—unless, of course, I can somehow believe that, in the end, all will be well for her.²⁸ But if I cannot believe this, if I were to believe instead that she would be lost to me forever—even if I were to believe that, *by her own will*, she would become intolerably evil—my own happiness could never be complete, not so long as I continue to love her and to yearn for her redemption. I would always know what *could* have been, and I would always experience that as a terrible, unacceptable loss, one for which there could be no conceivable compensation. Given the right circumstances, therefore, love can render happiness utterly impossible; and herein lies a paradox that hard hearted theists would do well to contemplate.

According to hard hearted theists, God loves some created persons but not all. But that, it seems to me, is impossible, because God's love for one person logically requires that he love all persons. God cannot, first of all, love me without loving all of those whom I love; for if two persons are bound together in love, their purposes and interests, even the conditions of their happiness, are so logically intertwined as to be inseparable. That is why Jesus can say, "as you did it to one of the least of these my children, you did it to me," and the letter known as First John can say, "If any one say, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar . . ." ²⁹ Just as I cannot truly love God and, at the same time, hate those whom God loves, neither can God truly love me and, at the same time, hate those whom I love. If God acts contrary to the interest of my loved ones, then he acts contrary to my own interest; and if he fails to do all that he properly can to promote the happiness of my loved ones, then he also fails to do all that he properly can to promote my own happiness. Here we might try, as a thought experiment, to imagine the impossible: what it would be like for God to love me without loving one of my loved ones. If God were to deceive me concerning his indifference toward, or hatred of, one of my loved ones, my blissful ignorance, being based upon a false belief, would not be the kind of happiness that is supremely worthwhile; and if he were to bring it about that I no longer love this person, that my attitude towards this *former* loved one is as callused as his, he would again destroy the very possibility of happiness that is supremely worthwhile. In either case, he would be acting in unloving ways not only towards my loved one but towards me as well.

But what about those who are not loved ones of mine? Surely God can love me without loving them, can he not? But even that is by no means clear. For if a person *S* is *not* an object of my love, it will be for one of three reasons: either I am ignorant of *S*'s existence, or I know *S* but not very well, or my capacity for love is not yet perfected. Now if I am ignorant of *S*'s existence and thus do not know that God despises this miserable person, then either my blissful ignorance arises from the false belief that there are no such persons whom God despises or my capacity for love is not yet perfected; if I am not ignorant of *S*'s existence but just do not know *S* very well, then either I will continue to desire the good for *S*—just as, for instance, I might desire the good for starving children in Ethiopia—or my capacity for love is not yet perfected; and finally, if my capacity for love is not yet perfected, as it certainly is not, and God wants me to experience happiness that is supremely worthwhile, then he must continue to teach me the lessons of love until it is perfected. Is it not precisely for this reason that, according to Christian teaching, God commands us to love our enemies as well as our friends? Of course love for a cruel and vicious person is difficult (perhaps impossible apart from the grace of God), and we must always express such love in appropriate ways; such love may even require that, like Jonah, we preach repentance to one whom we regard as an enemy. Indeed, the story of Jonah is most illuminating in this regard. According to the story, Jonah's initial refusal to preach to the Ninevites was an expression of his hatred for them, of his desire to see them literally damned by God; the last thing he wanted was for his enemies to repent of their evil ways. Such hatred is often understandable. I would imagine that many Jews who suffered in Nazi concentration camps would find themselves unable, for a period of time anyway, to forgive their tormentors or to desire the good of repentance for them. But if, as the Christian religion has always taught, the highest forms of human happiness require the ability to love even those who wrong us, and wrong us badly, then God cannot truly love us without loving our enemies, those whom he has commanded us to love, as well.

Let us now review the logic of the situation and try to express the argument more precisely. I contend that

(3') God loves some created persons but not all

is necessarily false. If lovingkindness is an essential property of God, then it is clear that (3') is necessarily false; but even if lovingkindness is an accidental property of God, we still must do justice to this fact: There can be no exclusiveness in love. If God loves some of us, therefore, he wills the good for at least some of us; but he can will the good for even one of us only if he also wills the good for all of us. A principle, already suggested, that points in this direction is the following:

(P₄) It is necessary that, for any two persons, *S* and *S'*, if *S* wills the

good for S' , then God wills the good for S only if God also wills the good for S' .

And (P_4) is clearly incompatible with the kind of exclusiveness that we find in Jonathan Edwards and other Protestant theologians. If God truly loves us, then we need have no fear that he will reject some of our loved ones. But (P_4) is at least *compatible* with this possibility: a nonempty class of persons who are loved neither by God nor by any of God's own loved ones. So two additional principles are required to rule out that possibility:

- (P_5) It is necessary that, for any two persons, S and S' , God wills the good for S only if God wills that S be the kind of person such that, were S to know of the existence of S' , S would will the good for S' as well.
- (P_6) It is necessary that, for any two persons, S and S' , if (a) God wills that S be the kind of person such that, were S to know of the existence of S' , S would will the good for S' and (b) God himself wills the good for S , then God wills the good for S' as well.³⁰

These three principles illustrate nicely, it seems to me, the sense in which love, willing the good for another, differs from the kind of grasping, possessiveness that we so easily confuse with love. Love is inclusive. If God loves us, then according to (P_5) he wills that we become the kind of persons who in turn will the good for all others; and if that is his will for us, then according to (P_6) he himself must will the good for all others as well. Accordingly, if God loves one created person, he also loves all created persons.

My claim for this argument is that, even on the assumption that loving kindness is an accidental property of God, it provides powerful reasons for thinking that $(3')$ is necessarily false. Of course a hard hearted theist may want to challenge either (P_4) or (P_5) or (P_6) , but it is difficult to see how; it is even more difficult to see how any Christian could challenge these principles without rejecting some of the clearest teachings of the New Testament. It seems to me, at any rate, that these principles are true and that hard hearted theism is not only morally repugnant: it is implicitly self-contradictory as well.

V. *Moderately Conservative Theism*

So far I have argued that conservative theism and hard hearted theism are both implicitly self-contradictory, because a doctrine of divine rejection is inconsistent with the love of God. If the argument of the previous two sections is sound, therefore, a doctrine of hell is defensible only if modified in one of two ways: One must either deny that hell is *everlasting* or deny that it is a place of *punish-*

ment. My own view, for what it is worth, is that the language of the Bible is compatible with the first alternative but not the second. Though there is (so far as I can tell) no doctrine of rejection in the Bible, the possibility of punishment in the next life is set forth clearly, and the image of fire, so often associated with hell, makes it clear that God himself is the author of the punishment. But those who insist that the Bible teaches *everlasting* punishment would do well to ask how, for example, the main character in the story of Jonah can lament concerning his punishment in “the belly of Sheol”: “I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me *for ever*” [my emphasis], and then speak of deliverance in the very next sentence: “yet thou didst bring up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God.”³¹

Be that as it may, moderately conservative theists insist that hell is indeed everlasting for this reason:

- (5') Some persons will, despite God's best efforts to save them, finally reject God and separate themselves from God forever.

Essential to such view is, of course, a libertarian conception of free will according to which an action cannot be both free and causally determined by antecedent sufficient conditions. Neither, on this view, can God simply impose a moral character upon someone by a simple act of creation. So if a person continues to make wrong choices, continues to cultivate a rebellious spirit, and continues to reject God's grace for an eternity, then God is quite literally powerless to save that person. In the words of Eleanor Stump, “it is not within God's power to ensure that all human beings will be in heaven, because it is not within the power even of an omnipotent entity to *make* a person freely will anything.”³² And in the words of Richard Swinburne, “Free will is a good thing, and for God to override it for whatever cause is to all appearances a bad thing.”³³ Moderately conservative theists need not, moreover, *prove* that human beings have the required free will or that (5') is true (or even plausible); if (5') is even possibly true, then everlasting separation of one kind or another is at least *consistent* with the existence of God.

But is (5') even possibly true? Neither Stump nor Swinburne has much to say about the nature of the choice in question, except to deny that it is causally determined. But a sinner of the kind described in (5') must make a fully conscious decision to reject God, and not only that: the sinner must sustain a commitment to such rejection for an eternity. Indeed, given (D₁) of section III, (5') entails

- (12) There exists at least one sinner S such that nothing God can properly do would bring it about that S freely repents of S's sin;

that is, no action God might perform, no punishment he might administer, no revelation he might impart (concerning, for example, the consequences of rejec-

tion) would bring about repentance in S. And nothing weaker than (12) will prevent moderately conservative theism from collapsing into conservative theism, which we have already shown to be self-contradictory. According to Swinburne, “God might well allow a man to put himself beyond the possibility of salvation, even without revealing to him the depth of eternal happiness which he was losing”;³⁴ but a *loving* God would do that only if he already knew that such a revelation would be ineffective anyway. If God could *effectively* do more than he in fact does to save a sinner—without, at the same time, harming others whom he also loves—then God has indeed rejected that sinner; and we are back with conservative theism again.

In support of the claim that (5′) is possibly true, Swinburne also gives a quasi-empirical argument that seems to me beside the point altogether. He points out that our choices tend to “shift the range of possible choice,”³⁵ so that a series of wrong choices often makes it more difficult to make the right choice in the future. He thus concludes:

it is a possibility that a man will let himself be so mastered by his desires that he will lose all ability to resist them. It is the extreme case of what we have all too often seen: people increasingly mastered by desires, so that they lose some of their ability to resist them. The less we impose our order on our desires, the more they impose their order on us.³⁶

But as an argument for the possibility that (5′) is true, that will never do. In the first place, if experience provides examples of persons who gradually become “a prisoner of bad desires,”³⁷ it provides just as many of those who sink to the depths just prior to a dramatic conversion. So the view that a dramatic conversion is more and more likely the deeper one sinks into sin and rebellion is no less consistent with the empirical evidence than Swinburne’s view that such a conversion is less and less likely. But such empirical arguments are beside the point anyway. If through a series of wrong choices some persons become prisoners of bad desires, it is always open to a loving God to release them from their bondage. Is it not precisely the function of the Holy Spirit, according to Christian theology, to release sinners from their bondage to sin?—and if a loving God can do this once, can he not do it again and again? The argument that a loving God would not interfere with human freedom has no relevance in a context where, *by hypothesis*, we are speaking of those who have already lost their freedom, who are prisoners of bad desires. A benevolent physician who treats her patient for his addiction to heroin by readjusting the balance of chemicals in his brain is in no way interfering with his freedom, not even if the patient is incapable of consenting freely to treatment; the man is, after all, already in bondage to the drug. The aim of the physician is to release her patient from his bondage and

to restore the possibility of free choice. Similarly, if those in hell are already in bondage to their desires and have already lost their freedom, in what sense would God be *interfering* with their freedom when he releases them from their bondage?

Now Swinburne does have an answer of sorts to this question, and his answer brings us to the crux of the matter:

It might be urged that no man would be allowed by God to reach such a state of depravity that he was no longer capable of choosing to do an action because of its overall worth. But in that case God would have prevented people from opting for a certain alternative; however hard a man tried to damn himself, God would stop him.³⁸

But here, it seems to me, Swinburne has confused two quite distinct matters. It is one thing to deny, as I do, that God would permit someone to slide, inch by inch and through a series of choices made at least partly in ignorance, into a state of irreversible corruption; or to say that God is always prepared to release from bondage those who are imprisoned by their desires. It is quite another to say that “however hard a man tried to damn himself, God would stop him.” The difficulty with the latter expression is that of understanding what it is supposed to *mean*. We all have some idea of what it means to fall into evil or to choose wrongly on a particular occasion. But what could it possibly mean to say that some sinners are trying as hard as they can to damn themselves? What sort of choice does Swinburne have in mind here? The picture I get is something like this. Though a sinner, Belial, has learned, perhaps through bitter experience, that evil is always destructive, always contrary to his own interest as well as to the interest of others; and though he sees clearly that God is the ultimate source of all happiness and that disobedience can produce only greater and greater misery in his own life as well as in the life of others, Belial *freely* chooses eternal misery (or perhaps eternal oblivion) for himself nonetheless. The question that immediately arises here is: What could possibly qualify as a motive for such a choice? As long as any ignorance, or deception, or bondage to desire remains, it is open to God to transform a sinner without interfering with human freedom; but once all ignorance and deception and bondage to desire is removed, so that a person is truly “free” to choose, there can no longer be any motive for choosing eternal misery for oneself.

Perhaps we are now in a position to see why those who depict the damnation of a soul so often depict it happening in small increments. A rational agent must lose a good deal of its rationality and its ability to choose freely *before* such a choice is even imaginable. But that also makes it clear why a *free* choice of the relevant kind is logically impossible. However *responsible* one might be for one’s ignorance and one’s bondage to desire, no choice that such ignorance or bondage determines is truly free (in the libertarian sense); and if one is free from

the kind of ignorance and bondage that is incompatible with free choice, one could never have a motive to choose eternal misery for oneself. Accordingly, though wrong free choices are no doubt possible on specific occasions, a free choice of the kind described in (5') is not.

But suppose now that the idea of a rational agent freely choosing damnation for itself were not, as I have suggested, deeply incoherent. It still does not follow either that (5') is consistent with other doctrines essential to theism or even that (5') is itself possibly true. Quite the contrary. We still have every reason to believe that everlasting separation is the kind of evil that a loving God would prevent even if it meant interfering with human freedom in certain ways. Consider the two kinds of conditions under which we human beings feel justified in interfering with the freedom of others. We feel justified, first of all, in preventing one person from doing irreparable harm, or what may appear to us as irreparable harm, to another; a loving father may thus report his own son to the police in an effort to prevent the son from committing murder. We also feel justified in preventing others from doing irreparable harm to themselves; a loving father may also physically overpower his daughter in an effort to prevent her from committing suicide. Now people sometimes draw all kinds of faulty inference from such examples as these, in part because we humans tend to think of irreparable harm within the context of a very limited time-frame, a person's life on earth. It does not follow that a loving God, whose goal is the reconciliation of the world, would prevent every suicide and every murder; it follows only that over the long run he would prevent his loved ones from doing irreparable harm either to themselves or to others, and neither suicide nor murder is necessarily an instance of such irreparable harm. So even if a loving God can sometimes permit murder, he could never permit one person to destroy the very possibility of future happiness in another; and even if he can sometimes permit suicide, he could never permit his loved ones to destroy the very possibility of future happiness in themselves. Just as loving parents are prepared to restrict the freedom of the children they love, so a loving God would be prepared to restrict the freedom of the children he loves; the only difference is that God deals with a much larger picture than that with which human parents are immediately concerned.

Now I expect that many moderately conservative theists would accept at least *part* of what I have just argued; namely, that a loving God must prevent one person from destroying the very possibility of future happiness in another. Indeed that, according to Eleonore Stump, is one reason for the creation of hell: to prevent bad people from harming the innocent.³⁹ But if one accepts that part of the argument, one must, it seems to me, accept the rest of the argument as well. Why? Because it is simply not possible for one to destroy the possibility of future happiness in oneself without, at the same time, undermining the future happiness of other persons as well, perhaps even of *all* other persons. Consider again the case of my own

daughter. If I love my daughter as myself, her damnation would be an intolerable loss to me and would undermine the very possibility of my own happiness, as I have said. Nor will it do to say, as Peter Geach does, that “someone confronted with the damned would find it impossible to wish that things so evil should be happy—particularly when the misery is seen as the direct and natural consequence of the guilt.”⁴⁰ That misses the point altogether. From the premise that I could not wish to see my daughter *both* morally corrupt *and* happy, it simply does not follow that I would not wish to see her happy. Indeed, if my own daughter should become as corrupt and miserable as Geach describes, that would only *increase* the sense of loss and the yearning for what could have been, the desire to see her both redeemed and happy. And if supremely worthwhile happiness requires that I learn to love my enemies even as I love my own daughter, then the damnation of single person is incompatible with such happiness in me.

I conclude, therefore, that an omnipotent and perfectly loving God would never permit sinners to damn themselves; his love would require him to prevent each of them from undermining the possibility of supremely worthwhile happiness in others. What we need at this point is a picture of how the end of reconciliation could be foreordained even though each of us is free in the libertarian sense. And the New Testament does, it seems to me, present such a picture, namely this: The more one freely rebels against God, the more miserable and tormented one becomes; and the more miserable and tormented one becomes, the more incentive one has to repent of one’s sin and to give up one’s rebellious attitudes. But more than that, the consequences of sin are themselves a means of revelation; they reveal the true meaning of separation and enable us to see through the very self-deception that makes evil choices possible in the first place. We may think we can promote our own interest at the expense of others or that our selfish attitudes are compatible with enduring happiness, but we cannot act upon such an illusion, at least not for a long period of time, without shattering it to pieces. So in a sense, all roads have the same destination, the end of reconciliation, but some are longer and windier than others. Because our choice of roads at any given instant is truly free in the libertarian sense, we are genuinely responsible for the choices we make; but because no illusion can endure forever, the end is foreordained. We are all, says the Apostle Paul, predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ; that part is a matter of grace, not human will or effort.⁴¹

VII. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that conservative theism is necessarily false because

- (3) God loves every created person

and

- (5) God will finally reject some persons and subject those persons to everlasting punishment

are inconsistent; that hard hearted theism is necessarily false because, even on the assumption that lovingkindness is an accidental property of God,

- (3') God loves some created persons but not all

is necessarily false; and that moderately conservative theism is necessarily false because the kind of choice described in

- (5') Some persons will, despite God's best efforts to save them, finally reject God and separate themselves from God forever

is deeply incoherent. Even if such a choice were perfectly coherent, moreover, it would be the kind of evil that a loving God would be required to prevent; his failure to do so would be inconsistent not only with his love for the person who might make such a choice, but with his love for all other persons as well. Whether it follows from these considerations, however, that (5') is necessarily false will depend upon the view of divine omniscience adopted. If a choice of the kind described in (5') were indeed coherent, and if God had no middle knowledge and no knowledge of future contingencies because the relevant propositions about the future are neither true nor false, then (5') might likewise be neither true nor false. But in any event, (5') would be either necessarily false or else neither true nor false.⁴²

We are thus left with two alternatives. A theist might adopt, on the one hand, the following nonbiblical idea: Though God loves all persons and wills the redemption of all those who have estranged themselves from him, it is not now certain and not now even *true* that he will be successful. (Neither, of course, is it now true that he will be unsuccessful.) Or, a theist might adopt, on the other hand, the biblical idea that God will eventually destroy all evil and will therefore destroy all evil-doers in the only way possible short of annihilation: by redeeming the evil-doers themselves. According to the Apostle Paul, the very same "all things" created in Christ will eventually be reconciled in Christ;⁴³ hence Christ will continue to reign until every opposing will voluntarily places itself in subjection to him. A *Christian* theist who accepts that view, which I have called biblical theism, can avoid the logical impossibilities present in the more popular forms of theism; that view, at least, is possibly true.

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NOTES

1. See Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), Chapter IX.

2. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 377.
3. Peter Geach, *Providence and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 123.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Richard Swinburne, "A Theodicy of Heaven and Hell," in Alfred J. Freddoso, *The Existence of God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. 52.
6. William Barclay, *A Spiritual Biography* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1977), p. 66.
7. Swinburne, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
8. Matthew 25:40 and 45.
9. I have tried to set forth some of the biblical grounds for an explicit universalism in the manuscript for a book, which I propose to call, *Inescapable Love: Reflection on the Nature of God*. See also "God's Unconditional Mercy: A Reply to John Piper," *The Reformed Journal* (September, 1983), pp. 09-13; and "Vessels of Wrath and the Unpardonable Sin," *The Reformed Journal* (September, 1983), pp. 10-15.
10. I here use the term "implicit contradiction" in the sense defined by Plantinga. See *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 16.
11. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 23, Article 3.
12. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, XXV.
13. *Enchiridion*, XXIV and XXV.
14. Quoted in G. C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election* (Grand Rapids, Erdmans, 1960), p. 224.
15. See, for example, C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1946).
16. See I Corinthians 15:20-28.
17. A stricter statement would be this. The *truth* of the proposition: *Some created persons will never be reconciled to God*, is inconsistent with the existence of God.
18. Geach, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
19. For Plantinga's broader or weaker sense of "bring it about that," see *The Nature of Necessity*, pp. 171-73.
20. Swinburne, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
23. I know of no theologian who actually claims that, for some sinner S, God would refuse to be reconciled to S even on the condition that S freely repents of S's sin.
24. Swinburne, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
25. Geach, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
28. That seems to be what the Apostle Paul has in mind when he comments concerning his fellow worker, Epaphroditus: "Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow" (Philippines 2:27). Anything bad that might happen to one of Paul's loved ones would inevitably be a source of sorrow for Paul himself.
29. I John 4:20.
30. The reason for condition (b) is this. If lovingkindness were not an essential property of God

and God were in fact malicious and cruel, then God might want S to have a disposition to love S' so that God could torment S with the knowledge that S' is suffering. Condition (b) enables us to rule out that possibility; and given condition (b), the argument for (P₆) is the same as that already given. Suppose that God does not will the good for some person S'. If S has a disposition to love S' nonetheless, then S cannot be happy *knowing* that God does not will the good for S'; and if ignorance of this fact is essential to the happiness of S, then such blissful ignorance is again not the kind of happiness that is supremely worthwhile. So even if S is unaware of the existence of S', God cannot will the good for S without willing the good for S' as well.

31. Jonah 2:6.

32. "Dante's Hell, Aquinas' Moral Theory, and the Love of God," *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, June, 1986, pp. 194-95.

33. Swinburne, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Stump, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-97.

40. Geach, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

41. See Romans 8:29.

42. In another paper I hope to reinforce this conclusion by examining, in somewhat more detail, the kinds of providential control that might be compatible with libertarian free will; in particular, I hope to examine further the options that an omnipotent and omniscient being might have had and how a loving God could be expected to deal with those options.

43. See Colossians 1:15-20. Though some reputable scholars deny that Paul was the author of Colossians, this pre-Pauline hymn or creedal statement is one to which the apostle would surely have assented even if he were not the author of the letter as a whole.