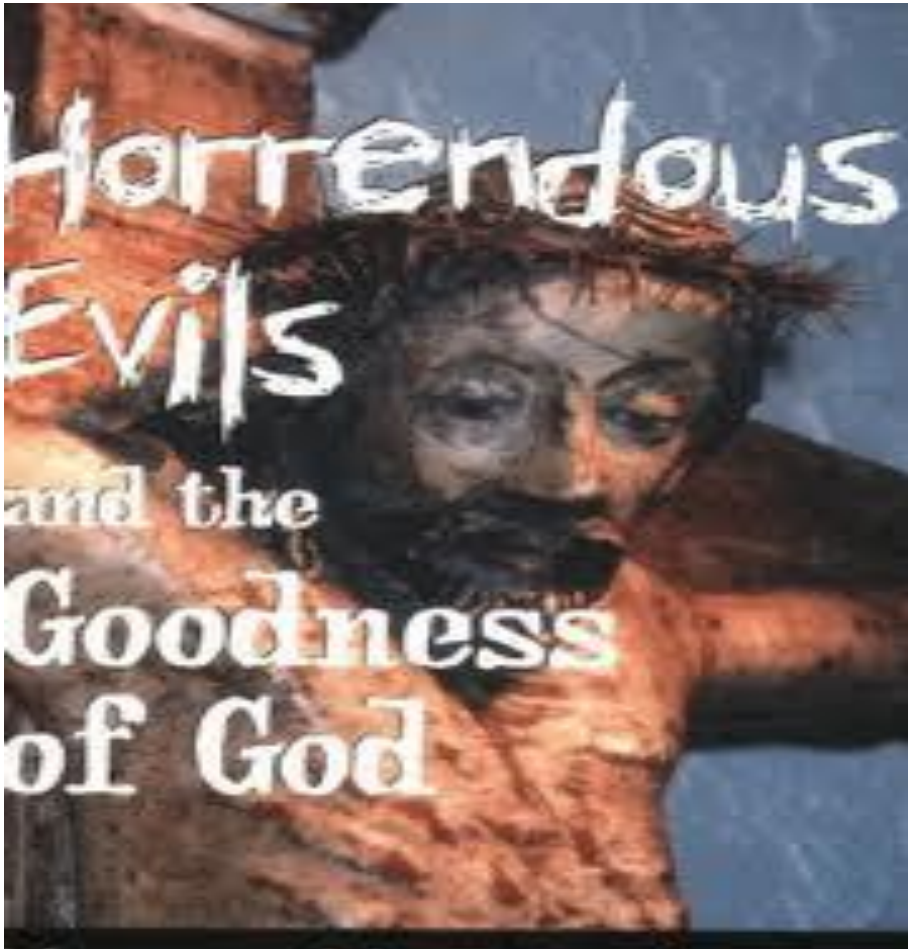


Horrendous Evils and Sufferings



The Eternal Beatific Vision

1 John 3:2 . . . We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

Revelation 21:3-7 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, 4 and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 "He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

The "Problem" of Evil and Suffering in the Presence of an All-knowing, All-good, All-loving, and All-powerful God (46):

Communion: Horrendous Evils/Sufferings Defeated by the Eternal Beatific Vision

<http://www.fbcweb.org/sermons.html>

Philosophical/Theological/Doctrinal & Spiritual Edification

Bible Doctrines

- Eschatology
- Thanatology
- Ecclesiology
- Israelology
- Dispensationalism
- Doxology
- Hodology
- Soteriology
- Hamartiology
- Natural Law
- Anthropology
- Angelology
- Pneumatology
- Christology
- Paterology
- Trinitarianism
- Cosmology
- Theology Proper
- Bibliology

Jesus Christ gained a full understanding of all these doctrines, and He lived His life in light of them to the glory of God. He then gave all of these doctrines to church age believers, John 16:12-15.

Contemporary Christianity bears little to no resemblance to authentic/doctrinal Christianity.

Prolegomena P.R. for objectivity (23) Foundations!

- Hermeneutics
- Linguistics
- Epistemology
- Metaphysics
- Reality -Logic 32, Truth 32

Jesus Christ was the consummate Philosophical Realist.

Broad and deep understanding of BD

1 Corinthians 2:9 but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And *which* have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.

Enough BD to be overcomer

1 John 2:14, I have written to you, young people, because you are strong, and God's word remains in you, and you have overcome the Evil One.

Basic doctrines

1 John 2:13, "I have written to you, little children, because you know the Father"

Mature Believer - Level 3- Metaphysical Maturity -

- Jesus Christ, 'Ehyeh, Esse, Ultimate Reality, Exod. 3:14; Jn 1:1; 8:57-58; John 17:5 "And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. Colossians 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Systematic believer, Level 2- Doctrinal conceptualization -

Systematic understanding of -- God's Word/Truth, e.g. Matthew 4:4 *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*

Baby believer - Level 1 -

- Limited to isolated Bible verses
- Unable to apply doctrine or divine viewpoint to *all* the issues of life
- Jesus Christ, Luke 2:40 *And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.*

Philosophical foundations of Jesus Christ



Word of God is alive and powerful

5- Christ's view of hermeneutics.



Objective meaning in Text

4- Christ's view of linguistics.



Consider His use and non-use of the LXX

3-Christ's view of epistemology:



Harmony of Reason and Faith

2- Christ's view of metaphysics.



'Ehyeh
Esse

1 -Christ's view of reality.



Logic Correspondence
 Truth

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1. The sole communion passage in the Church Age epistles is very instructive and always applicable (not mystical), 1 Cor. 11:17-34.
 - a. Note the doctrinal breakdown reflected in believers' attitudes, 17-22. There is always a tendency of churches to go downhill. It is crucial to remain diligent in growing in the Word of God. Pastor must never give in to "bad" attitudes with regard to Bible doctrine and the spiritual life, cf. Acts 20:28-33.
 - b. Communion, 23-26.
 - c. Note the breakdown in the believer's spiritual lives, 27-34.

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2. Note the emphasis of our Lord on the *future* with Him:

1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until He comes.**

Matthew 26:29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now **on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."**

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(Note the *future* emphasis of our Lord)

John 14:2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that **where I am, there you may be also.**

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3. It is pathological (deep and systemic disease) for a Christian to live for this life instead of his next life with the Lord,

Matthew 6:19-24.

Col. 3:1-4.

Rev. 3:14-21.

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4. The sufferings we experience in this world are a but a trifling compared to the incommensurate goodness which awaits us in the next life,

Romans 8:18 For I consider (Λογίζομαι) that the sufferings of this present time (τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ) are not worthy (οὐκ ἄξια) to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Philip 3:4-14.

5. Consider what it must mean for a person to have an anticipate of his future glory with Jesus Christ that is so great so as to make anything that he suffers in this life frivolous in comparison.

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6. It does no good for atheists (or any objectors of Christianity) to argue against Christianity because of the problem of evil and suffering (on the ground that the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, pleasure-maximizer is impossible with a world such as ours), because true Christianity was never about a God who was a pleasure-maximizer anyway. Consider what Christianity has to say about the love of God, the grace of God, and the suffering of God and man:

Romans 8:31-39.

Philip 2:5-11

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(Christianity is not impossible with suffering and evil)

Isaiah 53.

Matthew 27:27-46.

John 1:1-18.

2 Corinthians 5:19-21 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

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(Christianity is not impossible with suffering and evil)

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Acts 5:41, So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Matthew 5:11 "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. 12 "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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(Christianity is not impossible with suffering and evil)

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

1 Peter 4:13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

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(Christianity is not impossible with suffering and evil)

1 Peter 5:10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Romans 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

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(Christianity is not impossible with suffering and evil)

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

1 Thessalonians 2:14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,

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(Christianity is not impossible with suffering and evil)

2 Timothy 3:12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1 Peter 1:7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

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(Christianity is not impossible with suffering and evil)

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

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7. PTG. The empirical evidence is overwhelming that traumatic suffering (loss of loved one, cancer, rape, child abuse, betrayal) produces life-changing benefits that cannot be gained any other way. This phenomenon is known as posttraumatic growth (PTG). *Most* traumatic sufferers acknowledge the great benefits of traumatic suffering, especially in forcing them to reorder their identity and integrate, which is requisite for true love and capacity for life.

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8. However, what about those who have suffered such horrendous horrors that seem to preclude integration and focus on God? What makes these horrors so intractable is that there is a disintegration of one's personality and meaning of life that seems to preclude second-personal relationship with God.

9. To those who have experienced horrendous evils that are of such a magnitude that there is no earthly redemption, God more than compensates with the Beatific Vision. The compensation for the finite horrendous evil is infinite blessings of the Beatific Vision.

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10. Given the biblical and empirical evidence of the benefits of suffering in time and in eternity for those who respond appropriately, there is no reason whatever to think that an all-powerful and all-good God would prevent the suffering we see around us.
11. In fact, it is part of the infinite goodness of God that He should allow evil and suffering to exist, *and out of it produce good*.
12. Our lives in the here-and-now are but a trivial blink of the eye compared to eternity we are to enter, there is no limit to the good result that might be made in the next life of even the most horrendous evils we suffer in this one. For even the worst evils we suffer are finite.

Communion: Horrendous Evils/Sufferings Defeated by the Eternal Beatific Vision

13. Therefore there is every reason to think that God can and will bring out of the sufferings of this life a good that so overshadows evil and suffering that this life will be seen in retrospect to have been worth it.

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

14. Even the most horrendous horrors we can imagine in this life are insignificant when compared to the blessings and blessedness of the Beatific Vision.

Communion: Horrendous Evils/Sufferings Defeated by the Eternal Beatific Vision

15. The irrationality of the atheist and skeptics regarding horrendous evil being proof that there is no God goes something like this:
 - a. Since there is no God (argument by assertion) and thus no beatific vision, nothing could outweigh horrendous evils in this world.
 - b. In other words, the “logical” circle goes something like this, “There is no God, because look at the horrendous suffering that couldn’t possibly be outweighed by any good. How do I know there is no good that could outweigh it? Oh, because there is no God.”
 - c. To destroy the logical problem of evil (Mackie), all one has to do posit that God may very well have sufficient reasons for allowing the suffering.

Communion: Horrendous Evils/Sufferings Defeated by the Eternal Beatific Vision

16. Reason and the Bible point to a First Cause who is Being Himself, Goodness Himself, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all the rest, and that we have immortal souls.

17. Hence, reason and the Bible (not emotion) tells us that there is a God who created us for a destiny beyond this life and who is fully capable of guaranteeing that the good we attain in the next life far outweighs the evil we suffer in this one to such an extent that the latter, however awful from our present point of view, will come to seem, “not worth comparing” to the former, and indeed if anything will even be seen to have been worth having gone through from the point of view of eternity.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

1. Mortal man cannot see God as He is in Himself (Esse). This includes all the prophets and writers of Scripture.

John 1:18 No man has seen God at any time (Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε); the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained (ἐξηγήσατο) Him.

Exodus 33:20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me (אַל תִּרְאֶה אֶפְתָּחַי וְחַיֶּה) and live!"

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

2. The term *Beatific Vision*, face-to-face experience with God, comes from the word “beatitude” (μακάριοι, אֲשֵׁרִי), meaning “blessednesses” or “happinesses.”

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

3. The Beatific Vision is the blessed vision that Moses sought, God forbade, Jesus promised, and John described—it is seeing God face-to-face; it is seeing His very essence—just as He is as Esse.

1 John 3:2 . . . We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is (ὁψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστίν).

Revelation 22:4 and they shall see His face (God-man, Jesus Christ), and His name shall be on their foreheads.

Psalms 17:15 As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

4. The Beatific Vision is the ultimate fulfillment and experience of the believer as he directly sees Esse as He is: Esse!
5. The Beatific Vision is the ultimate direct act of self-communication of God to the individual.
6. The Beatific Vision transcends all human capacity, it is only possible by a supernatural act of God.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

7. All of our present knowledge of God is mediated.
 - a. Our knowledge of God is mediated through the Bible and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Our knowledge of God is mediated through analogical and metaphorical talk of God in the Bible. The only exception is God's proper name, 'Ehyeh/Esse, but even with that word we are unable to see Him fully. All language used of God (except for 'Ehyeh) is analogical or metaphorical, which means that we have only finite images about the infinite God.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

(All of our present knowledge of God is mediated)

- c. Our knowledge of God through reason and demonstration is mediated through empirical and rational proofs—through creation, Rom. 1:20, *for since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made"*
- d. Our knowledge of God through faith (sacred revelation) is mediated by trusting God's authority—for the truths of the Bible.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

8. The Beatific Vision of God is direct and unmediated.

1 John 3:2 We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

9. The Beatific Vision brings direct knowledge of God. This is seeing the very essence/Esse of God. It is not a likeness or a vision, if it were then the essence of God is not seen at all, which is false.

10. The Beatific Vision brings perfect knowledge. Our partial knowledge will be turned to whole knowledge; our incomplete understanding will be transformed into complete understanding. We will perfectly apprehend Him, though we will never completely comprehend Him.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

11. The Beatific Vision takes place through the operation of the intellect. The ultimate beatitude of man consists in the use of his highest function, which is the operation of his intellect. The Beatific Vision is accomplished by the grace of God as the mind abstracts Esse from the infinite “glory/form.”
12. It is not the physical eye that sees anything, let alone anything spiritual (cf. Eph. 1:17-18, “eyes of the heart”). The mind will extract from the glory of God the nature of Esse as He is in Himself—this will all be possible by the grace of God. No human being can see the essence of God by his own natural power. Physical eyes cannot see the immaterial. It is the mind that abstracts metaphysical realities and universals. Perhaps, “intellectual vision” is a good way of thinking of it.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

13. Although all believers will see the Beatific Vision, some will see it deeper and more perfectly than others. This is all related to God-given glory (1 Cor. 15:41,42) which is based on capacity gained in pre-mortem state. Though all will be perfectly happy, some will have bigger “cups” to fill.
14. The Beatific Vision Brings Perfect Love of God. The kind of love that God commands (Matt. 22:37-38) is never fully attained in this life, but it will be in the next. God is love and to know His essence is to know Him and to know Him is to love Him.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

15. The Beatific Vision makes sin impossible. Beholding Him with all of His glory will remove all attraction to or desire for sin or evil.

16. The Beatific Vision fulfills our freedom. We will be completely free as our first order wills are in accordance with our second order wills—this is the essence of self-determination: freedom from sinning. True freedom is not the freedom to do evil, but the freedom to do good. God is both free and unable to sin; it will likewise be for us when we are most godlike.

The Incommensurate Beatific Vision

17. The Beatific Vision Brings a Dynamic State of Perfection.

- a. We will be actively worshipping and serving Him, Rev 4-5; 22:3, 4.
- b. We will be enjoying Him rather than striving for Him.
- c. We will be treasuring what was found rather than seeking.
- d. Our minds will be active in rejoicing for infinite truth discovered rather than searching for truth.
- e. Our intellectual and spiritual action in heaven will delighting in the God we know perfectly and f Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. Fellowship with perfectly, Rev. 21:1-7.

Hymn by Carrie E. Breck

Face to face with Christ, my Savior,
Face to face—what will it be
When the rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ who died for me?

Face to face—O blissful moment!
Face to face—to see and know;
Face to face with my Redeemer,
Jesus Christ who loves me so.

Face to face I shall behold Him
Far beyond the starry sky.
Face to face in all His glory,
I shall see Him by and by.