

Abstract

Traditionally, Christians have held the two following beliefs: the belief that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good on the one hand and the belief that God has actualized a possible world in which some people freely reject Christ and are damned eternally, while others freely accept Him and are saved on the other. The combination of these two beliefs seems to result in a contradiction. This serious and well-known problem is called the soteriological problem of evil. In this article the author, on the basis of William Lane Craig's Molinist theory, argues that there is no contradiction between these beliefs and that, therefore, there is no soteriological problem of evil, unless one adds two premises. The theory of middle knowledge shows that there is no good reason to accept the second of these. Therefore, there is no contradiction between belief in a perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent God and the eternal damnation of some people in this world. This Molinist account is defended against some philosophical and theological objections that have been raised against it. Finally, the author tries to show that, although Craig's concept of transworld damnation is helpful to offer a defense of the compatibility of the two traditional Christian beliefs mentioned above, it does not help us to offer a theodicy of post-mortem evil.

Divine Foreknowledge and Eternal Damnation

The Theory of Middle Knowledge as Solution to the Soteriological Problem of Evil

Rik Peels, Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn, Boerhaavestraat 141, 7316 LG Apeldoorn (the Netherlands)

Preliminary Remarks

Traditionally, Christians have adhered to exclusivism, the view that there is only one way to be saved by God and that some people are damned eternally. Traditionally, Christians have also claimed that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. *Prima facie* these two beliefs seem to result in a contradiction, which is often called the *soteriological problem of evil* (SPE). In the first section of this article I will analyze this problem and show that the two orthodox beliefs result in a contradiction only if one adheres to two premises, one of which is dubious. I will presuppose that an orthodox Christian should not reject belief in a perfectly good and omnipotent God or belief in the eternal damnation of some persons and that, therefore, at least one of the added premises must be somehow crucially wanting. In the second section, I will show how the theory of middle knowledge or Molinism (MO), as explained by William Lane Craig, offers a solution to SPE.¹ In the third and fourth parts, I will critically investigate this solution respectively from a philosophical and theological point of view, although I have to admit that often an objection is both philosophical and theological. I will show that Craig's version of MO can be used as a defense, that Craig's theory is logically possible. However, I am also convinced that there are good reasons to think that it is

¹ The term "Molinism" refers to the basic tenets of the philosophical theology of Luis de Molina (1535-1600), a Spanish Jesuit theologian of the counter-Reformation. For his theory on divine foreknowledge and free will, see his *Liberi Arbitrii cum Gratiae Donis, Divina Praescientia, Providentia, Praedestinatione et Reprobatione Concordia*. A good English translation of the fourth part of this book is available: *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, transl. by Alfred J. FREDDOSO (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

not actually true. Therefore, in the fifth and last section, I will argue why Craig's concept of transworld damnation is implausible. In other words, I believe it can be used as a defense, but not as a theodicy.

I. The Soteriological Problem of Evil

As I already said in my introductory remarks, Christians traditionally adhere to the two following propositions:

- (1) God is omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent.
- (2) God has actualized a possible world (namely our world, W_α), in which some people freely reject Christ and are damned eternally, while all the others freely accept Him and are saved.

The combination of these two beliefs often evokes one or both of the following questions:

- A. Why did God not create a world in which everybody freely chooses to accept Christ, instead of creating a world in which some people are damned eternally?
- B. Why do some people who did not have the opportunity to hear of Christ and reject Him freely perish eternally, while they might have accepted Him freely, if they had been confronted with the gospel?

We have to notice two things with respect to these questions. First, they suggest that there are certain true (and probably also false) counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (CCF's), i.e. truths about what people would have done, if they had been in a situation different from the actual one. This presupposition seems quite plausible to me. Second, it is important to see that these two questions suggest that there is a contradiction between (1) and (2), or at least that it is hard to see how (1) and (2) are compatible. This problem is called the *soteriological problem of evil*. However, on some reflection it is clear that (1) and (2) do not result in a contradiction, unless we add the two following premises:

- (3) God could actualize a possible world in which everybody freely receives Christ and is saved by Him.
- (4) God prefers any actualized possible world in which no people fail to receive Christ to an actualized possible world in which some fail to receive Him.

Only if (1) - (4) are all true, we do have a clear contradiction, which can be shown in the following way:

- (5) If God prefers any actualized possible world in which no people fail to receive Christ to an actualized possible world in which some do fail to receive Him, and God could actualize a possible world in which everybody freely receives Christ and is saved by Him, then God, given his perfect goodness, must have actualized a possible world in which everybody freely receives Christ and is saved by Him [(1), (3), (4)].
- (6) God prefers any actualized possible world in which no people fail to receive Christ to an actualized possible world in which some fail to receive Him and God could actualize a possible world in which everybody freely receives Christ and is saved by Him [(3), (4)].
- (7) God has actualized a possible world in which everybody freely receives Christ and is saved by Him [(5), (6)].

- (8) God has actualized a possible world in which some people freely reject Christ and are damned eternally and in which everybody freely receives Christ and is saved by Him [(2), (7); RAA].²

If (5) is true - and it seems hard to deny that it is - then this *reductio ad absurdum* shows that one or more of the premises (1) - (4) has to be rejected. In this essay, I will presuppose that both (1) and (2) are central to orthodox Christian belief and cannot be rejected. I think it is absurd not to accept (1), since this is the main claim of Christian theism, and (2) seems to find strong support in Scripture. I will take exclusivism to be the view that (2) is true, a view that recently has been defended by several philosophers. Now it is claimed by inclusivists (those who assert that people belonging to some of the non-Christian religions are saved as well), pluralists (those who believe that many religions are different and good ways to honor the same God), and universalists (those who contend that in the end everybody will be saved) that (3) follows from God's omnipotence [(1)], while (4) follows from God's omnibenevolence [(1)]. Craig offers a version of MO that rejects this claim.

II. *The Theory of Middle Knowledge as Solution to the Soteriological Problem of Evil*

Let us now focus on the question how MO can solve SPE. In what follows I will concentrate on the particular version of MO which is offered by Craig. It is important to note, however, that a Molinist is not committed to this version. There might be (many) other different ways in which MO can deal with SPE. Here we do not have to deal with other versions, because, as I will try to show, Craig's version is sufficient to demonstrate that (1) and (2) are compatible. Let us now turn to that account. First, remember that premises (3) and (4) have to be added to (1) and (2) in order for their being contradictory.

Let us start with (3). In opposition to Craig I think that this premise is a plausible one. God could, for instance, actualize a possible world containing only those people that freely accept God on the basis of general revelation,³ independent of any one else. God could also actualize a possible world containing only those people that freely accept Christ in every world which is both possible and for God feasible. In both cases God would actualize a world in which everybody freely receives Christ and is saved by Him. So, (3) seems true, but what about (4)? It is not clear to me at all how (4) follows from (1). It seems possible that God prefers a world in which great amounts of people are converted and some or even many people are damned eternally to a world in which just a few or none are converted and nobody is damned.⁴ Perhaps the joy of salvation by Christ's atoning death is vastly bigger than the

² Strictly spoken, this only follows if one adds the presupposition that God has actualized not more than one possible world. This is an extremely plausible presupposition with which almost everybody agrees; the problem, as it seems, must be with (3) or (4) or both.

³ I take 'general revelation' to be both what John Calvin called the *sensus divinitatis* and the way God reveals Himself to humankind in nature. Cf. David P. HUNT, "Middle Knowledge and the Soteriological Problem of Evil," in *Middle Knowledge: Theory and Applications*, ed. by William HASKER, David BASINGER, and Eef DEKKER (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 248.

⁴ Cf. William HASKER, "Middle Knowledge and the Damnation of the Heathen: A Response to William Craig," in *Faith and Philosophy* 8.2 (1991), 381. See also Raymond L. VANARRAGON, "Transworld Damnation and Craig's Contentious Suggestion," in *Faith and Philosophy* 18.2 (2001), 242-243. For a more elaborate explanation by Craig himself, see his *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 145-151.

evil of (great amounts of) people being damned eternally. And as long as (4) is not true, it has not been shown that (1) and (2) are incompatible. However, can we also show that they are in fact compatible? Like Craig, I think we can, for it seems possible that the balance in the actual world W_α between those who are saved and those who are lost is the best feasible balance possible.⁵ This would mean that, (a) if there were less people in hell, then there would not be enough people in heaven, and (b) if there were more people in heaven, then there would be too many people in hell. In this way the first question we asked at the beginning of the first section can be answered. But what about the second one? Why do people who did not hear of Christ and reject Him freely perish eternally, while in other possible worlds they would have freely accepted Christ, if the gospel had been preached to them? In order to answer this question, let us consider the following proposition:

- (9) It is possible that there be a certain group of people G that in every world, which is feasible for God, freely reject salvation through Christ.

This proposition seems quite plausible, especially if one realizes that there is an infinite amount of individual essences that God could instantiate. But (9) says the same as:

- (10) It is possible that there be no possible worlds that are feasible for God, in which members of G freely accept Christ and are saved.

This means that it is possible that there be a group of people that will not be saved, if God were to create them. Now, the Molinist can answer the second question. The answer is that it is possible that those people that freely reject Christ in W_α , but freely accept Him in some other possible world do not exist. In other words, it seems possible that in our world the people who freely reject Christ without ‘special revelation,’ God’s word as found in the Old and New Testaments, would have done the same thing, if they had received Scripture. It seems possible that God choose not to create people who would have freely rejected Him on the basis of ‘general revelation’, but who would have freely accepted Christ if they had received Scripture. This is not to say that the individual essences of the people described in the second question do not exist; the fact is that their individual essences are not instantiated. In Craigian terminology, we can say that those people who never hear of Christ in W_α and are damned eternally suffer from *transworld damnation*: they freely reject Christ in every feasible possible world.⁶ In other words, according to Craig’s account, some person S has the property of ‘being transworldly damned’ if and only if S has the property of being such that in every possible world which is feasible for God S freely rejects Christ. VanArragon does not think that this definition, which he calls TDF, will work in a theodicy. I agree with him, but TDF suffices for us to offer a mere defense.⁷

⁵ This might remind us of Leibniz’s claim that we live in the best world possible. We have to notice, however, that there is a crucial difference between Craig’s account of MO and Leibniz’s view: while Leibniz claims that we live in the best world possible, this particular version of MO says that we live in the best world possible *that is feasible for God*. This means that there might be other worlds which are (much) better than this one, but that those worlds are not feasible for God.

⁶ So, Hunt is wrong, when he says: “A person suffers from transworld damnation if there are *no* conditions under which the person would freely accept Christ.” (David P. Hunt (see above, n. 3, 253)) There are such conditions, but they are not feasible for God.

⁷ Cf. Raymond L. VANARRAGON (see above, n. 4), 250. VanArragon himself proposes TDS₂, the “property of being such that, for every *moderately* (or less) *persuasive* situation in which

Now we are able to answer the two questions we asked at the beginning of section I. God created a world in which some people perish for ever, because there is no better world that God could actualize, in which less people would not be saved. In other words, God did not create a world in which everybody freely accepts Christ, because that would not be the best world God could actualize, since there would not be the amount of people God wants to be saved in the way He wants them to be saved (in that particular world a smaller amount of people would be saved than God wants to be saved and/or in a significantly less glorious and for God pleasing way). It is even possible that those who are damned eternally are needed for the salvation of others in W_α . In response to the second question, we can say that these sort of people do not exist, since God, in his perfect providence, has arranged the world in such a way, that everybody who would receive Christ, if supplied with special revelation, but would not receive Christ if only supplied with general revelation, is in fact evangelized in some way.

It is important to note that I do not claim that this is in fact the truth (in opposition to Craig, I am convinced that it is false; I will argue for this view in the last section of this paper).⁸ It is sufficient for the Molinist to claim that it is possible and as long as this account is possible it is false that God's omnipotence, foreknowledge, and perfect goodness contradict the fact that some people are eternally damned. In other words, I do not claim to be offering a *theodicy*; I only offer a *defense* of the compossibility of the existence of God and the fact that some people are damned eternally. Although there might be other versions of MO, for practical purposes I will talk about Craig's version as the Molinist solution to SPE. Let us now turn to some philosophical objections to this view.

III. Philosophical Objections to the Molinist Solution

I. First Objection

The first objection is an objection to the Molinist claim that W_α has an optimal balance and that, if God had not created those who freely choose not to accept Christ, W_α might have been significantly different with respect to the fate of those who in W_α freely accept Christ. The objection is that there might be noticeable differences, but that this does not mean that there are significant differences with respect to the actions and decisions of those people who freely accept Christ in W_α . Rather, it seems that those who freely reject Christ do not have any influence on the eternal destination of those who freely accept Christ. I do not think this objection is a serious threat, for it seems possible, for instance, that there are some people who only convert to Christianity, if they see both the fate of believers and non-believers. By his middle knowledge (MK) of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (CCF's) God knows that the existence of those who are damned eternally has many other causal connections to the total 'goodness' of W_α , connections we, as human beings, do not know about (or perhaps cannot even think about, because they are too complicated). Again, of course God might have decided not to create this category of people that suffer from transworld damnation, so that there would not have been this kind of post-mortem evil, but apparently God wanted the

one's essence might be instantiated and one left free with respect to accepting Christ, one would in fact freely not accept Christ in that situation." I do not have space here to elaborate this claim, but I doubt whether TDS₂, any better than TDF, can be used to offer a theodicy of postmortem evil.

⁸ For Craig's claim that this account is not only possible, but also plausible – a claim which he does not really defend – see William L. CRAIG, ““No Other Name”: A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation through Christ,” in *Faith and Philosophy* 6.2 (1989), 186.

people that are saved in W_α to be saved and to be saved in the way that they are saved. I conclude that this first objection is seriously wanting.⁹

2. *Second Objection*

I am not sure whether this second objection is not a theological rather than a philosophical objection, but since Hunt himself presents it as a “metaphysical objection” I will take it to be a philosophical argument. Let me summarize the objection as follows:

- (11) If God has middle knowledge, i.e. if God knows which of the subjunctive conditionals with respect to choices of human beings (CCF’s) are true independently of which pre-mortem world is actual, then there is no good reason for God not to actualize the eternal destiny of the saved immediately, so that pre-mortem and postmortem evil do not have to exist.¹⁰

This is an attractive position, since, reasoning from the Molinist point of view, it questions the whole *raison d’être* of evil, a phenomenon which is quite strongly present in our world and probably also in postmortem existence (at least for some people). Attractive as it may be, however, it has one disadvantage: it is false. The reason that (11) is false is that the existence of W_α has a value for God that ‘overrides’ the evil that the same world contains: those who are saved in W_α are *really* saved. They did sin, they repented, and they freely choose to accept Christ. If God never created a world but choose his children on the basis of his knowledge of true CCF’s, his children would be elected children, but not saved children and apparently God prefers children of his that are both elected and saved (otherwise He could easily have created a world without the existence of free will). However, Hunt disagrees for two reasons. First, many lives are too brief to provide the valuable grounding in a pre-mortem life. It is not a solution to say that God knows whether those people who die prematurely would have freely accepted or freely rejected Christ, for this seems to imply that everybody could live a post-mortem life on the basis of true CCF’s which are known by God. Second, MO implies that the pre-mortem existence of the saved entails the pre-mortem existence of the damned and this is implausible, because the same ‘optimal balance’ could be realized by the Simulacrum Strategy: God could create simulacra (zombies) instead of evil doing non-believers to make the same optimal balance in the world, a view which is also defended by Thomas Talbott.¹¹ I think both reasons are deficient. Let us start with the second. First, if this were true, God would deceive us, which clearly contradicts his perfect goodness. One could object, however, that if God in his perfect goodness allows evil for a higher purpose, there is no good reason to think that God could not deceive us for a higher purpose. Again, I disagree: there is a significant difference between these two. In the first case, God *permits* evil, while in the second case He *commits* evil, i.e. He does evil Himself, and in opposition to the former the latter clearly contradicts the main Christian doctrine as formulated in (1). Let us now turn to the first reason, the idea that some people’s lives are too short to provide a grounding in W_α for the world to come. In my view, this objection does not apply to MO, for MO does not claim that those people who die prematurely are damned eternally. It only claims that those people who *freely reject Christ* are damned eternally (and transworldly).

⁹ For the same sort of answer to this objection, see Charles SEYMOUR, “A Craigian Theodicy of Hell,” in *Faith and Philosophy* 17.1 (2000), 105-108.

¹⁰ Cf. David P. HUNT (see above, n. 3), 261.

¹¹ Cf. David P. HUNT (see above, n. 3), 264. For Thomas TALBOTT’s view see his “Craig on the Possibility of Damnation,” in *Religious Studies* 28 (1992), 506–507.

3. Third Objection

The third and last philosophical objection is an objection with respect to the Molinist answer to the second question mentioned in section 1.¹² For it seems that, from the Molinist point of view, the following proposition is extremely probable:

- (12) There exist some persons *S* and *T* such that (a) *S* will freely choose whether or not to preach the gospel to *T*, and (b) if *S* were to preach the gospel to *T*, it would be the case that, if *S* were to preach to *T*, she would freely accept salvation, whereas (c) if *S* were not to preach the gospel to *T*, she would suffer from transworld damnation and it would not be the case that, if *S* were to preach to *T*, she would freely accept salvation.

If this were true, however, then the Molinist would have a serious problem, for how can the fact that *T* is or is not transworldly damned be dependent on *S*'s contingent action? Is it not an essential element of MO that CCF's are true or false before God's creative act of will (CAW)? How can the fact that *T* is transworldly damned depend on a contingent free action of *S*? That the Molinist did not see this problem before, so the argument goes, is probably due to the fact that all examples given by Molinists are *retrospective*, while this example is *prospective*. Hasker rightly thinks that there is a solution, namely rejecting the following assumption:

- (13) Most of those who freely accept Christ and are saved would not have been saved had the gospel not been brought to them.

In order to avoid the problem one has to deny (13) and claim that those who freely accept Christ and are saved probably would have been saved, even if nobody had ever brought them the gospel. One could claim, for instance, that, if *T* is saved by *S*'s preaching, then she would have been saved by someone else's bringing the gospel to her, if *T* had not done it. From this, however, it follows that there is no need for evangelization and this clearly contradicts Craig's view – and, I suspect, the view of the great majority of Christians – that each of us has responsibility to bring the gospel to the people we can reach. Fortunately, I think the Molinist does not have to reject (13), for she does not have to accept (12). She can reject that such a person as *T* exists. For, via his foreknowledge God knows in advance whether *S* will bring the gospel to *T* or not. If God knows that *S* will bring the gospel to some person *T*, then He arranges the world in such a way that either *T* will be converted or that that person is in fact a person who is transworldly damned (if there is no other opportunity for *T* than to be converted by *S*'s bringing the gospel to her). If God knows that *S* will not bring the gospel to *T* (nor anyone else), then He arranges the world in such a way that person *T* is a person who is transworldly damned. In other words: God knows in advance whether *S* will bring the gospel to *T* and therefore arranges things in accordance with *S*'s bringing or not bringing the gospel to *T*. Therefore, we do not have to presuppose that the *T* of (12)-b and (12)-c are the same *T*; they might very well be different persons.¹³ I conclude that the most important philosophical objections against the Molinist solution to SPE crucially fail. However, perhaps there are strong theological objections, objections that an orthodox Christian should take seriously. To these objections we turn in the following section.

¹² For this objection see William HASKER (see above, n. 4), 384-385.

¹³ For this line of response, see William L. CRAIG, "Should Peter God to the Mission Field," in *Faith and Philosophy* 10.2 (1993), 261-265.

IV. Theological Objections to the Molinist Solution

1. First Objection

The first objection is Hunt's objection, which can be formulated as follows:

- (14) If *S* freely rejects Christ in any possible world, then any attempt to evangelize *S* is futile.

And the fact that there are many *S*'s in W_α takes away an important incentive to bring the gospel to those, who do not know Jesus Christ (and perhaps also to those who already know Him, but freely refuse to accept Him so far). Hunt rightly points out that heaven is inhabited by only one of the following categories of people:

1. Those who are saved transworldly, where 'being saved transworldly' is the property of being such that there is no possible and for God feasible world in which one is not saved.
2. Those who are saved contingently. Heaven is inhabited by people that are such that they are saved in W_α , but are not saved in at least one other possible world.
3. A mix of those who are saved transworldly and those who are saved contingently.¹⁴

The problem, according to Hunt, is that, if there are such people as those in category one, then it does not matter whether I will bring them the gospel or not; they will freely accept Christ anyway. So, it does not make any sense to bring the gospel to those that are transworldly damned and/or to those that are transworldly saved, for they will respectively freely reject and freely accept Christ, even if I do not bring them the gospel. I agree with Hunt that if the people of category 1 really exist, they will accept Christ, even if I do not bring them the gospel (the latter fact being foreknown by God). But does it follow from that that I do not have the responsibility to bring the gospel to as many people as I can in my environment? I, as a human being, do not know which people in my environment will be saved transworldly, saved contingently, damned transworldly, or damned contingently. If I see a little girl that cannot swim fall into the river, but do not try to save her, since then my coffee will become cold, and if that same little girl is saved by someone else, then does it follow that I am morally blameless? Not at all, and the same applies to the case of those who are saved transworldly: if I do not bring them the gospel, while I could have done it, and someone else does it in my place, then I am still guilty for not having evangelized them. And those who are saved transworldly have to be saved *somehow*, so my bringing them the gospel might be a good way. And perhaps God has organized things in such a way that we do not spend too much time trying to convert those who are transworldly damned, and, therefore, will freely reject Christ anyway.

2. Second Objection

Myers criticizes Craig's view that his account can be used as a theodicy for SPE, but this objection also casts a gloom over Craig's account as a defense.¹⁵ Therefore, I will show why I am not convinced by it. Myers claims that Craig's account is based on questionable theological assumptions. In order to show this, he (rightly) distinguishes the following three

¹⁴ Cf. David P. HUNT (see above, n. 3), 259.

¹⁵ Cf. David B. MYERS, "Exclusivism, Eternal Damnation, and the Problem of Evil: A Critique of Craig's Molinist Soteriological Theodicy," in *Religious Studies* 39 (2003), 407-419. For a reply to this article, see William L. CRAIG, "Response to David Myers," in *Religious Studies* 39 (2003), 421-426.

categories of non-believers. First, there are *uninformed non-believers*: those who are ignorant of Christ and never have an opportunity to accept or reject Him. Second, there are *informed conventional non-believers*: those who, although aware of the salvific role attributed to Jesus, reject Christ because they grow up in and uncritically accept another religious tradition. And third, there are *informed reflective non-believers*: those who after some hard thinking deliberately reject Christ. According to Myers, Craig must claim that no one ever freely rejects Christ for merely evidential or intellectual reasons. Focusing on the third category, Myers asserts that it is possible that there are fully informed and reflective persons, certain Muslims for instance, who freely reject Christ on a purely cognitive basis. Therefore, Craig cannot claim that all non-believers are culpable. If the evidence for the existence of God in general or special revelation were compelling, then the acceptance of Christ does not seem to be a free decision. Craig needs to appeal to original sin in order to make the claims he makes and he needs to claim that those people who deliberately reject Christ on an intellectual basis do this because they love darkness rather than light - that they want nothing to do with God. And this seems to imply that we have to call into question the character of all non-Christians, even if they are completely rational. And this, Myers says, seems absurd. The claims Craig makes are dogmatic and not philosophical. Therefore, Craig's account begs the question. Moreover, if the people in the third category are not culpable, then the people of the first and second category are not culpable either, since they virtually reject Christ (i.e. they would have done the same as the people in the third category, if they had been in the same situation).

I am not sure whether this is an objection to MO. It seems rather an argument against the view that those people who reject Christ on merely intellectual grounds are culpable. However, Myers presents it as an argument against MO, and therefore, I will take it seriously. First, we have to notice that Craig's account does not crucially rely on the doctrine of original sin. One could easily claim that there is such a thing as universal sin: everybody performs at least one sinful action during his life, without this having anything to do with someone else's sin. Second, even if Craig's account were to rely on some dubious theological doctrines, what would follow from that? Are there not many people who deny that there is such a person as God, that there is such a thing as salvation, or that there is such a thing as personal faith? In philosophy of religion everybody relies on certain theological assumptions that are highly controversial. In order to show that Craig is false, Myers would have to show why Craig's theological presuppositions are false or implausible. But what about the informed non-believers, who reject Christ on a purely cognitive basis? I do not think these people exist: everybody who freely rejects Christ, rejects Christ against the *sensus divinitatis* and perhaps also against the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. This *sensus divinitatis* is sufficient to defeat apparent evidence against Christian belief. So, the evidence might be insufficient to come to believe in Christ, but in general the *sensus divinitatis* is sufficient (and if it is not sufficient, then the person in question is not culpable with respect to rejecting God freely). However, it seems that this argument can be turned against the Molinist account, for "[i]f it is justifiable for a Christian to reject the claim that Allah is drawing on her heart, I think that is equally justifiable for a reflective non-Christian to do the same with respect to the asserted Triune God."¹⁶ I disagree. Does it follow from the fact that I am justified in rejecting the claim that I see some red object in front of me that someone else (let us say Abdullah in Afghanistan) is justified in rejecting the claim that he sees some green object in front of him? Of course not. Whether I am justified in rejecting the claim that I see something red in front of me depends on the question whether I am 'appeared to redly' and whether Abdullah is justified in rejecting the claim that he sees something green in front of him depends on the question whether he is 'appeared to greenly'. In the same way whether a Muslim is justified in

¹⁶ David B. MYERS, "Rejoinder to William Lane Craig," in *Religious Studies* 39 (2003), 430.

believing that he is experiencing the internal instigation of Allah's spirit depends on whether he is in fact experiencing something like that and a Christian could deny this (because he could think, for instance, that there is no such thing as Allah's spirit). Myers may be right that we cannot establish this difference on rational grounds, but not much follows from that.

3. Third Objection

According to Hunt, Scripture contradicts the idea that all those who are never faced with special revelation, would reject Christ in any possible world in which the gospel is brought to them. He refers to Matt 11:21: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." In response to this objection, I would like to say that I do not see any reason to take this text literally: perhaps Jesus is using metaphorical language, referring to paradigmatic cities, to warn Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum. However, even if we should take it literally, it does not say that those people in Sidon, Sodom, and Tyre would be saved, if placed in the actual circumstances of Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum. It only says that they would (temporally) repent and that Sodom would not be destroyed. This, however, is significantly different from honoring and having faith in God on the basis of general or special revelation. I conclude that the main theological objections against MO as solution to SPE are as wanting as the philosophical ones.

V. Why We Cannot Use the Concept of Transworld Damnation for a Theodicy of Post-Mortem Evil

We can conclude that the account of MO, as offered by William Lane Craig, can be used as a solution to SPE. Therefore, (1) and (2) are clearly not incompatible. The most important philosophical and theological objections crucially fail; Craig's view can be used as a defense. I doubt, however, that it can be used as a theodicy, for the answers to questions A and B seem both implausible to me. It just does not seem to be true that the people who perish eternally in W_α - which, according to Craig, might even be the majority of the human race - are all somehow needed for the salvation of others and the total goodness of the world. Cases in which people are converted because other people are or remain (obviously) unconverted seem highly exceptional. If Scripture were to suggest that only very few people are damned eternally, this might not be a problem, but Scripture seems to suggest that there will be many people who are damned eternally (something which Craig himself clearly acknowledges; he even seems to make the stronger claim that Scripture suggests that the majority of people will be damned eternally). Also, it just does not seem very plausible to think that those who are damned eternally are transworldly damned. It does not even seem right to me that there is one single person who has this property. Would one really think that there are persons who would freely reject Christ under *any* circumstances God could create? Does it not seem to be true that for any existing person God could, without removing that person's free will with regard to choosing in favor or against God, create some (perhaps very exceptional) circumstances in which that person would accept God?

Fortunately, we do not need transworld damnation as a plausible theory. One of the central questions with regard to the eternal damnation of some people is the following: what does it mean for someone to be guilty, so that one deserves eternal punishment? Craig's answer seems to be that guilt is that one has freely rejected Christ (in W_α and in every other possible feasible world), but this is not entirely correct. People are guilty (and therefore punished) for their sins. Traditionally, Christians have often made an even stronger claim: the sins of people *have to be* punished, because God is not only good; He is also just. The only

crucial difference between believers and non-believers is that non-believers have to suffer the punishment themselves, while Christ is punished instead of the believers. Thus, in both cases the punishment for sin has to be and is in fact exercised. That the believers are not punished themselves is due to the fact that they honor, serve, and fear God. The presence of general revelation, especially the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, is sufficient to deprive one of every excuse (even if one accepts God in another possible and for God feasible world or other and for God feasible worlds); it has pleased God to actualize this world and everybody who rejects Christ rejects Him freely. The same can be said about those who do have special revelation, but reject Christ on the basis of tradition or rational argumentation; they freely reject Christ and have to suffer the punishment they deserve. The opposite can be said about the faithful: perhaps there are other worlds in which they freely reject Christ. However, it has pleased God to actualize this world and it is man's responsibility to accept God on the basis of general revelation or God in Christ on the basis of special revelation and believers have in fact done this. I think this is a coherent picture, but it evokes the question why God has chosen to actualize this world, of which He knew in advance (by his MK of CCF's) that some people would freely reject Him, while others would freely accept Him. And here, I think, we meet with God's predestination: before the creation of the world, God has predestined some people to be his children, while others are not predestined by Him to be his children. What Craig in fact does, is explaining the second part of God's predestination: God did elect not the people who are eternally damned in this possible world, because He has chosen to actualize transworldly damned people. As we have seen this is possible, although not plausible. Therefore, I would like to stop questioning as soon as we reach the motives or reasons for God's predestination. Perhaps there are good reasons for God's electing certain people, while not electing others, but these reasons are unknown to us and all the reasons we can offer seem to me to be mere guesses. It seems not only possible, but even plausible to me that those who are damned eternally are saved in other possible and for God feasible worlds. Perhaps Craig would consider this view to be an Augustinian-Calvinist solution, which "makes the damnation of the lost the result of God's choice, which seems abhorrent,"¹⁷ but the same can be said about his own account: God choose to save certain people that He wanted to be saved, thereby indirectly choosing other people that would be lost (perhaps there are many other transworldly damned people that are not instantiated and accept Christ in more possible infeasible worlds). I think we do not need transworld damnation as a plausible theory, because it is a possible but implausible answer to a question that we do not need to ask. The standards of God's justice are often different from ours and sometimes incomprehensible for us. When God gives the same daily wage to all the laborers of the vineyard, although some of them worked much longer than others, He asks: "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?" (Matt 20:15). Better than guessing for reasons for God's predestination is rejoicing in the fact that "He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph 1:5). The concept of transworld damnation can be used fruitfully as a defense of the compatibility of (1) and (2), but we will have to reject it as a theodicy of post-mortem evil.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cf. William L. CRAIG (see above, n. 13), 265.

¹⁸ One question, which I did not try to answer in this paper, is whether God's perfect goodness is compatible with some people being damned *eternally*. Does it not follow from God's perfectly good nature that He would give such people a second (and third, and fourth, and so on) chance to choose in favor of Him or that He would choose to annihilate those people? These questions are both intriguing and extremely difficult; they deserve a separate and extensive treatment.

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