An Exploration of Eleonore Stump's Theodicy

J. Brian Huffling

Introduction

Perhaps the strongest argument against theism is the problem of evil. Classical theists have held that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent.[1] While these terms are difficult to define and are controversial, they basically mean that God in some way knows everything and can do anything and is completely good. This is where the problem of evil arises. It would seem that if God were all-powerful, then he would have the power to defeat or prevent evil. Further, it would seem that if God were all-knowing, then he would know how to abolish evil. Finally, if God were all-good, then he would desire to demolish evil. However, if anything is painfully apparent it is the fact

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that evil exists. Such is the problem, viz., given a classical conception of God who has the ability and knowledge to conquer evil, why does he not do so? Such a question is used by atheists to argue against the existence of a being so commonly known as God. The problem is not only relevant to atheists but to theists. This issue haunts those who believe in a classical conception of the divine.

What follows is a brief examination of the problem of evil as understood by one of Christianity's leading philosophers, viz., Eleonore Stump, as outlined in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*.[2] In this work Stump examines the problem of evil, considers whether it actually is a logical problem, and then offers her own solution.

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[2]Eleonore Stump, "The Problem of Evil," in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Michael J. Murray (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 227-240. This is an adaptation of Eleonore Stump, "The Problem of Evil," *Faith and*

The Problem

In trying to prove the veracity of theism, many arguments are proffered for the existence of God, such as the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, and the moral argument. These arguments rest on basic categorical reasoning. The truth of the premises and the validity of the argument make the arguments sound. For example, in terms of the Kalam cosmological argument, the argument takes this form:

(1) Everything that begins to exist has a cause.

(2) The universe began to exist.

(3) Therefore, the universe has a cause.

If the premises are true and no violation in the form of the argument has been committed, then the argument is sound. Such is the nature of logic and such is the nature of theistic proofs.

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A typical counter-argument to such theistic proofs is the problem of evil. The problem of evil often takes the below form, which is the form that Stump lays out:[3]

(1) God is omnipotent;

(2) God is omniscient;

(3) God is perfectly good.

Most people, as Stump recognizes, claim:

(4) There is evil in the world.

Philosophers who have used the problem of evil as an argument against theism and Christianity have sometimes argued that it is a logical problem. In other words, (4) is not compossible with (1)-(3). The only way to make sense of (4) is to reject at least one of the first three premises or define them in such a way as to make sense of (4). J. L. Mackie thus states, "It is true that there is no explicit contradiction between the statements that there is an omnipotent and wholly good god and that there is evil in

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[3]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 227-228.

the world."[4] However, after saying this, Mackie asserts that it becomes a logical problem "if we add the at least initially plausible premises that good is opposed to evil in such a way that a being who is wholly good eliminates evil as far as he can, and that there are no limits on what an omnipotent being can do, then we do have a contradiction."[5] "The problem of evil" then, for Mackie, "is essentially a logical problem."[6] Stump rejects the notion that the problem of evil is in fact a logical one. "To show such an inconsistency," she argues, "one would need at least to demonstrate that this claim must be true:

> (5) There is no morally sufficient reason for God to allow instances of evil."[7]

One way of solving the problem, as mentioned, would be to deny at least one premise of (1)-(3). However, for a

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[4]J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1982), 150.
[5]Ibid.
[6]Ibid.
[7]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 228.

classical Christian theist, such as Stump, this is no solution at all.

At this point Stump examines Alvin Plantinga's free will defense, which she says rests on the following two points:[8]

(6) Human beings have free will;

and

(7) Possession of free will and use of it to do more good than evil is a good of such a value that it outweighs all the evil in the world.

While Stump praises Plantinga for such a contribution to the discussion, she argues that Plantinga's point is only to show that the arguments for the problem of evil do not constitute a logical problem. While Plantinga's tactic may certainly be successful, as Stump says, it is not a theodicy

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[8]Ibid. For a discussion of Plantinga's free will defense, cf. Alvin Plantinga, "The Free Will Defense," in *Philosophy in America*, ed. Max Black (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965), 204-220.

and does not bring satisfaction to either side of the debate.

Thus, Stump's aim is to construct a theodicy.

The Solution

In making a theodicy, Stump points out that "*mere* theists

are relatively rare in the history of religion."[9] Thus, in

constructing a theodicy she declares that it is imperative to

examine what particular theistic religions teach. As she

argues:

> If we are going to claim that [a particular
> religion's] beliefs are somehow inconsistent,
> we need to look at a more complete set of
> Jewish or Muslim or Christian beliefs
> concerning God's goodness and evil in the
> world, not just at that limited subset of such
> beliefs which are common to all three
> religions, because what *appears* inconsistent
> if we take a partial sampling of beliefs may
> in fact look consistent when set in the
> context of a more complete set of beliefs.[10]

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[9]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 230 (emphasis in original).
[10]Ibid. (emphasis in original).

Since she, being a Christian, is an expert in Christian doctrine, Christianity serves as her paradigm. At this point she introduces more premises that to her are necessary to solve the problem of evil. They include:

8) Adam fell.

9) Natural evil entered the world as a result of Adam's fall.

10) After death, depending on their state at the time of their death, either (a) human beings go to heaven or (b) they go to hell.[11]

She spends some time attempting to thwart certain problems and objections to these premises. However, for the sake of this paper the author will assume that these points, viz., (8)-(10) are true.

A key ingredient for a solution to the problem of evil is the notion of free will. Given the Christian understanding of the fall, man's will is also fallen. Stump

recognizes that Christians differ on what this means and to what extent the will is affected by sin. As Stump understands the situation, "all human beings since Adam's fall have been defective in their free wills, so that they have a powerful inclination to will what they ought not to will, to will their own power or pleasure in preference to greater goods."[12] Stump further argues that a person in this condition cannot go to heaven and be in union with God while his will is corrupt. Further, annihilation is not an option since God would be destroying a good, viz. existence, which he cannot do. Some may argue that an omnipotent being could make an agent will anything. The question, of course, is can an omnipotent being make an agent will something freely? The notion of an agent being forced to freely will something is a contradiction. Stump declares "he cannot fix the defect by using his

[11]Ibid.
[12]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 230.

omnipotence to remove it miraculously. The defect is a defect in *free* will, and it consists in a person's generally failing to will what he ought to will. To remove this defect miraculously would be to force a person's free will to be other than what it is."[13] (It is important to emphasize that the defect according to Stump and orthodox Christianity is inherited from one's parents, and thus no one is exempt from the defect.)

Stump argues that if God cannot fix one's will, then it is up to the person to fix his own will. However, Stump does not think this is possible. As Stump notes:

> The problem with a defect in the will is not that there is an inability to will what one ought to will because of some external restraint on the will, but that one does not and will not will what one ought to will because the will itself is bent towards evil. Consequently, changing the will is the end for which we are seeking the means; if one were *willing* to change one's will by willing what one ought to will, there would be no problem of a defect in the will. Self-repair,

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[13]Ibid., 231 (emphasis in original).

then, is no more a solution to the problem of
a defective will than is God's miraculous
intervention.[14]

Thus, God cannot repair one's will via his omnipotence and

man cannot repair his will because he will not seek that

himself. In other words, as long as the will is corrupt, a

fallen human will not choose self-repair. What then is left

for a solution regarding the will?

At this point Stump explains what she believes is

"the only remaining alternative."[15] She writes, "Let a

person will that God fix his defective will. In that case,

God's alteration of the will is something the person has

freely chosen, and God can then alter that person's will

without destroying its freedom."[16] Thus, God is not

overriding one's will via his omnipotence, and the agent is

not repairing his own will. Rather, he is freely willing that

God repair it. She further explains, "The traditional

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[14]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 231 (emphasis in original).
[15]Ibid., 231-232.
[16]Ibid., 232

formulation of the crucial necessary condition for a person's being a Christian (variously interpreted by Protestants and Catholics) is that he wills God to save him from his sin; and this condition is, I think, logically (and perhaps also psychologically) equivalent to a person's willing that God fix his will."[17] Further, "Willing to have God save one from sin is willing to have God bring one to a state in which one is free from sin, and that state depends essentially on a will which wills what it ought to will."[18]

As Stump notes, the way in which God relates to one's will is highly debated among Christian theologians. Some, following Pelagius, argue that one can simply change his own will. However, Stump rejects this position based on her previous objection to the idea of self-repair. Others, following Augustine and Calvin argue that God, solely apart from man, changes one's will. Stump argues

[17]Ibid.
[18]Ibid.

for something in between these views. "Perhaps the correct view," she says, "consists in postulating a cooperative divine and human effort."[19] Stump gives as an example Socrates converting a man to philosophy:

> When Socrates pursued a man with wit and care and passion for the truth, that man sometimes converted to philosophy and became Socrates's disciple. Such a man converted freely, so that it is false to say Socrates *caused* his conversion; and yet, on the other hand, it would be ridiculous to say in consequence that the man bears sole responsibility for his conversion. The responsibility and the credit for the conversion belong to Socrates, whose effort and ingenuity were necessary conditions of the conversion. . . . I think that something along those lines can also be said of the process by which a man comes to will God's help.[20]

Stump further iterates, "If a man does will that God fix his will or save him from his sins, then I think that God can do so without detriment to free will, provided that he does so only to the extent to which man freely will that God do

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[19]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 232.

so."[21] She explains that God fixing one's will is a process. "On Christian doctrine, this is the process of sanctification, which is not finally completed until after death when it culminates 'in the twinkling of an eye' in the last changes which unite the sanctified person with God."[22] Whatever the mechanics involved, one willing that God fix his will is for Stump "the foundation of a Christian solution to the problem of evil."[23]

But what should make a person will for God to change his will? According to Stump, a person needs to be in the right circumstances that will precipitate such a desire. The person in question must, first, be aware that he tends to do what he should not do and that he wills what he should not will, and second, have a desire for his will to change.[24] Stump argues that moral and natural evil (disease and

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[20]Ibid. (emphasis in original).
[21]Ibid.
[22]Ibid.
[23]Ibid., 233.
[24]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 233.

natural disasters) contribute to this set of circumstances. Moral evil alerts man to the fact that he is in a state that he should not be in. The history of man is replete with examples as to this being the case. Further, natural evil makes man humble and aware of his own mortality. Stump notes that "evil of this sort is the best hope . . . and maybe the only effective means for bringing men to such a state."[25] Stump admits that making an argument for such a move is very difficult due to the nature of the data and how one would gather it, for the psychological state of a person both before and after an instance of evil would have to be known. This difficulty notwithstanding, she gives an example of how the argument might function. Suppose, she says, that a set of parents have a child with a terminal disease. Part of the disease causes the child to reject any cure. Thus, the parents subject the child to treatments, even though the treatments are painful and do not guarantee the

[25]Ibid.

child will be cured. Analogously, Christianity claims that men have a spiritual terminal disease. Evil, Stump argues, may serve to move men to seek the cure, namely God. God allows men to suffer since such suffering may bring his creatures to him and help save them.[26] In this scheme, evil could bring about a good, viz., the recognition that man is in a horrible state and needs the salvation that only God can bring.

Stump gives another illustration to clarify her position: that of Cain and Abel. Cain and Abel both brought offerings to God. God was pleased with Abel's offering but not with Cain's. Cain became angry and jealous over this. The Lord approached Cain and inquired as to why he was upset. Afterwards, Cain killed his brother, Abel. At this point the Lord asked Cain about the incident. After declaring to Cain that he knew about what had happened, God punished Cain by declaring that the land

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[26]Ibid., 233-236.

would not bring forth food for him and that Cain would wander the land. Cain expressed fear at what God had declared, and complained that the punishment was too great for him, saying that he himself would be killed. In response to this complaint, God said that if anyone killed him that person would suffer seven times over. God then gave Cain a sign so that no one would kill him.[27]

It is interesting, Stump points out, how God acts in this story. God does not intervene to save Abel; however, he intervenes in several ways in regard to Cain. First, God warns Cain of the danger of sin. Then, God, seemingly miraculously according to Stump, banishes Cain from the land to be a wanderer. Finally, God gives Cain a sign so that no one will kill him. Stump declares, "Clearly, any *one* of these things done on Abel's behalf would have been enough to save him. But God does none of these things for *Abel*, the innocent, the accepted of God; he does them

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[27]This story is found in Genesis 4.

instead for *Cain*, a man whose offering was rejected and who is murderously angry at his brother."[28] Stump's point is that it seems odd for God to allow the innocent to die and yet seem to offer mercy and protection to the wicked. However, this is her point. She informs, on the solution to the problem of evil which I have been developing . . . if God is good and has a care for his creatures, his overriding concern must be to insure not that they live as long as possible or that they suffer as little pain as possible in this life but rather that they live in such a way as ultimately to bring them to union with God.[29]

Abel was righteous and his death did not bring him trouble. However, Cain was unrighteous and was in an immoral state in his relation to God. Thus, his death would have left him in an eternal state of disunion with God. On Stump's account, Abel was in no danger at the time of his

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[28]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 237 (emphasis in original).
[29]Ibid.

death, whereas Cain was. Therefore, God used certain circumstances to bring Cain back into a proper relationship with himself. Analogously, evil is allowed in the world to help precipitate men to seek after God to have their wills corrected. Evil then for Stump is a type of medicine that God uses to bring ultimate health.

Stump closes her argument by revising (7) to (7'''):

(7''') Because it is a necessary condition for union with God, the significant exercise of free will employed by human beings in the process which is essential for their being saved from their own evil is of such great value that it outweighs all the evil of the world.[30]

Stump argues that "(7''') constitutes a morally sufficient reason for evil and so is a counter-example to (5), the claim that there is no morally sufficient reason for God to permit instances of evil."[31]

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[30]Ibid., 238.
[31]Ibid.

Evaluation

Stump certainly has a philosophically rigorous argument
and wonderful contribution to the discussion of the problem
of evil. She recognizes that the problem of evil is not a
logical problem. There is nothing in the form of the
argument, at least as presented here, that makes God's
existence a contradiction with evil (contra Mackie). Her
way of dealing with the logical aspect of the problem is to
introduce particular Christian themes into the discussion of
general theism. She believes this not only demonstrates that
there is no logical problem, but that the problem of evil is
solved, or at least can be solved along these lines.

Her first and main contention is to introduce free
will as understood from a (particular) Christian point of
view. As she argues, God cannot change a person's will via
his omnipotence in such a way as to destroy the nature of
the will's freedom. In other words, God cannot force
someone to freely choose something, as this would be

contradictory. Also, man does not seem to have the ability to alter or repair his will. This inability as she argues is not due to any extrinsic issue, but rather an intrinsic one based in the nature of the will itself. Man ought to will the good; however, he does not. Rather, he wills what he should not will. Thus, he will not will that his will change. Stump's answer then is for man to will that God change his (man's) will. She believes that this leaves freedom intact, and also allows the will to be changed.

It is at this point that there seems to be a difficulty. Consider what Stump argues: "The problem with a defect in the will is not that there is an inability to will what one ought to will because of some external restraint on the will, but that one does not and will not will what one ought to will because the will itself is bent towards evil."[32] Thus, man "does not and will not will what" he ought. However, she goes on to say, "Willing to have God save one from

one's sin is willing to have God bring one to a state in which one is free from sin, and that state depends essentially on a will which wills what it ought to will."[33] In other words, the state of being in a right relationship with God depends on one willing "what [he] ought to will." However, if a man "does not and will not will what [he] ought," then how can he will that God bring him into such a state? It seems from what Stump says that willing that God fix one's will is something that one ought to will; however, man according to her will not will what he ought. Therefore, man will not will that God fix his will. Perhaps this difficulty is simply an exegetical one and is remedied by a different formulation or interpretation.

Another apparent problem with Stump's argument is the illustration that she uses to explain her view, viz., that of Socrates persuading one to become a disciple of his in

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[32]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 231.
[33]Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 232.

the discipline of philosophy. A theologian, especially of the Reformed ilk, may object that this is a false analogy. The theologian may argue that one cannot compare a man's relation with another man, and man's relation with God. Of course, Stump is not claiming this is a perfect analogy, only that it is "something along those lines."[34]

Perhaps another possible problem is Stump's notion that if an omnipotent God changed one's will then it would abolish freedom. Is this actually the case? Can God make a person will something and the person still be free? While this work cannot give a robust exegetical investigation into what the Bible says, it may be instructive to examine a few short passages. Proverbs 21:1 declares, "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."[35] In a discussion of the Passover, Ezra says, "And they observed the Feast of Unleavened

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[34]Ibid.

[35]All Scripture will come from the *NASB*.

Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel" (6:22). Perhaps the most perplexing example is from Jesus in John 6. In verse 44 he says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." However, in verse 37 he says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." So on the one hand no one has the ability to come to Jesus, but at the same time the Father has given Jesus certain people who will go to him. There is no room left for uncertainty. It seems to be the case that God wills who will come to Jesus (as he gave them to him and did not give others). Such examples could be multiplied. To prove the point that God can use his omnipotence to change one's will and it also be exercised freely would certainly need to be further investigated. *Prima facie*, however, it seems at

least possible from a biblical perspective that this can be done. Perhaps one might argue that the kings in question are not using free will, or that the interpretation and use of these Scriptures and those like them are misguided. Such may certainly be the case. More investigation needs to be done, it seems, to make Stump's point, at least in comparing the theological claims of Christianity with the philosophical problem of omnipotence and freedom.

Certainly from a philosophical point of view Stump's argument deserves great consideration. There is an exegetical component to this argument since it is based on sacred revelation; however, any serious work in this area is beyond the scope of this work.

Conclusion

The problem of evil is perhaps the greatest thorn in the theist's side. Stump points out that it is not a logical problem, however. She also lays out a philosophical

argument that attempts to take into consideration both the philosophical and theological complexities involved in the matter (at least as far as space will allow her to do so). Her argument is certainly one that deserves further investigation and thought.

There does seem, however, to be apparent problems with her view. These problems, if they are real, may not pose any serious problem to Stump's overall view. It may just be the case that certain aspects need reworking or rewording. However, it may be the case that these problems are due to the weakness of the author either in his philosophical acumen or his exegetical abilities. In either case, Christian philosophers can be thankful to Stump for her incredible insights and work.

The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context

Louis Markos

In the early 1990's I suffered a sea change from a PhD student at the University of Michigan to English professor at an evangelical liberal arts university in Texas.[1] The transition was a profound one, and it took me several years to grasp the full nature of my calling as a secular-trained academic who confessed Jesus as Lord and for whom the Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection represented the pillars and touchstones of my faith, truth, and reality.

In working out my calling and identity I was aided greatly by three books which I read, serendipitously, in close proximity: Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, Lesslie

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Newbigin's *Foolishness to the Greeks*, and Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Though the books differed in many ways, their combined witness opened my eyes to the ubiquitous dangers and the dangerous ubiquity of the fact/value split.

Whereas pre-modern people operated from what Francis Schaeffer called a unified field of knowledge, the Enlightenment drove a wedge between reason and revelation, history and myth, logic and emotion, science and religion, public and private. This Enlightenment split, which is ingrained in nearly all graduate students, has had the effect of silencing Christian professors who feel it would be unprofessional for them to bring their Christian beliefs into the classroom. As a result, secular humanism is allowed to reign supreme as the default paradigm of the academy.

Agonistes, *Apologetics for the 21st Century*, and *On the Shoulders of Hobbits: The Road to Virtue with Tolkien and Lewis*.

Against this relegating of Christianity to the sphere of private emotion, two generations of feisty apologists have asserted the rational/logical/historical/scientific foundations of the Christian worldview. They fought a good fight; however, in order to win it, they agreed to wage their war in an arena created by that very Enlightenment whose exaltation of reason over faith had been responsible for pushing the Christian witness out of the public square.

In *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context*, Myron Bradley Penner, an Anglican priest who holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh, argues that this agreement should never have been made. Although Christians worship a savior who entered history at a specific time and place, and although that savior reached out to people as embodied individuals, modern apologists found their arguments upon abstract principles meant to appeal to disembodied minds.

Rather than treat the truths of Christianity as rooted in a tradition and in a community of faith (the Church), modern apologists, entrenched in the same Enlightenment mindset that they set out to conquer, treat reason as an "objective-universal-neutral complex," a phrase which Penner cleverly refers to by the acronym, OUNCE. Indeed, though liberal and conservative apologists differ on how much of orthodox doctrine they will accept, they both agree that the doctrines that *can* be accepted must be supportable by OUNCE-based reason.

Parting company with apologists who follow a two-step method by which they first argue for theism and then move on to Christianity, Penner, with considerable gusto, argues that theism is "something of a modern intellectual fiction." Theism as a concept was invented to facilitate OUNCE-based discussions of religion. "Actual believers in the so-called theistic religions are members of historically situated worshipping communities that engage in specific

practices and have beliefs—about God, the world, the

nature of faith, etc.—that are a crucial part of making life

and their world intelligible." While people in faith

communities look to prophets for a word from God,

moderns look to expert apologists for rational justification.

So reliant, in fact, has the church become upon such experts

that apologetics itself has become an industry, marketing

such consumer products as books, lecture series, God

debates, and even culture wars.

In developing his distinction between experts and

prophets, Penner borrows from Kierkegaard's essay, "On

the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle." Unlike

the genius, who appeals to the authority of abstract reason,

the apostle appeals to tradition, revelation and the call of

God. For the apostle/prophet, and those who follow him,

truth is not something that one can possess and enshrine in

universal propositions; truth is something that possesses us,

that exists within a specific context, and that can only be expressed in contingent language.

For Penner, what the church needs today are not expert apologists making airtight cases for faith but prophetic witnesses who seek to edify particular persons in particular situations. Though Penner is careful not to fall into an anti-dogmatic stance, he makes it clear that true Christian witnesses must first appropriate the faith for themselves. "As an individual believer I do not sit in authority over Scripture or tradition, but I must wrestle with them and struggle to make them mine and resituate their truths within my time, my life, and my community."

Only once we have gone through such an internal wrestling process can we move outward toward others and help them embody the faith in their own community. In his famous "Here I stand" speech, Luther appeals, not to OUNCE truth, but to the contingent truth he has found through years of personal struggle. As it was for Luther, so,

Penner argues, it should be for us. "In our Christian witness we always testify—as Luther does—from our conscience and not from an epistemically secure and objectively demonstrable position."

The End of Apologetics is a well-researched, effectively organized, lucidly written, mostly irenic work that succeeds in de-fanging postmodernism. By carefully marshalling the innovative theories of believers (Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Hauerwas, Volf, Kevin Vanhoozer) and non-believers (Lyotard, Foucault, Rorty, Ricoeur, Terry Eagleton) alike, Penner demonstrates persuasively that postmodernism, far from being a gateway to relativism, atheism, and the death of the church, offers resources for furthering the gospel and strengthening discipleship.

Still, Penner's book is a troubling one. Although, like most postmodern thinkers, Penner works hard to avoid falling into an either/or binary, the clear message of his

book is that modern apologetics needs to give way to his

own brand of prophetic, contingent witness. Penner is

certainly right to argue that different people from different

communities need to hear the gospel in personal ways, but

he seems unwilling to concede that there are many in our

modern world who need to hear reason-based arguments as

a form of pre-evangelism. He quotes C. S. Lewis several

times, always positively, and yet Lewis's effectiveness as a

witness rests in great part on his ability to 1) balance reason

and imagination in his apologetical works, 2) find common

ground (like the existence of a cross-cultural moral/ethical

code) that all people can identify with, and 3) tap a

universal longing that cuts across all boundaries of time

and space.

I will concede Penner's distrust of propositional

statements (OUNCE), but Lewis's liar, lunatic, lord

trilemma, though it rests on rational argumentation

methods, is firmly grounded in the words of Jesus as

understood by the people who lived in Jesus's culture. Only

by putting ourselves in the place of a first-century Jewish

monotheist can we appreciate the absolutely radical nature

of Jesus's claims: so radical that if Jesus was not the Son of

God, then he could only have been insane or a blasphemer.

I will further concede Penner's contention that

evangelists are most effective when they speak from the

perspective of their own struggle. But such a contention

obscures the fact that the apostles' chief testimony was to a

historical event (the Resurrection) not a personal

experience. In his critique, Penner fails to mention that

defenses of the historicity of the Resurrection are

absolutely central to modern apologetics.

Penner does well to expose how reliant modern

apologetics is on Enlightenment reasoning, but he would do

better if he cast a more critical eye on his own tendency to

perpetuate the Enlightenment split by championing the

personal, the emotional, and the intuitive over the public,

the rational, and the logical. If we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, then we need to foster in ourselves, our churches, and our schools both forms of apologetics.