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# A Comparative Study of the Problem of Evil as Set Forth in the Views of John W. Fletcher, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, and Edwin Lewis

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### APPROVAL SHEET

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AS SET  
FORTH IN THE VIEWS OF JOHN W. FLETCHER, EDGAR  
SHEFFIELD BRIGHTMAN, AND EDWIN LEWIS

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
Western Evangelical Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Theology

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by  
Norman A Riggins

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Problem of Evil stands as one of the major topics of Philosophy and Theology throughout the history of thought. The very nature of evil is elusive to the unaided human reason, and presents much room for speculation. This does not minimize the problem for, "In a day such as this, men and women are seriously troubled with the problem of evil."<sup>1</sup> The fact of evil cannot be escaped, therefore it is of prime importance to all who attempt to think through on the major problems of life. Evil is around us on every hand. "We try to ignore it or tone it down, to think of it in more or less conventional terms, but . . . the fact of evil has always been a most real fact concerning man in the whole course of his history."<sup>2</sup>

#### I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Much has been said and written on the subject. "In the literature which has come down to us there have not been wanting records of what men have thought about

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<sup>1</sup> William Robinson, The Devil and God (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

evil."<sup>3</sup> Any attempt to propound a new theory would seem to be a wasteful expenditure of time, strength, paper, and ink. It was rather the purpose of the writer to examine the views of John William Fletcher, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, and Edwin Lewis on the Problem of Evil and to compare their views.

## II. REASON FOR THE STUDY

The writer is aware that other authors might have been chosen for such a study. For this study, at least, it has been felt that it would be better to confine ourselves to men from the Methodist tradition. Each of these authors were or are Methodist. They also have been chosen because they seem to represent three different positions concerning the problem of evil.

John William Fletcher was chosen as one representing early Methodist thought. After studying the life work and the writings of this man there is no doubt that he is well chosen to represent the evangelical, orthodox position. It is said that Mr. John Wesley chose Fletcher to be his successor as the leader of the Methodists, but because of

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<sup>3</sup> Casey Smith, "Evil, its Origin, Course, and Peculiar Character," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, 1944), p. 4.

Fletcher's early death this was never consummated.<sup>4</sup> It is doubtful that Mr. Wesley would have wanted to place anyone in the place of leadership in whom he did not have complete confidence.

Edgar Sheffield Brightman was chosen as a contemporary liberal churchman. Brightman has a Methodist background and is a typical liberal thinker. No man is truly representative of the liberal movement because of the diversity of opinion within what is termed 'liberal.' Brightman was studied because he is an influential thinker and a prolific writer.

Edwin Lewis, the third man chosen for this study, is also a contemporary writer and foremost leader in the theological world today. He has been studied because he stands in a position over against liberalism on the one hand and fundamentalism on the other on a number of basic issues. He is considered by many to be Barthian. Lewis denies this in a certain sense but says that he is at least sympathetic with "this truly great soul."<sup>5</sup> He also says, "I find myself much nearer to Brunner than to Barth."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Wise, Heroic Methodists of the Olden Time (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1882), p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> Edwin Lewis, "From Philosophy to Revelation," The Christian Century, 54:764, June 14, 1939.

<sup>6</sup> Loc. cit.

Lewis is a man who had accepted much that had been set forth in the name of liberal scholarship, but who in the last two decades has made a partial return to the orthodox position. From these factors Lewis has been generally placed in that general classification known as Neo-orthodox.

The general classification into which each of these men fall may be readily seen, Orthodox, Liberal, and Neo-orthodox. From this may be observed much of the purpose of the study. Such an over-all study of the major fields of thought in our day seems to be a very good way to gain a thorough understanding of any problem.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF MATERIAL

The method used in the presentation of this study has been to make a survey of the views of each of the men mentioned above, individually, as to their views of the nature, origin, purpose, and outcome of evil. It has then been the author's purpose to compare these views and to see the likenesses and the differences. Some conclusions have been set forth and some recommendations for further study to be made in light of these studies.

## CHAPTER II

### THE VIEWS OF JOHN W. FLETCHER

#### I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jean Guillaume de la Flechere, better known to English readers as John William Fletcher, was born at Nyon, Switzerland on September 12, 1729.<sup>1</sup> "His parents belonged to the nobility and were highly esteemed."<sup>2</sup> More specifically his father was a military officer and John was want to follow in the footsteps of his father. Through some peculiar circumstances he went to England, became interested in spiritual things, and joined the Methodists. "In 1757 he was ordained as a priest in the Church of England,"<sup>3</sup> and after a number of years spent as an evangelist for the Methodists, settled in 1760 as vicar of the Anglican Church at Madeley, which position he held until his death in 1785.

Educationally Fletcher was an outstanding man. He took high honors at the University of Geneva in his early

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Benson, The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere (vol. I, The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher, 9 vols.; London: Wesleyan Conference Office, [n.d.], p. 13

<sup>2</sup> James Gilchrist Lawson, Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing Company, 1911), p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

formal training. He was a student at heart and it is said that he would, after spending the most of the day in studies, consume the greater part of the night in noting down things that occurred during his reading, worthy of observation.<sup>4</sup>

He had the knowledge and use of at least six languages. Especially, he was a student of the Biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek.

Mr. Fletcher was a student of human nature and had a discerning mind as he dealt with the needs of people. Mr. Benson said,

He knew when to probe, and when to heal; when to depress, and when to encourage: and no case was so perplexed or desperate, but he was in some measure prepared to explain and relieve it.<sup>5</sup>

His continuous diligence in study stood him in good stead as an able controversialist. He was the outstanding figure in the Calvinistic and Arminian controversy within Methodism as well as the controversy of the Methodists with the hyper-Calvinism of his day. Many of his writings on the issue are preserved for us in his Checks to Antinomianism. Some of his other writings are: Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense, and The Portrait of St. Paul. The latter was originally written in French and later translated by the

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<sup>4</sup> Benson, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

Rev. Joshua Gilpin.<sup>6</sup> There are also in existence, numerous letters and Sermons of John W. Fletcher's which were helpful in understanding his position concerning the problem of evil.

As stated in chapter one the author has undertaken to set forth the views of each man on the problem of evil by showing first, their views of the nature of evil; second, their views of the origin of evil; third, their views of the purpose of evil; and fourth, their views of the outcome of evil. Mr. Fletcher's views have been considered in the above mentioned order.

## II. THE NATURE OF EVIL

Mr. Fletcher would understand evil to be of two types, moral evil and natural evil. He referred to these in one place as, "moral defilement and natural disorder."<sup>7</sup> He said, "when man's free will has begun to work moral evil, God may justly follow him by withdrawing his slighted grace, revealing his deserved wrath, and working natural

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<sup>6</sup> John W. Fletcher, The Portrait of St. Paul, Joshua Gilpin, translator (vol. VI, The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher, 9 vols.; London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1859), p. 225.

<sup>7</sup> John W. Fletcher, An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense (vol. II, The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher, 9 vols.; London: John Mason, 1859), p. 20.



evil."<sup>8</sup> He said that God establishes and continues this fearful course of things, natural evil, to punish the disorders of the moral world.<sup>9</sup> Proof for this concept was seen by Fletcher in the scripture passage found in Genesis the third chapter and the seventeenth verse. He interpreted this verse when he said that Moses

. . . represents him [man] after his disobedience, as a criminal under sentence of death: a wretch filled with guilt, shame, dread, and horror; and a vagabond, turned out of a lost paradise into a cursed wilderness, where all bears the stamp of desolation for his sake.<sup>10</sup>

The nature of natural evil was seen by Fletcher on every hand in the world around us, probably best described as disorder.

The nature of moral evil would seem to be basic to understanding the whole problem for Fletcher because of its causative force.

The problem of the nature of moral evil is one that has haunted the minds of men throughout the ages. It is a basic concept which determines the course of the philosophies of men. What men have thought and held concerning

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<sup>8</sup> John W. Fletcher, An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism (vol. IV, The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher, 9 vols.; London: Wesleyan Conference Office, [n.d.]), p. 163.

<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

the nature of moral evil has shaped their ideas of God, man, and the world. These ideas are all basic and hence each is reciprocal to the other. Mr. Fletcher said,

Before we can form a rational judgment of sin and the punishment it deserves, it becomes us to entertain just ideas of moral order; to make the obligation laid upon the supreme Legislator to maintain that order by wholesome laws; and to discover, in some degree, the sanctity, the excellence, and the extent of those absolute commands. It is necessary to understand the dependence of the creature upon the Creator, . . . We must reflect upon all the various obligations under which we lie to the Almighty, as Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Comforter. We must consider those examples of his vengeful justice which he has placed before our eyes on purpose to awaken our fears, together with the unmerited favours by which he has constantly sought to engage our grateful affection. It becomes us, likewise, to observe the vanity of all those appearances by which we are allured into sin; and lastly, it is necessary to remember, that 'God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing.' Eccles. xii. 14. While we have not a proper attention to every one of these circumstances, we must necessarily form an imperfect judgment, concerning the nature of sin.<sup>11</sup>

From the above quotation it can readily be seen that for him sin or evil is by nature a relationship between Creator and creature.

Mr. Fletcher held the opinion that moral evil is positive; that it is an entity as over against nonentity or that it is being as over against non-being. He said,

If sin . . . may be properly called a 'not being' or a nonentity . . . it absurdly follows, that crookedness, or want of straightness, in a line, is a mere privation, also, or a 'not being;' whereas, reason and

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<sup>11</sup> Fletcher, The Portrait of St. Paul, op. cit., pp. 417-8.

feeling tell us, that the crookedness of a crooked line is something every way as positive as the straightness of a straight line. To deny it is as ridiculous as to assert, that a circle is a 'not being,' because it is not made of straight lines, like a square; or that a murder is a species of nonentity, because it is not the legal execution of a condemned malefactor.<sup>12</sup>

He argued also, that this evil is real and positive and not negation or privation, from the argument that it has a positive cause. He said,

Either sin is a real thing, and has a positive cause; or it is not a real thing, and has no positive cause. If it is not a real thing, and has no positive cause, why does God positively send the wicked to hell for a privation which they have not positively caused? And if sin is a real thing, or a positive moral crookedness of the will of a sinner, and as such, has a positive cause, can that positive cause be any other than the self-perversion of free will, or the impelling decree of a sin-ordaining God? If the positive cause of sin is the self-perversion of free will, is it not evident that, so sure as there is sin in the world, the doctrine of free will is true?<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Fletcher's statements as quoted above reveal to us his position as to the positive nature of evil. The origin of evil, which has been considered next, will also help to make more clear his concepts of the nature of evil.

### III. THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

The problem of the origin of evil is one that has

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<sup>12</sup> John W. Fletcher, A Reply to Rev. Mr. Toplady's Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity (vol. V, The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher, 9 vols.; London: Wesleyan Conference Office, n.d.), pp. 340-1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 341.

presented itself to the minds of men for most of time. All who have tried to think honestly and correctly have seen that the answer to the question is desperately needed. It is needed in order that we might rightly place the blame.

Mr. Fletcher had an answer in the statements, "Man's free will is always the first cause of what is evil."<sup>14</sup> and; "That bad works can have no other origin but the belief of a lie will appear evident, if we follow them to their spring."<sup>15</sup> He offered a scriptural proof of this in the following paragraph:

Did not Eve stand in paradise, so long as she forbore eating of the forbidden fruit? Did she not forbear eating, so long as she believed the truth; that is, so long as she believed she should die if she ate of the fruit? Would she have sinned, if she had not first believed a lie, yea, swallowed down a cluster of lies? She should not die; the fruit was as good as it was fair; it was to be desired to make one wise; she should be as God. Was it not those untruths, fully entertained in her heart, that made her commit the direful deed?<sup>16</sup>

He said,

A lie is the hellish seed that produces unbelief; and unbelief is the hellish root that produces bad works. A lie and unbelief are then at the bottom of every bad work."<sup>17</sup>

He went on to say,

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<sup>14</sup> Fletcher, An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

Impartially read any one book in the Bible, and you will find that it establishes the truth of the two following propositions:

## I

God hath freely done great things for man; and the still greater things which he freely does for believers, and the mercy with which he daily crowns them, justly entitle him to all the honour of their salvation; so far as that honour is worthy of the primitive Parent of good, and First Cause of all our blessings.

## II

He wisely looks for some return from man; and the little things which obstinate unbelievers refuse to do, and which God's preventing grace gives them ability to perform, justly entitle them to all the shame of their damnation. Therefore, although their temporal misery is originally from Adam, yet their eternal ruin is originally from themselves.

. . . according to the first, God remains the genuine Parent of good; and according to the second, devils and apostate men are still the genuine authors of evil.<sup>18</sup>

Mr. Fletcher met the perplexing problem of the philosophers, the origin of evil, in a number of places in his writings, but probably the best description of his position is given by him in answer to the direct question. The question and answer as he has put it have both been quoted for clarity of understanding.

'How can you,' say they, [the philosophers] 'reasonably account for the origin of evil, without bearing hard upon God's infinite goodness, power, or knowledge? How can you make appear, not only that a good God could create a world where evil now exists in ten thousand forms; but also, that is highly expedient he should create such a world, rather than any other.?'  
Answer.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 159-60.

When it pleased God to create a world, his wisdom obliged him to create it upon the plan that was most worthy of a God. Such a plan was undoubtedly that which squared best with all the divine perfections taken together. Wisdom and power absolutely required, that it should be a world of rational as well as of irrational creatures; of free, as well as of necessary, agents; such a world displaying far better what St. Paul calls, 'the multifarious, variegated wisdom' of God, as well as his infinite power in making, ruling, and over-ruling various orders of beings.

It could not be expected, that myriads of free agents, who necessarily fell short of absolute perfection, would all behave alike. Here God's goodness demanded, that those who behaved well should be rewarded; his sovereignty insisted, that those who behaved ill should be punished; and his distributive justice and equity required, that those who made the best use of their talents should be entitled to the highest rewards, while those who abused divine favours most should have the severest punishments: mercy reserving to itself the right of raising rewards, and of alleviating punishments, in a way suited to the honour of all the other divine attributes.

This being granted, (and I do not see how any man of reason and piety can deny it,) it evidently follows: 1. That a world, in which various orders of free, as well as of necessary, agents are admitted, is most perfect: 2. That this world, having been formed upon such a wise plan, was the most perfect that could possibly be created: 3. That, in the very nature of things, evil may, although there is no necessity it should, enter into such a world; else it could not be a world of free agents, who are candidates for rewards offered by distributive justice: 4. That the blemishes and disorders of the natural world are only penal consequences of the disobedience of free agents: and 5. That from such penal disorders we may indeed conclude that man has abused free will, but not that God deals in free wrath. Only admit, therefore, the free will of rationals, and you cannot but fall in love with our Creator's plan; dark and horrid as it appears, when it appears, when it is viewed through the smoked glass of the fatalist, the Manichee, or the rigid predestinarian.<sup>19</sup>

From these quotations from the pen of Mr. Fletcher

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 165-6.

we are able to see clearly his position on the origin of evil. Evil, as we have said before, for him is both moral and natural. The origin of the latter is seen in the former. To answer the problem of the origin of moral evil answers the whole. It has been seen that he sees this to have originated in the free will of man.

#### IV. THE PURPOSE OF EVIL

The third phase of the views of Mr. Fletcher on the Problem of Evil to be considered is that of the purpose of evil.

Because of Mr. Fletcher's position, that evil is not necessary,<sup>20</sup> it can be seen that if it has a purpose at all it is only one of secondary importance. His explanation has been given to us in a dialogue between himself and a parishioner. The parishioner confronted him with the question concerning the fact that if God could foresee Adam's sin and its consequences, why he did not prevent it altogether. This type of question required an answer concerning the purpose of evil if it had any at all. Mr. Fletcher's position is well defined when he said,

God permitted, not ordered sin, because he both would and could overrule it to the glorious display of several of his attributes, which must otherwise have remained unknown to, and unglorified by, his creatures;

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<sup>20</sup> Supra, p. 13.

such as his boundless mercy, his wonderful patience, his inflexible justice, and admirable wisdom in bringing good out of evil.

As those who never knew what sickness and want are, do not half value the blessings of health and plenty, it is not unlikely that God saw it expedient to suffer, not procure, the apostasy and misery of this world, or, to use a scriptural expression, to permit the loss of his hundredth sheep, that the ninety-nine who never were lost might be more sensible of, and thankful for, preserving grace. And lest there should be any reason to impeach his goodness, he sent his only-begotten Son to take the curse of the law upon him, to destroy the works of the devil, and, as 'a good shepherd, to bring back the lost sheep,'---the world that had strayed from the path of pious obedience.

Lastly, the contrast between sin and holiness, between earthly misery and heavenly bliss, will heighten to all eternity the beauty of holiness, and the joys of the blessed; so that the wickedness and wretchedness of this earth, which is but a point with regard to the universe, when they shall have been overruled by divine wisdom, mercy, justice, and power, will answer the end of shades properly thrown into a piece of painting, or that of night tempering the day of paradise. They will make the light of God's perfections appear unspeakably brighter and the day of heaven shine infinitely more glorious.<sup>21</sup>

With such an explanation the parishioner found his objection answered but raised another which also sheds light on the stand that Mr. Fletcher took. The objection brought was in essence that if sin answered the end of shades in a picture it had a purpose and was therefore not deserving of punishment. Mr. Fletcher answered that it was only sin properly pardoned, or justly punished, which would answer that sort of end. He illustrated this point by

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<sup>21</sup> John W. Fletcher, Fragments, Pastoral and Familiar Letters (vol. IX, The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher, 9 vols.; London: John Mason, 1860), p. 480-1.



saying,

Rebellion is always abominable in itself; nevertheless, a wise king overrules it to good purposes: a pardon granted to penitent rebels attaches them for ever to their merciful prince, and endears him to all his faithful subjects; and, at the same time, the public execution of the stubborn reflects praise on the steadiness of his government, and makes all stand in awe of his justice.<sup>22</sup>

Such a position seemed to answer, at least for Mr. Fletcher, the question of the purpose of evil.

#### V. THE OUTCOME OF EVIL

Mr. Fletcher's position as to the outcome of evil has been anticipated in his answer as to the nature and origin of evil. To reiterate, he understood evil to be of two types, moral evil or sin, and natural evil.<sup>23</sup> He also considered the scriptural interpretation to be that moral evil is the cause of natural evil. This would mean that all natural disorder is the outcome of moral evil. It is for him "the just sentence of an offended God."<sup>24</sup>

For 'the soul that sinneth,' says God's law, and not the soul that committeth so many sins, of such or such an heinousness, 'it shall die.' Hence it is, that the first sin of the first man was punished both with spiritual and bodily death, and with ten thousand

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 481.

<sup>23</sup> Supra, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Fletcher, An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense, op. cit., p. 39.

other evils.<sup>25</sup>

The paragraph above shows to us that Fletcher considered death, both spiritual and bodily, and all natural evils as outcomes of broken laws. The tenor of all his writings, especially, An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense, speaks again and again of this fact.<sup>26</sup> Such statements as, "Sin, that inconceivable, virulent, and powerful evil, drew down God's righteous curse upon all that was created for man's use, as well as upon man himself,"<sup>27</sup> show to us his view of the outcome of evil in the present time.

The sinful state, the "corrupt and lost estate"<sup>28</sup> or "natural depravity"<sup>29</sup> to use his terms, of man is another present consequence or outcome of evil. Fletcher vindicated, explained, and defended his position at this point in answer to an objection brought against it. The objection was,

It seems both absurd and unjust, that we should be born in sin, because Adam chose to sin: by what law are we bound to suffer for the faults of another? We had no hand in our first parents' transgression: why should

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-199.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

the consequences of it fall so heavy upon us?<sup>30</sup>

Fletcher answered the objection thus:

Adam was the general head, representative, and father of mankind, and we suffer for his rebellion,--as justly as the children of a bankrupt suffer for their parent's imprudence, or those of a traitor for their father's treason, . . . --and as unavoidably as an unborn child shares the fate of its desperate mother when she hath poisoned herself.

As we are all seminally contained in the loins of Adam, it would have been as impossible to save us from the defilement of sin, as to preserve part of your blood free from all infection if you were dying or dead of a fever.

If Adam had stood, and the happy consequences of his obedience had reached down to you, you would not have thought it unjust to enjoy them; yet, as he fell, it is reasonable that you should submit to the sad alternative.

Did God appoint, for our representative and head, the first Adam, who ruined us without our fault: He hath also graciously appointed the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who redeemed us without any merit on our part: it ill becomes, therefore, those who talk of salvation by the cross of the Son of God to speak against the doctrine of our natural depravity through the fall of Adam.<sup>31</sup>

An enlargement upon this argument is found in An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense.<sup>32</sup> In the conclusion of this enlargement he stated, "If Adam corrupted the fountain of human nature within himself, we, the streams, cannot but be naturally corrupt."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Fletcher, Fragments, Pastoral and Familiar Letters, op. cit., p. 478.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 478-9.

<sup>32</sup> Fletcher, An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense, op. cit., pp. 110-21.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

Having seen that Fletcher considered, natural evil, death, both spiritual and bodily, and depravity as consequences of sin it leaves to be considered one more point under present outcomes.

The blinding and binding power of specific acts of sin is a very present outcome. He showed that there are "many in the moral world . . . to whom nothing appears as sin, except impieties of the grossest kind."<sup>34</sup> "We have a thousand proofs that smaller sins will lead a man, by insensible degrees, to the commission of greater."<sup>35</sup>

The study of the views of Fletcher on the outcome of evil has called us to consider, along with the present outcomes, those final outcomes. Upon interrogation Fletcher gave answer in a number of places and ways that eternal punishment is the final outcome of sin. He quoted Christ in reference to unbelievers from Matthew 25:46 "these shall go into everlasting punishment."<sup>36</sup> Hell is referred to as, "a state or place of misery"<sup>37</sup> and "the prison and death of an immortal soul." <sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Fletcher, The Portrait of St. Paul, op. cit., p. 413.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 416.

<sup>36</sup> Fletcher, Fragments, Pastoral and Familiar Letters, op. cit., p. 482.

<sup>37</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 484.

He pleaded the justice of such action, on God's part, because Christ made possible deliverance. He said,

If any perish now, it is by their own choice; for 'there is help laid on one mighty to save.' Psalm 89:19. 'The soul that sinneth' unto death, by rejection, to the end, the life offered in Jesus, 'it shall die' eternally, and only that soul: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, 'The son shall not' finally 'bear the iniquity of the father.' Ezekiel 18:20.<sup>39</sup>

And again,

God, who rewards the godly with endless glory, may justly punish the wicked with endless ruin. Death must be in the balance with life, eternal misery with eternal happiness, or else there is no proportion between the punishment threatened, and the reward promised.<sup>40</sup>

The outcome of evil is, in conclusion, according to Fletcher, both present and eternal. The present outcome includes; natural evil, all disorder and decay; death, both spiritual and bodily; man's corrupt and lost estate, or depravity; and the blinding and binding power of specific acts of sin. The eternal outcome will be eternal death in an eternal state or place of misery.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 479.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 483.

## CHAPTER III

### THE VIEWS OF EDGAR SHEFFIELD BRIGHTMAN

#### I. BIOLOGICAL SKETCH

Edgar Sheffield Brightman, who at the present time occupies the Bordon Parker Bowne chair of Philosophy at Boston University, was born September 20, 1884.<sup>1</sup> He is the son of a "conservative"<sup>2</sup> Methodist minister. Of himself, he says, "as a youth I was very conservative . . . yet somehow I gradually outgrew that stage without any perceptible crisis or violent wrench with the past."<sup>3</sup>

Brightman is well prepared educationally. He holds a number of degrees from leading institutions. He received his college education at Brown University, graduating in 1906. From the same University he received his Masters in 1908. During the period 1906-08 he served as an assistant professor in Philosophy and Greek at Brown University.

From Boston University Brightman received his S. T. B. and Ph. D. in 1910 and 1912 consecutively. Some of

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<sup>1</sup> James John McLarney, The Theism of Edgar Sheffield Brightman (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America, 1936), p. x.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, "Religion as Truth," Contemporary American Theology (Vergilius Ferm, editor; New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1932), vol. I, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Loc. cit.

this time, 1910-11, was spent in study at Berlin and Marburg, Germany. After a number of years as professor at Nebraska Wesleyan University and Wesleyan University in Connecticut he became professor at Boston University Graduate School in 1919 and still holds that position at the present time.<sup>4</sup>

The principle works of Edgar Sheffield Brightman are: The Sources of the Hexateuch, An Introduction to Philosophy, Religious Values, A Philosophy of Ideals, The Problem of God, The Finding of God, Is God a Person?, Nature and Values, Moral Laws, Personality and Religion, A Philosophy of Religion, and The Future of Christianity. Beside these he is a regular contributor to numerous philosophical journals and periodicals.

One appreciates in the writings of Brightman, his attempt to be logical and coherent. This fact is attested to by others, too, who have studied his views.<sup>5, 6</sup> As concerning the problem of evil this fact is seen to be very evident. It was not the purpose of this paper to determine as to the fulfillment of this attempt, but at least his

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<sup>4</sup> Who's Who in America, 1940-41 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis).

<sup>5</sup> McLarney, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Curtis Knowles Jones, "The Problem of Evil," (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1938), p. 2.

effort makes it worthy of note.

The views of Edgar Sheffield Brightman, on the problem of evil have been treated under the following outline: His view of the nature of evil, his view of the origin of evil, his view of the purpose of evil, and his view of the outcome of evil.

## II. THE NATURE OF EVIL

Evil, for Brightman, is a serious problem. As a philosopher he said that "no objection to religious faith compares in seriousness with that arising from the fact of evil."<sup>7</sup> This for him does not allow for any minimizing of the problem.

A philosophy which investigates value, but not dis-value, would be so partisan and one-sided as to lose its title to objectivity and devotion to truth. . . . The Philosopher's unpardonable sin is indifference toward any area of experience, especially . . . the battlefield of good-and-evil.<sup>8</sup>

His open-minded position was for facing into the facts regardless of how hard they are to understand. "Until evil has been examined, all conclusions about good remain insecure. The problem of evil is ineluctable."<sup>9</sup> These few

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<sup>7</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 240.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 259.



references have given us an insight into Brightman's attitude toward the problem. There was no doubt expressed in his writings about the reality of evil in the universe. He stated his position clearly when he said, "There is an ultimate evil in the universe which God in no sense willed and against which he always exerts his full energy."<sup>10</sup> This, a summary statement, probably expressed his position as to the general nature of evil as well as it can be stated.

Brightman recognized the ordinary classification of the evils of the world as moral and natural evil. He was not wholly satisfied with it and claimed it to be oversimple, and not always clear."<sup>11</sup> In an analysis of evil as we meet it in our experience he found some evils to be both moral and natural. A specific evil may, under some circumstance be moral, and under some other be natural.<sup>12</sup>

Another set of terms used by Brightman in place of moral and natural was the terms voluntary and involuntary. "Voluntary evils are those which result from choice; involuntary evils are those which arise without, or in spite of human choice."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 243.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 244-5.

<sup>13</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Nature and Values (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 84.

Moral evil is always of this voluntary sort; it is impossible to do moral wrong unintentionally; and all voluntary evil is moral evil.

There are, however, many evils which are in the class of the involuntary. Much of man's ignorance and error is due to circumstances beyond his control. Much ugliness exists in the order of nature apart from man. Worship is as much a matter of education and tradition as it is of choice, and irreverence and blasphemy may often be socially conditioned rather than freely chosen attitudes. Experiences of sorrow, pain, frustration, and chaos seem to arise from the nature of things. Hence involuntary evil has often been called natural evil, although the term is less descriptive and less accurate than 'involuntary.'<sup>14</sup>

To better understand the position of Brightman as to the nature of evil it should be understood that he did not accept the traditional concept of creation as understood in conservative theology but held to a theory of evolution, or to be specific, creative evolution.

To call God creative involves several points. It means that the entire universe is dependent on his will for its existence. The idea that creation occurred at some one point in time, long ago, is untenable in the light of the expansion of the idea of God. The constant conservation of the energy of the universe points to a will that is eternally creating. Hence, creation implies the immanence of God in all things. In particular, it means that the law of evolution is God's method of creation. It is coming to be generally recognized that evolution is not merely a recombination of pre-existing elements, but is the scene of the arrival of new qualities which could not possibly be explained merely as forms of what had been there before. Consciousness, for example, when it arises in the course of evolution, is plainly no combination of atoms, no matter how subtle or complex the atoms are. It is a genuine novelty.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-5.

<sup>15</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, The Problem of God (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1930), pp. 123-4.

And again,

Ages of imperceptible advance go by before the earth is ready to support life; ages more drag on before the dawn of intelligent consciousness; ages on ages, and then man emerges. The whole span of human history is but a drop in the bucket. Yet what for God is a few moments of recent time, is for us the whole of recorded history, in which the slow advances have been dearly bought with blood and pain; hope has been fluctuating, and any goal has seemed remote and inaccessible.<sup>16</sup>

One of the bases for his theory of a limited God, which will be discussed more fully later,<sup>17</sup> was the fact of evolution. Concerning the theory of creative evolution, he made some very dogmatic statements, such as, "After all, there is creative evolution,"<sup>18</sup> and, "It is increasingly recognized that evolution is creative or emergent."<sup>19</sup> A look at the basic assumptions helps in the understanding of his views of the nature of evil.

Now again, to the problem of the nature of evil. His source for understanding evil was experience. There was for him, no authority in the Biblical account. In the preface of his book, The Sources of the Hexateuch, he stated his acceptance of the "critical" position in relation to the

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<sup>16</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, The Finding of God (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1930), pp. 123-4.

<sup>17</sup> *Infra*, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

<sup>19</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Is God a Person? (New York: Associated Press, 1932), p. 33.

Bible.<sup>20</sup> With experience as the criterion, and because evil is so evident in all experience, it was his opinion that it was inherent in the very structure of things. This aspect of evil was generally termed as intrinsic evil. There was also, for him, an instrumental or relative evil. "Intrinsic evils are inherent. They are disvalues in themselves and nothing can make them into intrinsic values."<sup>21</sup> While, "An instrumental evil is an experience, process or entity which contributes to producing an intrinsic evil or to averting an intrinsic good."<sup>22</sup>

Another term which was used as similar if not synonymous with intrinsic evil by Brightman was 'dysteleological surd.' "It is a type of evil which is inherently and irreducibly evil and contains within itself no principle of development or improvement."<sup>23</sup> At some places in his writings he was not sure if there are such 'surds,'<sup>24</sup> but all of his thinking was built upon the assumption that there are.

These seem to be the views of Brightman as found in

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<sup>20</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, The Sources of the Hexateuch (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1918), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, op. cit., p. 242.

<sup>22</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 245-6.

<sup>24</sup> Loc. cit.

his own writings, concerning the nature of evil. The next section, which has covered his views of the origin of evil, will also help in the fuller understanding of the nature of evil.

### III. THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

In the process of establishing a coherent philosophy, which was Brightman's purpose in all of his thinking, the problem of origins was very basic. He has committed himself to the assumption of creative evolution.<sup>25</sup>

The origin of evil constituted a real problem for him. He could no more accept the view of the ancient Hebrew writers, that all evil came as the result of human sin. He has said,

Are there not rather essential parts of the whole order of life, which belongs to the realm of animated nature long before man appeared on earth? It is vain to ascribe all of the darkness of creation to human will. The obstacles which matter and time, suffering and finiteness, offer to the onward movement of spirit cannot be wholly due, as traditional theology has taught, to the sin of man and the curse of Eden.<sup>26</sup>

He was willing to admit the possibility of ascribing the origin of sin to human will, although, this is not a sure thing, it may be and it may not. He was sure that we cannot "impute to man the blame of the slow and painful

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<sup>25</sup> Supra, p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> Brightman, The Finding of God, op. cit., p. 117.

process of life, or for the presence of earthquakes, cyclones, and disease germs in the world."<sup>27</sup>

Brightman has seen three possible solutions to the origin of the frustration of design in nature. The first was that it was "a product of the creative will of God, chosen as the best means of attaining his ends."<sup>28</sup> Second, "that it is something external to God."<sup>29</sup> The idea here, something "independent of God and so eternal and un-created."<sup>30</sup> Third, "That it is due to factors within God himself, which are eternal aspects of his nature, but not products of his will or choice."<sup>31</sup> The last was Brightman's position. Much of his writings have been given to the purpose of describing this factor within God, especially the two books The Problem of God and The Finding of God.

In the latter book, written in 1931, Brightman has narrowed the possible solutions down to two.

The universe contains obstacles to the will of God besides the obstacles due to human sin. These obstacles, since they delay the fulfillment of goodness and beauty, cannot be due to God's will. Ultimately, they must be due to something within the nature of

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<sup>27</sup> Brightman, The Problem of God, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> Brightman, The Finding of God, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>31</sup> Brightman, The Problem of God, op. cit., p. 127.

God.<sup>32</sup>

The dualistic view was dismissed, in spite of its allure-  
ment, because, "it raises difficulties as great as those it  
solves."<sup>33</sup> The following is probably as well stated a  
description of his position as any in all of his writings.

If, then, we turn to the other possibility, it is  
that the obstacles are due to something within the  
nature of God--what I call 'The Given.' On this view,  
the divine consciousness contains, in every one of its  
experiences both freely chosen activity and unchosen  
passivity, both form and content. The eternal God,  
thus, is always a perfectly good will and a perfectly  
wise reason, in the sense of being always loyal to the  
highest purposes and of knowing always everything that  
can be known. But his eternal nature is not a peaceful,  
happy, effortless, willing that attains its ends as soon  
as they are conceived. All experience testifies to the  
contrary. The eternal nature of God contains a prin-  
ciple of delay and suffering within itself. Every  
choice of God is limited not merely by the eternal  
necessities of reason (which prohibit contradictions),  
but also by the eternal and uncreated nature of divine  
experience, which it is equally necessary for us to  
posit and absurd for us to undertake to chart in detail.  
Yet we may say that the content of this experience is  
such that it both renders necessary eternal pain in God  
and also renders possible the kind of triumph over pain  
that the inexhaustible good will of God achieves.<sup>34</sup>

Probably the most important reason for Brightman's  
acceptance of the 'Given' as a solution to the problem of  
evil was because it best fits with his basic philosophy of  
Idealistic Personalism. This was set forth by him in the

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<sup>32</sup> Brightman, The Finding of God, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>34</sup> Loc. cit.

book, Is God a Person?. He said that Idealistic Personalism asserts that

personality is the supreme reality, the source of all being and the controller of its ongoing. . . . That matter itself is a form of spirit, being the very will and experience of God in action in one of its realms. . . . Idealism holds that matter and spirit are both aspects of a single unitary type of process, namely, the process of personal will. For the Idealistic Personalist, the whole of nature, as revealed in our sense experience, is truly what Berkeley calls it, a divine language, which symbolizes to our minds the purpose and reason of the divine mind.<sup>35</sup>

From this view of Idealism, his theory of the origin of evil, as he has found it in the 'Given,' is probably as logical a solution as possible.

As to the origin of moral evil, or sin, Brightman was not willing to relieve man of all the responsibility, yet he felt that "there is a reality beyond man's will which makes righteousness hard."<sup>36</sup>

Moral evils may be explained as a result of human freedom. . . . Nevertheless, human freedom leaves many aspects of evil, even of moral evil unexplained. . . . Freedom, we repeat, explains much of moral evil, but it does not explain either the force of temptation or the debasing consequences of moral evil.<sup>37</sup>

Because of the casual laws of nature, Brightman was aware that the experiences of intrinsic evil may be, at

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<sup>35</sup> Brightman, Is God a Person?, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Brightman, The Finding of God, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>37</sup> Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, op. cit., pp. 260-1.



least partially, explained by reference to man's use of his freedom. "But if there are causal processes in nature which apart from human intervention, lead to dysteleological results, then it is impossible to avoid the question of God's responsibility for evil."<sup>38</sup> So, in spite of a number of references to human responsibility for sin, no conclusive evidence has been found by Brightman that man is ultimately held responsible for its origin.

In the light of his basic philosophy of Idealistic Personalism, of creative evolution, and of the 'Given' within God, it would seem that the ultimate origin of all evil, even moral or voluntary evil, is traceable to the passive nature of God and man is relieved of the responsibility. The problem of responsibility has been dealt with again in the last part of this chapter<sup>39</sup> in the discussion of the outcome of evil. Suffice it to say here, there seems to be a vagueness as to the understanding of the development of the problem of sin in most of his writings. In a number of places it has been presented as due to human freedom and therefore no problem.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>39</sup> Infra, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, "Evil," An Encyclopedia of Religion (Vergilius Ferm, editor; New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), pp. 263-4.

The third point to be considered of the views of Brightman on the problem of evil was that of the purpose of evil.

#### IV. THE PURPOSE OF EVIL

Brightman has said that basically the intrinsic evil serves no purpose. It is "dysteleological"<sup>41</sup> in its very nature, and contains no principle of development or improvement. "Evil is a principle of fragmentariness, of incoherence, of mockery. Hence there is no immanent logic in evil."<sup>42</sup> "Evil is always in-consistency, disharmony, absence or repudiation of or inattention to the good."<sup>43</sup> In another place he used the word "purposelessness"<sup>44</sup> to describe evil.

If this were the full explanation, the problem of purpose in evil would be solved as far as Brightman is concerned. But it was not that easy because he said,

Often we experience use from the useless and good from the evil. Out of suffering grows strength; out of frustration, patience; out of sin itself, increased zeal for righteousness. It is true that there are cruel

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<sup>41</sup> Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>43</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Religious Values (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1925), p. 133.

<sup>44</sup> Brightman, The Problem of God, op. cit., p. 159.

and sordid evils, the purpose of which is far from clear; yet to confess that some problems are unsolved is not to prove them insoluble. For many of the ills of life there is no clear-cut theoretical solution. Yet if man meets those ills that he cannot understand with the best there is in him, he is capable, within limits, of making all things work together for good.<sup>45</sup>

This speaks of good from evil in spite of it and not because of it. It shows his basic philosophy that evil is purposeless, but even at that it can be brought to good if man uses the best in himself.

Brightman discussed a number of theories concerning the purpose of evil in his philosophy of religion; such theories as: natural evil is punishment for moral evil, all evil is disciplinary, evil is needed to contrast good and break the monotony, evil is for the purpose of punishing beings other than men, or that evil serves an unknown good.<sup>46</sup> After having given each of these a fair treatment and acknowledging the possibility of a partial truth in the first two and showing the fallacy of the rest he tried to show that evil was not to be viewed as having purpose but that there is purpose in the world in spite of evil.<sup>47</sup>

Out of all the evil in the world "God brings

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<sup>45</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, An Introduction to Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1925), p. 294.

<sup>46</sup> Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, op. cit., pp. 261-9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

meaning,"<sup>48</sup> but this does not mean for Brightman that evil was necessary for there to be meaning.

The last phase of the study of the views of Brightman to be presented on the problem of evil was that of the outcome of evil.

## V. THE OUTCOME OF EVIL

The outcome of evil, in the eyes of Brightman, in some of his writings, seemed to be quite optimistic while in others there was so much doubt about the future that he became very pessimistic. There was little in the writings of Brightman concerning immortality or any phase of the subject of eschatology. His book, A Philosophy of Religion, is the only one that deals at any length with the subject, at least concerning his own views.

As to the present outcome of evil, as worked out in the experience of people, he has very little to say. He stated that the consequences of some evil choices are "utterly debasing and disastrous,"<sup>49</sup> but does not develop it any further.

Because evil is caused by 'the Given,' which is a part of the eternal nature of God, there is no empirical

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<sup>48</sup> Brightman, The Finding of God, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>49</sup> Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, op. cit., p. 260.

proof that it will ever be completely overcome.<sup>50</sup> Although, there can never be in this view of 'the Given' a complete destruction of evil Brightman was sure that God is able to always control evil. He said,

We have ground to trust his ultimate control of the future and at the same time to expect that the future will continue to contain much that we do not understand. The existence of values and of evils leads to belief in a God who is good and whose power is sufficient to control evil.<sup>51</sup>

In another place he said, "there is no adequate basis for the fear that the good spirit of God is so weak that he will cease to struggle."<sup>52</sup>

Concerning the outcome of 'the Given,' which is the basic cause of evil, Brightman has some uncertain suppositions. He spoke of 'the Given' as eternal and said,

As to whether, or in what sense, it can be completely overcome in the future development of the universe, who can say? There seems little ground, however, to believe that it will be entirely eliminated. There is more ground to hope that it may enter into increasingly beautiful and holy creations as the endless future advances.<sup>53</sup>

This above was his answer to the outcome of basic evil and as to the matter of individual responsibility for

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 405.

<sup>51</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, The Future of Christianity (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1937), p. 105.

<sup>52</sup> Brightman, The Finding of God, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

voluntary evil and its final outcome he was no more specific. It is probably answered best through his view of conditional immortality. This view was "that immortality is not inherent in every person . . ., but is conditional on the presence in the person of genuine potentialities for spiritual development."<sup>54</sup> There was no attempt to say who is to be immortal but he "leaves them to the goodness of God."<sup>55</sup> Such a view leaves much that is not answered concerning personal guilt for voluntary evil.

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<sup>54</sup> Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, op. cit., p. 408.

<sup>55</sup> Loc. cit.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE VIEWS OF EDWIN LEWIS

#### I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edwin Lewis is the son of Joseph and Sarah Lewis of Newbury, England, born April 8, 1881.<sup>1</sup> He attended colleges in Canada, America, and Scotland; and his early manhood was spent in mission work in Newfoundland.<sup>2</sup> On January 5, 1904 he was married to Louise Frost of Newfoundland and in that same year came to America. In 1904 he was ordained as a minister of the Methodist Church and for that year and the next he was pastor of the Methodist Church in Velva, North Dakota.

Lewis did his undergraduate work at New York State College for Teachers and Drew Theological Seminary. During these years of study he was pastor of rural churches in both New York State and New Jersey, he also pastored a fair-sized city church.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Who's Who in America, 1940-41 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Marvin Hayden, "A Critical Study of the Doctrine of Revelation as held by three Contemporary American Theologians--Georgia Harkness, Nels F. S. Ferre, and Edwin Lewis--in the Light of the Wesleyan View," (Unpublished Bachelor of Divinity Thesis, Western School of Evangelical Religion, Portland, Oregon, 1950), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Edwin Lewis, The Faith We Declare (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 211.

One year, 1915-16, was spent as an instructor of English at New York State College for Teachers and the two years following as an instructor in Greek and Theology at Drew Theological Seminary. He received his Th.D. in the year 1918 from Drew and the following two years he was adjutant professor of Theology at Drew. He became head of the Systematic Theology Department of that institution in 1920, succeeding his former teacher, Olin A. Curtis, and is now in that position. He received his D.D. in 1926 from Dickson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

He stands in our day as a foremost thinker and writer and is widely read. For a number of years he wrote a weekly exposition of the International Sunday School Lesson. He contributes to a number of leading periodicals and theological journals at various intervals. He was co-editor of "The Abingdon Bible Commentary." His books include: A Manual of Christian Beliefs, God and Ourselves, A Christian Manifesto, The Faith We Declare, A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation, The Creator and the Adversary, and a number of others.

"Lewis . . . is purported to have changed not only some intellectual opinions and beliefs but also to have had a transforming spiritual experience."<sup>4</sup> This is an important

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<sup>4</sup> Hayden, op. cit., p. 54.



factor, and it has not been disregarded in this study. It is worthy of note and pertinent in relation, to know that throughout the writings of Lewis, before and after the purported change, all his philosophy was based on a theory of process. Any changes that have been made in no way affect this basis for him. In his latest book he said, "In actual fact, by what long and slow processes we came to be as we are, is now, so we claim, a matter of general knowledge."<sup>5</sup> This philosophy has implications which has affected his views of the problem of evil.

The Problem of Evil is a subject that has continually presented itself to Lewis. He has seen that answers at this point will help answer other problems of the universe. His views on evil have been considered by the same outline as the other men studied; the nature, origin, purpose, and outcome of evil.

## II. THE NATURE OF EVIL

Lewis' concept of the nature of evil can only be understood in the light of his theory of creative process. In speaking of man as a creature he said, "he has come by a long and devious route, as have all other 'kinds,' and he is

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<sup>5</sup> Edwin Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary (New York: The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 32.

the fixed outcome of the process."<sup>6</sup> Creation was not understood in the traditional sense of 'ex nihilo' but as new levels in a process.<sup>7</sup> "All paths lead to man the universal heir."<sup>8</sup>

The pounding hammers of ancient cosmic strife threw off the sparks whence my life has come. Huge monsters dragging their slow length through primeval slime, assured that I at last should come to be. Within the earth, which was to be my home, were being stored, by condensations and transformations inconceivable, and by upheavals whose vast involvements leave the imagination impotent, the conditions necessary to my existence. When at last I was here, I consummated the story of life. The fish of the sea, and the bird of the air, and the beast of the field--they came, they lived, they suffered, they died, and made me possible.<sup>9</sup>

Evil was seen as a necessary part of this process.

"Contradiction inheres in the structural framework of existence; it inheres in all organic life; it inheres in the nature of man. Creation is creativity in strife with discreativity."<sup>10</sup> "Creation is the issue of God's challenge to the Adversary and of the Adversary's acceptance of the challenge."<sup>11</sup> For Lewis, creativity and discreativity are "two perfectly obvious aspects of existence."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

The discreativity is the very center of evil. "Discreativity is evil in itself, and evil in what it seeks."<sup>13</sup>  
 "The basic evil, then, is in the fact that if there is to be created good, there will also be discreative evil as the enemy of the good."<sup>14</sup>

Evil can be seen here to be relative. Without the creative good evil would not be. "The discreative can function only where the creative is already functioning."<sup>15</sup>  
 God's initial activity in the process described above

presented the otherwise passive and quiescent demonic with its opportunity of destruction. If the Creator does nothing, the Adversary does nothing. Discreativity is meaningless except as there is creativity.<sup>16</sup>

Evil was more than just a negation in the theory of Lewis,<sup>1</sup> although it was, also that. "There is not merely the absence of the good, but there is also the presence of what is not good."<sup>17</sup> This statement from one of his earliest books has the same essential concept of evil as was set forth in his latest work. In the latest book he said,

God is free in his purpose to create, but he is not wholly free in respect of the conditions of creation.

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<sup>13</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>17</sup> Edwin Lewis, A Manual of Christian Beliefs (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 50.

As his will becomes creative there is also creation, but creation is more than the direct expression of his will. It carries a plus, and that plus is of evil: it is, indeed, what evil is.<sup>18</sup>

The form of evil, or to use Lewis' term "discreativity," was generally considered under the usual classification of natural and moral evil. He recognized these and understands the usual definition given to each, and used the terms throughout all of his writings; but in one of his first works he said, "There are forms of evil which it seems impossible to include under this simple scheme."<sup>19</sup> He then offered another set of terms which, even in his latest book, seem for him to better express the form that evil takes. He said "More sharply, evil may be distinguished as inevitable and as avoidable."<sup>20</sup>

Because evil was inherent, for him, in the very structural framework of existence it is inevitable. "There is a necessitatedness of evil."<sup>21</sup> There are numerous allusions to this fact in all the writings of this man. The following are only a few: "Pain, hardship, calamity, want,

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18 Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, op. cit., p. 138.

19 Lewis, A Manual of Christian Beliefs, op. cit., p. 50.

20 Ibid., p. 51.

21 Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, op. cit., p. 40.

disease, and the like, all fall in the biological order."<sup>22</sup>  
 "The various natural calamities, for example, that so often perplex us are clearly enough events determined by natural process."<sup>23</sup> "Error is a necessary condition of growth."<sup>24</sup>  
 "Death plays an indispensable part in the economy of life."<sup>25</sup> and, "Moral fault is simply one phase of universal failure . . . not all the world's moral wreckage expresses the intent of human wills."<sup>26</sup> Such are a few of the expressions of Lewis as to the inevitable, and blameless form of evil.

The other form of evil, which Lewis called 'avoidable,' in his earlier book was also considered as important in all of his later works. The logical fact, that if there were no such form of evil, man is not responsible, was clearly seen and marks a basis of consideration in the total problem of evil for him. "The possibility of moral evil necessarily goes with human life: sin is the responsible actualizing of this possibility."<sup>27</sup> Sin is the

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<sup>22</sup> Edwin Lewis, God and Ourselves (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1931), p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, God and Ourselves, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

denial of God and His will<sup>28</sup> and of His right to rule.<sup>29</sup> Even this when seen as a product of inherent discreativity of existence speaks that, "it is not only true that men may sin; it is also true that they will sin."<sup>30</sup> Thus, the greater share of the responsibility was shifted, for Lewis, from man to God. Man is only responsible when he actually wills wrong in the sense of denying God.

This, as presented above, was the concept of the nature of evil as seen by Lewis. The next phase to be considered was that of the origin of evil. It, too, has some implications which are helpful in further understanding the nature of evil.

### III. THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

Lewis, in a 'speculative venture,'<sup>31</sup> sets forth his theory of the ground of evil. The need for a theory such as he has given us was necessary because of his rejection of the traditional scriptural interpretation that evil is grounded in the misuse of free will. His theory in a few words was this: "The ground of evil . . . is found in the

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54. <sup>28</sup> Lewis, A Manual of Christian Beliefs, op. cit., p.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis, God and Ourselves, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>31</sup> Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, op. cit., p.  
140.

Adversary, or in the demonic standing over against God in an absolute 'otherness.'<sup>32</sup>

A further elucidation was given to this statement in the following paragraph:

'In the beginning--God.' The ancient declaration is here taken for granted. But it is not being taken for granted that in the beginning was God and nothing else. In the beginning was the Adversary as well, and not only the Adversary but also a form of existence--later to be called 'the residue' or 'the residual constant'--which made it possible for the two to meet in conflict. Each of the three is itself and no other. Neither is to be explained by the other two. It is the very nature of eternal existence to be this way. God never began to be. The Adversary never began to be. The 'makings' of their battlefield never began to be. The only thing that began to be was the conflict itself, at least, the conflict in the form which makes creation as we know it. Creation is the issue of God's challenge to the Adversary and of the Adversary's acceptance of the challenge.<sup>33</sup>

This theory was taken from Lewis' most recent book, The Creator and the Adversary. None of his other works have been so pointed as to his exact thinking on the matter of origin. His rejection of the traditional view has been because by many it has seemed to have been attributed to the nature or will of God.<sup>34</sup> In nineteen hundred thirty-one he wrote, "There is an evil in life and it is preferable to regard it as resulting from creative inefficiency than from

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<sup>32</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Loc. cit.

intention."<sup>35</sup> Even when, by some, the origin of evil was not attributed to God's nature or will but the free will of man Lewis has rejected it. He said, "To attribute it all to man's free will seems to be sheer fantasy, involved in it though man's free will undeniably is."<sup>36</sup> To Lewis "the freedom of man represents the freedom of God."<sup>37</sup> With this concept, even if evil be attributed to man's free will God is responsible, therefore he rejected it. In discussing this problem of the traditional view Lewis said,

He would be blind, therefore, who should suppose that the problem of evil, including as it does the problem of sin, is wholly explicable in terms of human freedom. The freedom is there; this is never to be denied. There is sin which men knowingly and deliberately commit, and there is evil which they knowingly and deliberately cause. But this is anything but the whole story. We have still to face the fact that there is evil which is structural in individual human nature, structural in human society, structural in the very nature of created existence, and this structural evil, the evil principle itself, is accountable not only for the various specific evils that attend the course of existence; it is accountable also for sin, since there would not be sin save for the prior and broader area of evil.<sup>38</sup>

The above quoted paragraph and the theory set forth<sup>39</sup> are the result of a concept set down early in Lewis' latest

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<sup>35</sup> Lewis, God and Ourselves, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, op. cit. p.  
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<sup>37</sup> Lewis, God and Ourselves, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, op. cit., p.  
140.

<sup>39</sup> Supra, p. 45.



book on the problem of evil. The concept is that "good and evil have more than a human reference: they have a cosmic reference."<sup>40</sup>

Another term used by Lewis as synonymous with 'discreativity,' or 'the demonic' is that of 'the darkness.' This was his interpretation of the meaning of John, the writer of the fourth Gospel, as he used the term. Lewis said, "This hostile 'darkness' is the source of all evil: it accounts for the imperfections and the impermanence of the created world."<sup>41</sup>

There is no doubt left, after reading Lewis, as to his view of the origin of evil. All evil, natural and moral, or to use his terms, inevitable and avoidable, was but a by-product of the ground of evil which was 'discreativity,' or 'the demonic Adversary.'

The third major phase of Lewis' view of evil to be considered in this study was that of the purpose of evil. It has been considered next.

#### IV. THE PURPOSE OF EVIL

The purpose of evil in the mind of Lewis has been best described by the one over-used word, 'discreativity.'

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<sup>40</sup> Lewis, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

Evil which had its origin from this principle of discreativity in the universe has the one purpose of destroying the work of God which is creativity.

The purpose of evil as conceived by Lewis is probably most clearly seen in the following quotation.

Each of the three eternal has its own distinctive nature, and therefore its own function. The divine is creative by its very nature; the demonic is discreative by its very nature; the residual constant is uncreative by its very nature. The creative divine creates through the instrumentality of the uncreative constant, whose function it is to be the bearer of quality, of meaning, of value, of life; and the discreative demonic destroys or seeks to destroy what is created, since destructiveness is its very nature. The divine and the demonic are absolute opposites. Neither can destroy the other because each is a necessary existent. Either can affect the other only through the residual uncreative constant. Since the divine is under a necessary law of creativity, and since creativity becomes operative through the uncreative constant, it follows both that there will be creativity, and that creativity will be a process of grim conflict, since the demonic is as much under a necessary law of discreativity or destructiveness as the divine is under a necessary law of creativity. No created being, no created 'kind,' can be accounted for wholly by the divine, or wholly by the demonic, or wholly by the residual constant, but only by all three. The given thing is what it is because they are what they are.

The course of created existence in its character of tragic drama, marked by conflicts, contradictions, sufferings, irrationalities, disintegrations, hereby becomes understandable. But understandable also is the fact that through all these tensions and contradictions, both in spite of them and because of them, appear joy and triumphs, meanings and values, as so many signs of a persistent purpose of good, and as the increasing evidence that this purpose yields the clue to the drama.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-3.

In interpretation of this it would seem that evil, or to use his term, 'discreativity,' is necessary to make good come to its full possibility.

The basis for this development of thought for Lewis was seen in some of his earliest books. In nineteen hundred twenty-seven he wrote in speaking of God being involved in evil that:

Within the scope of his will and purpose it is provided for that we shall experience difficulty, and that we shall suffer pain, and that we shall fall into error of various sorts, and that the conflict of natural forces shall issue in destruction and loss, and that suffering and sorrow shall come upon us because of our relations with each other. These things, however, are not to be regarded as ends in themselves. They are but parts of his complete will and purpose with men, potential ministers to the good that he is seeking for his children.<sup>43</sup>

He went on to say that God's purpose is causative of conditions that not only make sin possible but inevitable. Sin and suffering lie within the divine purpose but do not express the divine will. The conditions of life which fulfil the purpose of God make sin and suffering inevitable. The logical conclusion to which this brings one is that God cannot find good except through evil. Lewis said, "some shrink from this conclusion . . . yet since this is the way that God actually is accomplishing his purpose, why may we

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<sup>43</sup> Lewis, A Manual of Christian Beliefs, op. cit., p. 58.

not suppose that it is the best way?"<sup>44</sup> A further statement in the latest work of Lewis concerning God's involvement in the purpose of evil was as follows:

God, indeed, may use evil to destroy evil, and he may use evil to increase good, but he can never regard evil as anything else than a foe, and he must deal with the foe in ways which the nature of the foe makes possible to a nature such as his own. His involvement in strife is therefore inevitable.<sup>45</sup>

This puts a different light on the problem and shows that Lewis' theory outlined in his later work has relieved God of the responsibility for evil, at least in one sense. This does not end the important place that evil has in God's final purpose for the universe. Evil was still seen as inevitable and filled a place in God's scheme.

The major purposes of evil have here been outlined. The purpose of evil in and of itself is destruction but somehow in the economy of things God had a purpose which included the use of evil to come to the ultimate end of good.

The fourth and last phase of the views of Lewis on the problem of evil has been considered next under the heading of, the outcome of evil.

## V. THE OUTCOME OF EVIL

To present the views of Lewis on the outcome of evil

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<sup>45</sup> Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, op. cit., p. 134.

was a very difficult task because of a vagueness on his part at this point. A lack of a complete presentation in his writings on the subject of eschatology stands in the way of knowing his complete position.

There were, in the writings which we have from the pen of Lewis, indications of the present outcomes or results of evil and more specifically sin. He has shown that sin and evils which are avoidable have results which warrant a serious effort of restraint. Sin, willful disobedience, can only lead to more darkness and result in the loss of the power of restraint. He made the statement that "a sinner may be wholly indifferent with regard to his sin."<sup>46</sup> Within the context of this phrase we understand him to mean that such is the result of continued sin. He continued by saying,

Sinfulness involves spiritual loss. That much of punishment is inescapable, and it obtains whether the sinner realizes it or not. More positively, there are such results as the accusations of conscience, the fear and distrust of God, the withdrawal of the divine presence, the gradual enslavement of the will, the increasing indifference to things of the spirit--and all these results are to be regarded as punishments of sin.<sup>47</sup>

It also brings personal and social loss.

Selfishness carries its own penalty. The less you

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<sup>46</sup> Lewis, A Manual of Christian Beliefs, op. cit., pp. 53-4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 54-5.

care about God and others, the less you will be able to care. . . . The penalty that God attaches to sin as defined is that you become more and more satisfied with your own status. You are meant for God, but you leave him out of your life. That makes hell a possibility. To realize that you have lost God--and sooner or later the realization is inevitable--makes hell an actuality. There is no hell except as there are human souls. A soul that awakens to find itself alone has all the hell there is--but it is enough.

This sort of self-centeredness also involves suffering and loss for others. One is appalled when one stops to consider how individual sinfulness works itself out socially and materially.<sup>48</sup>

For Lewis this was, of course, only a small portion of the whole scope of evil. The outcome of sin or moral evil is only one phase of the whole problem.

The outcome of all evil or the principle of discreativity and of the Adversary was answered in the fourth Gospel for Lewis. He said that the author of this book

. . . conceived two worlds to which human life is relevant. One is the world in which evil is everywhere present and active, the other is the world which is above the reach of evil. In the first the will of God is perpetually challenged and hindered. In the second the will of God completely obtains. Yet it is only through the first that the second can be realized, just as it is in the area of the first that the actuality of the second is to be demonstrated. Life in the Spirit is not to be wholly separated from life in the flesh, any more than eternal life may proceed with no reference to transient life. To live the life of the Spirit in the conditions of the flesh, beset with the impact of evil, knowing continually the assaults of the Adversary--this is what the Son of God did; this, indeed, is the very meaning of the Incarnation. The creative entered the realm of the discreative to introduce into the realm of the discreative that which would eventually bring it into subjection. The victory of the Son of God

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

prognosticates the victory of all those who through his perfect Sonship find a sonship for themselves.<sup>49</sup>

Probably the most significant phrase of the whole paragraph was 'eventually bring it into subjection.' The term subjection does not in any sense mean complete destruction. He said, "Some touch of evil will remain even in the final universe, a touch of evil that is the mute testimony to the cost of the entire creative and redemptive process."<sup>50</sup> This, of course stands in agreement with his view of the eternal nature of the demonic discreativity, or Adversary.

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<sup>49</sup> Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, op. cit. pp. 192-3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

## CHAPTER V

### A COMPARISON OF THE THREE VIEWS

The material presented in this chapter is that of the comparison of those views already presented in chapters two, three, and four. The purpose of this study has been to study and compare objectively the views of these men. The material for the comparison is found in the study already made.

The method of procedure has been to make a comparison of the views of Fletcher, Brightman, and Lewis on each phase of the problem of evil as considered in the preceding chapters; that is, the nature of evil, the origin of evil, the purpose of evil, and the outcome of evil.

#### I. A COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF FLETCHER, BRIGHTMAN, AND LEWIS ON THE NATURE OF EVIL.

The comparison here has been made on three major points: First, the basic nature of evil; second, the problem of necessity; and third, the form of evil.

The basic nature of evil. Fletcher was of the opinion that evil is not basically inherent in the structure of things but is a positive something, entity, or relationship,<sup>1</sup> which has come into a perfectly ordered creation.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ante, p. 9.



His basis of authority for this position was the Bible.

Speaking of the scripture he said,

They open to us the mystery of the creation, the nature of God, angels, and man, the immortality of the soul, the end for which we are made, the origin and connexion of moral and natural evil, the vanity of this world, and the glory of the next.<sup>2</sup>

According to Brightman evil was a lack of coherence and a lack of completeness inherent in the very structure of the universe.<sup>3</sup> It has always been and probably always will be. It is dysteleological in its very nature.

Lewis said that evil was a necessary part of the process of life, and that it inheres in the very structure of existence.<sup>4</sup> It was, as with Brightman, a negation or lack of the good but it was more, too. It was a positive force of discreativity directed against the creativity of God.

The criterion of authority for both Brightman and Lewis was experience. Their postulates and assumptions concerning the nature of anything were drawn from what seems to them to be most coherent and logically consistent with experience.

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Fletcher, An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense (vol. II, The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher, 9 vols.; London: John Mason, 1859), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ante, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ante, p. 41.

The problem of necessity. Fletcher would say that evil in all its forms was absolutely unnecessary.

Brightman would not labor the point of necessity. He saw much of voluntary evil which is unnecessary but also accepted the reality of other-than-voluntary evil, necessitated or not it is still with us. His doctrine of the 'Given' would seem to presuppose the necessity of it, at least in some form.

Lewis saw evil as absolutely necessary. In the process of development nothing could be complete without it. Progress has been made in spite of evil and not because of it, yet this discreative force is a necessary part of the whole.

The form of evil. According to Fletcher evil was either natural or moral. Natural evil was all the disorder and destruction of the world, while moral evil was sin.

Brightman recognized the distinction of moral and natural evil but felt that it was an over-simplified distinction and that we need to make some distinctions between such things as, sin, ignorance, ugliness, irreverence, maladjustment, incompetence, and surd evil.<sup>5</sup> He has substituted terms voluntary and involuntary for moral and

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<sup>5</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, "Evil," An Encyclopedia of Religion (Vergilius Ferm, editor; New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 264.

natural.

Lewis, too, recognized the classification of moral and natural evil and used them in his writing because they are terms so widely used and understood. He was of the same opinion with Brightman that the scheme is too simple and he would rather use the terms, avoidable and inevitable. These were not exactly parallel terms with those of moral and natural but they better express his position.<sup>6</sup>

## II. A COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF FLETCHER, BRIGHTMAN, AND LEWIS ON THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

In the course of comparison of the views of these men on the origin of evil, two points are observed as revealing likenesses and differences. They are: the source of evil and the time of the origin of evil.

The source of evil. Fletcher has a very terse but profound statement of his position at this point when he said that man's free will was the cause of all evil. Natural evil is seen as the penal consequence of the disobedience of free agents.<sup>7</sup>

Brightman has devised a theory, that of the 'Given,' for an explanation of the source of evil in the world. He

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ante, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ante, p. 10.

posited it in the eternal nature of God, thereby, for him, relieving God of the responsibility of having created it. This 'Given' was the ultimate source of both moral and natural evil.

Lewis ventured a theory which was in a sense similar to that of Brightman. In fact, he recognized the idea of the 'Given' of Brightman as being a real fact only he places it outside of God<sup>8</sup> and as standing over against God in complete otherness. This 'Given,' which was termed by Lewis 'The Adversary,' is the source of all evil. It or he, the Adversary, is eternal and this relieves God of the responsibility of having created evil.

The time of the origin of evil. Fletcher saw the beginning of evil in the world in the garden of Eden. No definite chronology was set by Fletcher, but at least, its beginnings were traced to a time since the origin of man. There was, for him, a time when evil was not. There was a lack of development in his writings on Satanology or the place of evil before creation. The traditional view of Satan as a fallen angel seemed to be presupposed.<sup>9, 10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Edwin Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary (New York: The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense, op. cit., p. 404.

<sup>10</sup> John W. Fletcher, Fragments, Pastoral and Familiar Letters (vol. IX, The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher, 9 vols.; London: John Mason, 1860), pp. 62-3.

Brightman, holding as he does that the source of evil is within the nature of God, necessarily made evil eternal as God is eternal. There has been no time when evil was not because there has been no time when God was not.

Lewis saw the Adversary as eternal, which places the beginning of evil before time. Evil in the creation was seen as second in the sequence of creativity and discreativity because discreativity was dependent upon something created upon which to act. Lewis attempted to hold to the fact of a beginning but pushed it back far enough so that it is beyond human comprehension. He also held to the idea that one of God's eternal attributes is the necessity of creativity. There seems to be a metaphysical inconsistency here which needs some further explanation. Maybe the use of Ockam's razor would help.

### III. A COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF FLETCHER, BRIGHTMAN, AND LEWIS ON THE PURPOSE OF EVIL.

The likenesses and differences of the views of these men on the purpose of evil are best pointed up in noting first, the place of purpose within evil itself, *per se*; and second, the purpose evil fills in the world.

The purpose within evil itself, per se. A full development of this has not been found in the writings of Fletcher. Intimations may be drawn from his views on the

nature of evil: that is, it is a positive entity of perverseness or crookedness, which has for its purpose the perverting of the good. A number of places in his books seem to presuppose Satan, which traditional theology says has the purpose of destroying the works of God. These are not presented as Fletcher's statements but only inferred possibilities regarding the purpose of evil, per se. Fletcher has left some questions unanswered at this point.

Brightman saw evil as a lack of purpose and as dysteleological in its very nature. It was a drag upon the progress of creative evolution.

Lewis held that evil has a very definite purpose. Its purpose was that of discreativity. It seeks "to destroy what is created, since destructiveness is its very nature."<sup>11</sup>

The purpose evil fills in the world. Fletcher's interpretation of the scriptures was that evil is not necessary to God's plan of things and therefore served no basic purpose for God in the world. He does concede that pardoned or punished sin in the final end of things will answer the place of shadows to a picture. The purpose of natural evil in the world was to punish moral evil.

Brightman held that evil served no basic purpose in the world; but, that in spite of the fact that it is here,

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ante, p. 48.

if man will do his best, good will come from evil and righteousness from sin. He saw too, that some evil, in some respects, may serve as punishment for moral evil and in another respect it may be disciplinary to bring us to God.

Lewis' interpretation of evil as inevitable, at least made room for it to have a purpose. Because God does use evil to bring about good he was of the opinion that it can not be done in any other way, therefore, evil must serve some purpose in the process. In a few words he has said that evil is here, therefore it has a purpose in the economy of things.

#### IV. A COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF FLETCHER, BRIGHTMAN, AND LEWIS ON THE OUTCOME OF EVIL.

Two aspects of the outcome of evil have been the basis of the comparison of the views of these men. They are: first, the present outcomes of evil; and second, the eternal or final outcomes.

The present outcomes. According to Fletcher, the present outcomes of moral evil or sin were natural evil, death, both spiritual and physical, man's corrupt and lost estate, and the binding and blinding power of specific acts of sin. The present outcomes of natural evil were the decay and disorder of nature that we see on every hand.

The subject of present outcomes of evil did not seem

to occupy much of the time of Brightman. The consequences of sin were noted as being very bad but this thought was not developed. In his treatment of the subject of evil, natural evil occupied a far greater place than did moral evil. Natural evil was in reality, for Brightman, a present outcome of the principle of evil inherent in the universe.

Lewis, like Brightman, saw the natural disorder or evil to be the present outcome of evil, or the principle of discreativity. He said concerning moral evil, that it brings spiritual loss, both personal and social. The spiritual loss is the withdrawal of the divine presence because of self-centeredness and brings enslavement of the will. The personal phase is the individual loss of God from the life, which was for Lewis all the hell there is; and the social loss is that loss of benefit to others from individual self-centeredness.

The eternal or final outcome of evil. Fletcher held the traditional Biblical belief that the final outcome of evil is endless ruin, everlasting punishment, and eternal death. He believed in a state or place of misery called hell. This state or place is the abode of unbelievers after death. There is to be a complete separation of all evil from the new heaven and new earth promised to the believers.

Brightman was a bit doubtful as to whether evil will in every sense be completely eliminated because of the



eternal nature of the 'Given' in God. This is based on the supposition that this world as we know it is not coming to an abrupt end. It is rather a world of increased improvement to the place where inconsistency and incoherence are no more seen. The outcome of moral evil was not very well developed in his philosophy, but it seemed that he was in favor of annihilation of all those who were incapable of spiritual growth beyond this life. There seemed to be final judgment for individual sin.

Lewis saw the answer to the final outcome of evil in the Gospel according to John. He found there a picture of a new world above the reach of evil. He saw a complete subjection of the Adversary and the principle of discreativity. Yet even in that final world there was to remain a touch of evil as mute testimony of the cost of the process. Some place for evil seemed to be necessary because of the eternal nature of the Adversary and the principle of discreativity.

As to the final outcome of moral evil, Lewis, like Brightman, was not very clear. At places it would appear that he held to a universal salvation. This was, of course by inference, and not by any exact statement of his. This idea of universalism will also fit into his idea that the creation is only a conflict between God and the Adversary to prove God the greater. Others have felt, too, that Lewis

holds to universal salvation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Marvin Hayden, "A Critical Study of the Doctrine of Revelation as held by three Contemporary American Theologians--Georgia Harkness, Nels F. S. Ferre, and Edwin Lewis--in the Light of the Wesleyan View," (Unpublished Bachelor of Divinity Thesis, Western School of Religion, Portland, Oregon, 1950), p. 112.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### I. SUMMARY

The efforts of the author have been to examine and to compare the views of the three men--John W. Fletcher, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, and Edwin Lewis--on the Problem of Evil. These men have been studied because each represented a specific phase of so-called Christian thought. Such an examination and comparison of divergent opinion serves the purpose of causing one to examine more closely the basis upon which he has built his faith.

Fletcher, as an early Methodist, with the Bible as his basis of authority, viewed evil as something which has come into a perfectly ordered creation, because of the misuse of free will. It serves no basic purpose in the world. It had a beginning and shall have an end.

Brightman, as a contemporary liberal philosopher, with experience and coherency as his criterion, viewed evil as a lack of coherency, as dysteleological in nature and caused by 'A Given' in the nature of God. It is uncreated and therefore eternal. There has never been a time when it was not and probably will never be a time when it is not. There is hope in a continual improvement until evil is completely controlled.

Lewis, as a contemporary Methodist Theologian, with experience and a subjectively determined revelation as a criterion, viewed evil as a positive discreative force, backed by 'The Adversary.' Its purpose is to destroy the work of the Creator. Evil is uncreated because the Adversary, evil personified, is eternal. Evil has always been and in some sense always will be, although, there is to be in the future a full subjection of evil.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

Some general observations and conclusions have been made from this study concerning the problem of evil. It has been observed from all of these writers, as well as others, that it is a grave and important problem. Evil is to be treated as a reality and not mere illusion. No phase or angle of it should be ignored because it seems hard to understand.

An outstanding conclusion which has been brought from this study is that a person's basic philosophy controls his thinking on the Problem of Evil. Fletcher's acceptance of the Bible as the Revelation of God and its teachings as authoritative confines him to certain conclusions concerning the problem. Brightman's and Lewis' acceptance of the evolutionary hypothesis and the exclusion of the Bible as authoritative confines them to certain conclusions.

It was observed that there is a general agreement among theists that God should not be charged with creating evil. This fact alone is productive of many theories, especially when the Bible is not held as an objective standard of authority.

A final but important observation is that this study has revealed to the author that the doctrine of evil as John W. Fletcher has set it forth, answers more of the questions concerning the Problem of Evil than do the other theories.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for further study on the Problem of Evil. Conservative Christian Theology needs a well defined doctrine of evil. A Biblical study of the words used for evil and sin in both the Old and New Testaments in their original languages would help to answer many misconstrued concepts of the nature of evil.

A historical and descriptive resume of distinctive answers to the problem of evil would be helpful in combating the errors in contemporary thought, many of which are not new but only the reworking of some view already devised in the ages past.

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