



ISSN (Print) 1225-4924, ISSN (Online) 2508-3104

Catholic Theology and Thought in Asia, Vol. 83, July 2019<http://dx.doi.org/10.21731/cat.2019.83.160>

A Critical Approach to Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* Argument*

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In his *Felix Culpa* Argument, Alvin Plantinga aims to prove that God is justified to create a world where sin and suffering exist in spite of his omnipotence and perfect goodness. According to Plantinga, God aims to create an extremely good world; but, what make this world extremely good are no other than divine incarnation and atonement; therefore, since sin and suffering in this world are necessary conditions for divine incarnation and atonement, God's allowing sin and suffering is justified in the sense that God achieves his ultimate

* This research paper is commissioned, supported, and originally published by the Foundation of Theology and Thought, 2019.

goal of creation by means of them. In this paper, while critically considering Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* argument¹, I aim to show that his argument does not successfully defend God's allowing sin and suffering.

In judging whether the *Felix Culpa* argument successfully defends God, it is necessary to understand that, in this argument, Plantinga intends to present a 'theodicy,'² which is quite different from his related argument, "the Free Will Defense."³ According to Plantinga, while a defense aims to show the logical possibility of the compatibility between the existence of evil and suffering and the existence of

¹ Alvin Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Peter van Inwagen (Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 1-25. Concerning the expression '*felix culpa*,' Plantinga cites the words of the Roman Catholic Easter Vigil liturgy: "*O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem*" (Alvin Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 12). The same expression appears in *ST III*, q.1, a.3, ad.3, where Aquinas claims that God allows sin and suffering to bring about a greater good. However, in this article in *Summa*, Aquinas does not argue for something equivalent to Plantinga's line of thought, that is, sin and suffering are morally justified as necessary conditions for divine atonement.

² A theodicy is distinguished from a defense. According to Plantinga, the former aims to show "what God's reason for permitting evil *really* is," while the latter deals with the issue of "what God's reason *might possibly be*" [Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 28]. Thus, a defender does not need to claim that his theory that explains God's reason for allowing suffering is *in fact* true; for he aims only to show that it is not logically impossible for God to allow suffering for some morally sufficient reason. In other words, a defender would take his theory successful if only it shows that it is possible for God to have some morally sufficient reason for allowing suffering. Also, Peter van Inwagen seems to distinguish theodicy and defense in a similar way in Peter van Inwagen, "The Problem of Evil, the Problem of Air, and the Problem of Silence," in *God, Knowledge, and Mystery: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Cornell University Press, 1995), 66-95. According to van Inwagen, the notion of 'defense' was introduced in the context of refuting the logical argument from evil; thus, it is a story that justifies God's allowing suffering in such a way that "there is no reason to believe that it is impossible in the broadly logical sense" (van Inwagen, "The Problem of Evil," 74). Thus, "a defense obviously need not be a theodicy in the evidentialist's sense, for the probability of a defense need not be high on theism" (van Inwagen, "The Problem of Evil," 74). In this paper, I will roughly follow this line of distinction. For a justificatory theory to be a theodicy, the story itself needs to be highly likely; on the other hand, for a story to be a defense, it only needs to be such that there is no clear reason not to believe its logical possibility.

³ To understand this argument in detail, see Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*.

a perfectly good God, a theodicy needs to present a highly likely answer to the question, “how should Christians think about evil.”⁴ Thus, for the *Felix Culpa* argument to be successful, its conclusion needs to be highly likely as well as logically possible.⁵

Thus considered, I find that the *Felix Culpa* argument is not plausible enough to be a successful theodicy, ultimately because of its implicit assumption of consequentialism, the impersonal principle of maximization: According to this principle, God is morally justified to allow some individuals to sin and suffer, when it contributes to the infinite good of the world as a whole.⁶ It seems quite obvious that

⁴ Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 5. Since what Plantinga aims to show through his *Felix Culpa* argument is distinct from what he intends to prove in his Free Will Defense, the *Felix Culpa* argument is not supposed to replace the Free Will Defense. In fact, Plantinga implies that these two theories of his are compatible with each other [Alvin Plantinga, “Transworld Depravity, Transworld Sanctity & Uncooperative Essences,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 78 (2009): 178-179].

⁵ However, Plantinga does not imply that the *Felix Culpa* argument needs to come up with a specific kind of good that would justify God’s allowing suffering. According to him, this argument is distinct from the sort of response that “specifies some particular kind of good and suggests that God could not have created a world displaying that kind of good without permitting evil” (Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 4).

⁶ I take this assumption as consequentialism, not in the sense that every consequentialist would agree with this assumption, but in the sense that among ethical theories, consequentialism is the one where this claim finds its proper support. For example, some may argue that, even on consequentialism, God is not simply justified to sacrifice some individuals for the sake of the whole world since “outcomes are to be ranked in terms of not only *how much well-being* they contain but also *how equally or fairly* it is distributed” [Brad Hooker, “Rule-Consequentialism,” *Mind* 99 (1990): 68; emphasis added]. According to this version of consequentialism, if God pursues the increase of the net value of the world by sacrificing some individuals, the consequent world may still not be the best possible world because the good of the world is not equally distributed among the individuals in it. However, some may argue against this version of consequentialism: To insert ‘equality’ on the list of consequentialist goods may be an *ad hoc* maneuver (Julia Driver, *Consequentialism*, Routledge, 2012, 74). Or, as Brad Hooker suggests, one may adopt rule-consequentialism, which “assesses the rightness and wrongness of any particular act, not directly in terms of its consequences, but *indirectly* in terms of a set of desires, dispositions, and rules, which is then assessed in terms of the consequences of everyone’s having that set” (Hooker, “Rule-Consequentialism,” 67). Thus, if there is a rule such that “No one is allowed to be sacrificed without due recompense,” on rule-consequentialism, a perfectly good God may not be justified to sacrifice some individ-

maximizing the value of the world as a whole does not always coincide with defeating the suffering of the individuals in it; in fact, these two projects often turn out to be two different issues, which conflict with each other.⁷ However, due to its consequentialist assumptions, the *Felix Culpa* argument does not properly address the good of the sufferer herself; in fact, the argument pays little attention to the important moral issues related to the individuals who suffer, such as whether the sufferer is fairly treated and compensated when God allows suffering, or how the individual's integrity is properly respected and preserved in spite of the suffering she experiences. However valuable God's created world may be, it would still be doubtful whether a perfectly good God would be justified to allow suffering in his created world if he left his suffering creatures untended and without personally redeeming them from suffering.

1. Presenting Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* Argument

Through his *Felix Culpa* argument, Plantinga tries to justify sin and suffering as necessary conditions of divine incarnation and atonement, which make God's ultimate aim, i.e. creating an extremely good world, achieved. For this purpose, in his argument, Plantinga discusses the relation between divine incarnation and atonement and God's ultimate aim of creating an extremely good world.

uals for the sake of the whole world.

⁷ According to Marilyn Adams, "[s]ince positively valued organic wholes (such as many possible worlds arguably are) can contain negatively valued parts that enhance cosmic excellence, going for a high degree of cosmic excellence would not guarantee individual personal well-being" [Marilyn Adams, "Plantinga on 'Felix Culpa': Analysis and Critique," *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008): 129].

However, since some of Plantinga's claims that make the pivotal assumptions of the *Felix Culpa* argument may be quite controversial, I will briefly discuss those claims before dealing with Plantinga's main argument in more detail: i) God aims at creating an extremely good world; ii) that divine incarnation and atonement together, not divine atonement alone, require sin and suffering as their necessary conditions and make God's created world extremely good; iii) that sin and suffering, not sin alone, are the necessary conditions for divine incarnation and atonement.

First of all, concerning God's ultimate goal of creation, it may not be necessarily true that an omnipotent God must create 'the best' world; for, according to Plantinga, there may be no best possible world.⁸ Suppose that for each world, no matter how good it may be, there is yet another better world. If this is the case, to create *the one and only best* world will be logically impossible because there is no such thing at all. Then, since even an omnipotent God cannot do what is logically impossible,⁹ God is not required to create the best world.

However, even if there were no best possible world, God would still need to create *an extremely good world* that fits his perfect goodness.¹⁰ Plantinga calls this extremely good world a highly "eligible world": A world is highly eligible if it is a world good enough "that God's goodness, mercy, and love would permit him to actualize."¹¹

Secondly, concerning Plantinga's claim that divine incarnation and atonement together, not divine atonement alone, require sin and suf-

⁸ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 5.

⁹ J. L. Mackie raises an objection to this claim, suggesting that if logic itself is created by God, 'to do what is logically impossible' may be within God's power [J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64 (1955): 203-204].

¹⁰ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 5.

¹¹ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 8.

fering as their necessary conditions and make God's created world extremely good, some may raise the issue of whether divine incarnation alone could be considered independently of divine atonement. For example, Marilyn Adams argues that "incarnation and atonement are logically independent [...] and incarnation without atonement would still have been cosmic excellence enhancing."¹² Also, according to Aquinas, in the case of divine incarnation, even if there had been no human sin, God *could* still have become incarnate, although he *would* not have; thus, divine incarnation alone, unlike divine atonement, may not require human sin and suffering as its necessary condition.¹³ According to Adams, Duns Scotus takes a more radical stance with respect to this issue: "On Scotus' scheme, human need for redemption does not function as a reason for Incarnation."¹⁴ Taken independently from divine atonement, divine incarnation would not require creaturely sin and suffering as its necessary condition.

Concerning this issue, it is noteworthy that in Plantinga's argument, divine incarnation is discussed only insofar as it is a specific historical event that works as a necessary condition for divine atonement. Even if it were not the case, at least it seems clear that, in his argument, Plantinga does not consider the value of divine incarnation alone independently of divine atonement: In his argument, divine atonement is the one that takes the important role in the justificatory work, and divine incarnation seems to be treated only as additional

¹² Adams, "Plantinga on 'Felix Culpa': Analysis and Critique," 131.

¹³ *ST III*, q.3, a.3.

¹⁴ Marilyn Adams, "Cur Deus Homo?: Priorities among the Reasons?," *Faith and Philosophy* 21 (2004): 151. Thus, according to Scotus, unlike divine atonement, divine incarnation is primarily related to "God's purposes for *creation*" (e.g. the completion of the whole universe and the supernatural perfection of human beings), rather than to "the human need for *redemption*" [*Faith and Philosophy* 21 (2004): 151].

and subordinate to divine atonement. Thus, to avoid confusion and keep the discussion on the *Felix Culpa* argument simple and clear, in what follows, I will use the term “divine atonement” as an equivalent to what Plantinga calls “divine incarnation and atonement.”

Finally, concerning Plantinga’s claim that sin and suffering, not sin alone, are the necessary conditions for divine atonement, although he argues that “a necessary condition of atonement is sin and evil,”¹⁵ he does not clearly show how suffering, not only sin and evil, makes a necessary condition for divine atonement. Only vaguely, he suggests that suffering often be the consequence of evil and sin;¹⁶ however, it is hard to find in his argument any necessary connection between sin and suffering.¹⁷

¹⁵ Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 12.

¹⁶ “But all the highly eligible worlds contain atonement; hence all the highly eligible worlds contain sin and evil, and the suffering consequent upon them” (“Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 12). Also in another place, Plantinga claims that “[o]ften pain and suffering is a result of evil” (“Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 2.)

¹⁷ Plantinga may explain why God would permit not only sin but also suffering, based on his theory of *counterfactuals of freedom*: “So suffering results, at least in part, from the actions of free creatures; and perhaps it wasn’t within the power of God to create free creatures who are both capable of causing suffering and turning to evil, but never in fact do cause suffering” (“Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 17). According to Plantinga’s theory of *transworld depravity*, which is based on the theory of counterfactuals of freedom, it would not be logically incoherent for an omnipotent God to be unable to create a world where human beings do always right, if they suffered from transworld depravity. Likewise, if free creatures were suffering from transworld depravity with regard to ‘causing suffering,’ even an omnipotent God would not be able to prevent them from freely causing suffering, unless he robbed them of their free will. Or, Plantinga may respond to this issue as follows: “Perhaps worlds with free powerful creatures who sin but do not cause suffering are not as good as worlds in which they create suffering; for suffering is also itself of instrumental value” (“Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 17). However, see that both answers do not squarely fit into the *Felix Culpa* argument. What Plantinga aims to prove in this argument is that God is justified to allow sin and suffering because they are necessary conditions for divine atonement, which makes God’s created world extremely good and thus fulfills God’s ultimate aim in creation. However, it is obvious that both answers do not show how suffering in itself makes a necessary condition for divine atonement at all; nor do they show how suffering contributes to the fulfillment of God’s ultimate aim of creating an extremely

However, I may attempt to build a necessary connection between sin and suffering from a different perspective. Suppose that suffering is “a complicate psychological experience that is elicited by a threat or damage to one’s integrity in general.”¹⁸ Now, when a person sins, she wills what is not good. However, according to Aquinas, a person’s “will is being directed towards goodness, the ultimate end for all things, is naturally necessitated; but that natural necessity, far from threatening freedom, is a precondition of the will’s making choices.”¹⁹ Thus, when one sins against this natural necessity, since she wills what she ought not to will, her internal integrity around the good is damaged. Then, since suffering refers to an experience that is elicited by a threat or damage to one’s integrity in general, sin in itself, even when it does not involve any explicit pain or discomfort, may be said to constitute suffering, in the sense that it damages one’s integrity in general.²⁰ If this argument works, I may suggest that suffering, not only sin, be a necessary condition of divine atonement.

good world.

¹⁸ Cf. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 rev. ed.), 318; Jason T. Eberl, “Religious and Secular Perspectives on the Value of Suffering,” *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 12 (2012): 252-253; John Ozolins, “Suffering: Valuable or Just Useless Pain?” *Sophia* 42 (2003): 63; Carlo Bellieni, “Pain Definitions Revisited: Newborns Not Only Feel Pain, They Also Suffer,” *Ethics and Medicine* 21 (2005): 7-8; Benjamin Fink, “Independence and Connections of Pain and Suffering,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 18 (2011): 58-60.

¹⁹ Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (Routledge, 2003), 104.

²⁰ Cf. Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 4: “Even if a malefactor feels no pain over the moral evil he does, his life suffers because of it.”

2. Three Versions of the *Felix Culpa* Argument

Concerning the issue of how the value of divine atonement contributes to fulfilling God's ultimate aim of creating an extremely good world, Plantinga suggests three value assumptions, which he respectively calls the strong, moderate, and weak value assumption. Based on these three value assumptions, the *Felix Culpa* argument may be presented in three respective versions.

2.1. The Strong Version of the *Felix Culpa* Argument

The strong value assumption, according to Plantinga, refers to the following:²¹

[A]ny world with incarnation and atonement is of infinite value by virtue of containing two goods of infinite value: the existence of God and incarnation and atonement. Under this assumption, there will be a certain level of excellence or goodness among possible worlds, such that all the worlds at that level or above contain incarnation and atonement. Call this "the strong value assumption," and say that any world whose value equals or exceeds is a highly eligible world.

Based on this value assumption, the strong version of the *Felix Culpa* argument may be presented as follows:

(sFC1) God aims to create an extremely good world.²²

²¹ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 10.

²² Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 6.

(sFC2) All extremely good world must contain divine atonement.²³

(sFC3) Free creatures' sin and suffering are necessary conditions of divine atonement.²⁴

(sFC4) Thus, all worlds that contain divine atonement necessarily contain sin and suffering.

(sFC5) Hence, all extremely good worlds must contain sin and suffering.

(sFC6) Therefore, since God's ultimate aim in creation is to create an extremely good world, sin and suffering must be included in God's created world.

I call this argument "the strong version of the *Felix Culpa* argument" particularly because of (sFC2), which refers to the strong value assumption. It is noteworthy that Plantinga himself prefers this strong version to other versions: He proclaims that, in his paper, he will conduct the argument mainly under the strong value assumption because he is "inclined to accept the strong value assumption,"²⁵ although "the argument can also be conducted under the moderate or weak assumptions."²⁶ However, Plantinga seems to fail to provide his readers with any persuasive reason why they should accept his strong value assumption.

If a world must contain divine atonement to be a highly eligible world, it would be the case that divine atonement is the most valuable

²³ "God wanted to create a highly eligible world, wanted to actualize one of the best of all the possible worlds; all those worlds contain atonement" (Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 12).

²⁴ "Atonement is among other things a matter of creatures' being saved from the consequences of their sin; therefore if there were no evil, there would be no sin, no consequence of sin to be saved from, and hence no atonement (Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 12).

²⁵ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 10.

²⁶ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 11.

feature and nothing else is good enough to make a world extremely good. Plantinga does discuss this issue of the value of divine atonement in God's created world. According to him, among the qualities that make a world good, the two most important ones are God's existence and divine atonement. However, between these two, God's existence is not the one that differentiates a highly eligible world from other possible worlds that are not good enough, for every world created by God contains God's existence: "According to the traditional doctrine of God's necessary existence, [...] there aren't any worlds in which God does not exist."²⁷ On the contrary, divine atonement is "a contingent good-making characteristic of our world — one that isn't present in all worlds — that towers enormously above all the rest of the contingent states of affairs included in our world."²⁸ Plantinga further claims that this enormous good of divine atonement makes our world much better than other possible worlds,²⁹ and "any world with incarnation and atonement is a better world than any without it."³⁰ Thus, according to Plantinga, divine atonement is the most valuable good-making characteristic not only among all contingent states of affairs of our world but also among all possible contingent states of affairs.

However, if God's existence, not only divine atonement, is of infinite value in itself as Plantinga claims, why is it not enough for a world to contain God's existence, without divine atonement, to be a highly eligible world? And why should anyone accept Plantinga's claim that divine atonement is the most important good-making fea-

²⁷ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 7.

²⁸ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa.'" 9.

²⁹ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 9.

³⁰ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 10.

ture among all possible contingent states of affairs? In the following paragraphs, I will discuss these issues.

2.1.1. Divine Atonement as the Most Valuable Good-Making Feature among All Possible Contingent States of Affairs

Concerning Plantinga's claim that divine atonement is the most valuable good-making characteristic among all possible contingent states, it is hard to find any precise supporting argument except for this ambiguous claim: "Could there be a display of love to rival this? More to the present purpose, could there be a good-making feature of a world to rival this?"³¹ I suggest that this claim be possibly read in two ways: One as a metaphysical claim, the other as an epistemic claim.

First of all, from a metaphysical point of view, Plantinga's claim may be understood such that divine atonement is the state of affairs that contains God's love most abundantly when compared to other possible states of affairs. However, the problem is that we do not have a *complete list* of possible states of affairs that contain God's love in different degrees.³² Thus, we cannot simply exclude the possibility of there being another state of affairs that contains God's love more abundantly than, or as equally as, divine atonement, even if it may be hard to imagine what sort of state of affairs this might be.³³ See that,

³¹ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 9.

³² When assumed that there is a being called God, we need to admit the limit of our human knowledge: As finite creatures, we cannot have the full understanding of God. Concerning this issue, see, for example, *ST I*, q.88, a.3.

³³ Plantinga himself admits that there is this skeptical issue concerning our knowledge of God: "It is hard to imagine what God could do that is in fact comparable to incar-

as mentioned above, divine incarnation is independent from divine atonement from a logical point of view: There may be divine incarnation even if there are no human sin and suffering. So, suppose that in a world *W*, where human beings have serious free will but do not sin, since God loves his creatures very much and “love brings about certain union of a lover to the beloved,”³⁴ God decides to be incarnate for the purpose of union with his creatures because divine incarnation is the only feasible way for the finite, even if not necessarily sinful, human beings to overcome the “metaphysical ‘size-gap’ between Godhead and human being”³⁵ in this world. Assuming that this world *W* is not logically impossible, it does not seem manifest that divine incarnation and atonement presented in Plantinga’s *Felix Culpa* argument contain more of God’s love than God’s incarnation in *W*.

Also, from the perspective of God’s love, whether God *actually* redeems his sinful creatures by way of divine atonement may not make much difference with respect to the value of a world created by God. For example, suppose that there is a mother who is always ready to sacrifice herself for the sake of her daughter but has not had any chance to actualize this willingness so far because, fortunately, her daughter has not yet been in a serious danger; and suppose further that there is another mother who actually sacrificed herself for the sake of her daughter when her daughter was in a life-threatening danger. Be-

nation and atonement; but perhaps this is just a limitation of our imagination. But since this is so hard to imagine, I propose that we ignore those possible worlds, if there are any, in which God does not arrange for incarnation and atonement, but does something else of comparable excellence” (Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 8-9). However, I cannot agree with Plantinga’s suggestion that ‘we ignore those possible worlds’: Even if a certain possible world is hard to imagine because of a limitation of our imagination, it does not lead to the conclusion that thus that possible world is good to be excluded from our consideration.

³⁴ *ST* IIaIIae, q.17, a.3; also, see *ST* IaIIae, q.28, a.1.

³⁵ Adams, “Cur Deus Homo?: Priorities among the Reasons?,” 143.

tween these two mothers, there seems to be no plausible reason to argue that the latter loves her daughter more than the former does. Concerning this issue, Kevin Diller argues that whether or not God *actually* sacrifices himself for the sake of his erring creatures, a perfectly good God would have the same willingness to sacrifice himself for his erring creatures in all *possible* worlds.³⁶ Thus, in every world where there is God, God's love will be the same; and since there is no possible world where there is no existence of God according to Plantinga, God's love will always be the same in every possible world. Hence, God's love, *pace* Plantinga, is not a contingent good-making feature that differentiates one possible world from the others in terms of the value of a world.

However, Plantinga's claim concerning the value of divine atonement may be understood in a different way: As an epistemic claim, this claim may mean that, when compared to God's other acts of love, divine atonement *shows* God's love *most lucidly*;³⁷ thus, although God's love may be the same in all possible states of affairs, people come to know God's love most explicitly through divine atonement.

However, one problem with this epistemic way of reading is this: Is it necessary for human beings to actually sin and suffer to know God's love for them? See that, according to the traditional Christian

³⁶ Kevin Diller, "Are Sin and Evil Necessary for a Really Good World? Questions for Alvin Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* Theodicy," *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008): 92.

³⁷ Plantinga discusses the epistemic value of divine atonement in another place: "Why does God permit evil? [...] I read of one more massive atrocity and am perhaps shaken. But then I think of the inconceivably great love displayed in Christ's suffering and death, his willingness to empty himself and take on the nature of a servant, his willingness to suffer and die so that we sinful human beings can achieve redemption, and my faith may be restored" [Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 487-488]. Thanks to this epistemic value of divine atonement, one's apprehension of suffering and evil does not constitute a defeater of her faith in a perfectly good God.

theism, human beings will be provided with full knowledge of God and his love when they are united to God *in the afterlife*.³⁸ If this were the case, those with this full knowledge would not need divine atonement, i.e. the actual event of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross for the remission of human sin, to know God's love in general;³⁹ thus, sin and suffering as necessary conditions for divine atonement would be gratuitous to a great extent in terms of their epistemic value.⁴⁰

Therefore, I conclude that Plantinga's claim that divine atonement is the most important good-making feature among all possible contingent states of affairs is not persuasive enough, although I do not deny that divine atonement may be of infinite value in itself.

2.1.2. Why Not God's Existence Alone, without Divine Atonement?

Plantinga claims that the two most important features that make our world highly eligible are divine existence and atonement, *each of which* is of infinite value. If this were the case, would God's existence alone not enough to make any possible world extremely good?

³⁸ For example, see *ST IIaIIae*, q.1, a.8: "Those things, by the vision of which we will be fully delighted in eternal life, and through which we will be led to eternal life, pertain to faith in themselves. However, two things are proposed to be seen to us there, that is, *what has been hidden of divinity (occultum divinitatis)*, whose vision makes us blessed; and *the mystery of Christ's humanity*, through which we have access to the glory of God's sons" (Translation is mine; emphasis added).

³⁹ In fact, Plantinga himself claims that a person's suffering is defeated in the afterlife thanks to her full knowledge of God's plan of salvation (Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 24).

⁴⁰ Actually, I may go one step further and argue that for a person with full knowledge of God, actual divine atonement that requires actual sin and suffering may arguably seem repugnant. Since now she knows that actual divine atonement is not necessary for the revelation of God's love, she may be angry (quite properly) at God because of the thought that God has willed to allow some unnecessary sin and suffering to her and her most beloved ones.

If God's existence is of infinite value, the value of the world that contains it will be infinite, too. However, if that is the case, Plantinga's claim that a world where God both creates and saves his erring creatures is better than a world where God only creates his creatures but does not save them becomes hard to understand: Since the latter must still be a world where God exists, both the former and the latter are infinitely valuable in the sense that they both contain God's existence, whose value is unlimited. In this case, how could one compare the value of these two infinitely valuable worlds?

Concerning this issue, see that, according to Cantor, "there are different sizes of infinity,"⁴¹ and thus that one infinity can be compared to another in terms of their sizes. Then, one may suggest that even if the value of a world is infinite, this infinity may be outweighed by another infinity, which has a larger scale or size. Thus, it may be possible that the infinite value of a world where God creates but not saves his creatures is outweighed by a larger scale of infinity, i.e. the infinite value of a world where God both creates and saves his erring creatures.

However, even when assumed that there are different sizes of infinity, and further that a world with divine atonement is more valuable than a world where God only creates but does not save his creatures, it does not follow that a highly eligible world must contain divine atonement; for, as Plantinga admits, God's ultimate aim in creation is not to create *the best possible* world but to create *an extremely good* world. If God's existence is infinitely good as Plantinga claims, a world that contains God's existence will be infinitely good regardless of whether or not it includes divine atonement. If this were the case, since God could have created a highly eligible world that does not contain divine

⁴¹ Roger Penrose, *The Road to Reality* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 364.

atonement, Plantinga's strong value claim that a highly eligible world must contain divine atonement would turn out to be wrong.

2.2. The Moderate Version of the *Felix Culpa* Argument

Claiming that the *Felix Culpa* argument does not need to be built only on the strong value assumption, Plantinga suggests something weaker, which he calls "the moderate value assumption."⁴² According to this assumption, between two possible worlds where there are free creatures, assuming that all other things are equal, the world where there is sin and divine atonement is better than the other where there is no need for divine atonement since free creatures in it are always doing right. However, Plantinga does not come up with any specific argument that supports this controversial claim.

Plantinga may defend this moderate value assumption on the basis of his aforementioned claim on the value of divine atonement as the most eminent way of displaying God's love. In fact, in another place, Plantinga quotes Abraham Kuyper with approval as follows: "The angels of God have no knowledge of sin, hence also they have no knowledge of forgiveness, hence again they have no knowledge of that tender love that is formed from forgiveness."⁴³ Thus, Plantinga may argue that a world with divine atonement is better than a world without it *ceteris paribus* either because the former world contains a specific sort of divine love, i.e. 'tender love that is formed from forgiveness,' which the latter lacks, or because in the former world, free creatures come to have specific knowledge of God's love that is form-

⁴² Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa'," 10-11.

⁴³ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 490, n.612.

ed from forgiveness, which the same creatures in the latter world would not be able to have.

However, from a metaphysical point of view, the claim that a world where there is no sin and suffering since free creatures in it are in perfect harmony with God's good will contains no divine atonement and thus lacks God's tender love that is formed from forgiveness is not persuasive enough. As is shown previously, in all possible worlds, if there is a possibility of creaturely sin, God will have the same willingness to forgive free creatures of their sins, regardless of whether they actually sin or not. Thus, even in a possible world where there is no actual sin, God will have the same willingness to forgive free creatures of their sins if there is a possibility of their sin. Now, in this world, free creatures' sin is a real possibility because, by assumption, they have free will and thus are free to sin: They are in perfect harmony with God's will not because it is impossible for them to act against God's will but because they freely will to act in accordance with God's will. Thus, in this possible world where there is no actual sin, God will have the same willingness to forgive sinners, as in a world where free creatures sin but are redeemed by way of divine atonement.

Also, from an epistemic perspective, *pace* Kuyper and Plantinga, there seems to be no reason to believe that free creatures in a world where there is no actual sin do not know God's tender love that is formed from forgiveness. As mentioned before, they are in perfect harmony with God's will not because it is not possible for them to act against God's will but because they freely will to act in accordance with God's will. See that, when they are in perfect harmony with God's will this way, they should have perfect, or at least nearly perfect, knowledge of God's will; for, if they do not know God's will perfectly,

they cannot be in perfect harmony with it. But if they know God's will perfectly, they will know that, in all possible worlds, God has the same willingness to forgive sinners whenever there is a possibility of sin, as shown above. If this is the case, even if these free creatures do not sin in actuality, they will know that, if they sin, God will forgive them of their sins; in other words, free creatures who are always in perfect harmony with God do *know* God's tender love that is formed from forgiveness.

Thus considered, it is hard to see in what sense, between two possible worlds, a world where free creatures sin but are redeemed by way of divine atonement is better than the other where the same free creatures are always in perfect harmony with God and thus always do right, all other things being equal.

2.3. The Weak Version of the *Felix Culpa* Argument

So far, I have tried to show that both the strong version of the *Felix Culpa* argument and its moderate version do not successfully justify God's choosing to actualize a world where there is sin. However, Plantinga claims that a weak assumption such as follows is sufficient for his argument:⁴⁴

[G]iven that all of the possible worlds including creatures are worlds sufficiently good for God to actualize them, all that is really required, for my argument, is that incarnation and atonement be possible, i.e., that there be possible worlds that include them.

⁴⁴ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa,'" 11.

On the basis of this weak assumption, the *Felix Culpa* argument may be modified as follows:

(wFC1) God aims to create an extremely good world.

(wFC2) An extremely good world *possibly* contains divine atonement.

(wFC3) Free creatures' sin and suffering are necessary conditions of divine atonement.

(wFC4) Thus, all worlds that contain divine incarnation and atonement necessarily contain sin and suffering.

(wFC5) Hence, an extremely good world possibly contains sin and suffering.

(wFC6) Therefore, since God's ultimate aim in creation is to create an extremely good world, it is possible that sin and suffering is included in God's created world.

I believe that the weak version of the *Felix Culpa* argument is much more persuasive than the other two versions. It is quite plausible to argue that, considering the preeminent value of divine atonement, a world that contains divine atonement is at least one of the possible worlds created by God in spite of its bad features, i.e. creatures' sin and suffering.

Some may still argue that if a world that contains divine atonement is merely one of the possible worlds that are extremely good, a perfectly good God would choose to create another possible world that lacks divine atonement and thus sin and suffering, considering the intrinsic badness of sin and suffering. However, see that a world with divine atonement is still a highly eligible world in spite of the intrinsic badness of sin and suffering in it. If a possible world is a highly eligible world, it is obvious that God is not prevented from creating that

world, especially when it is assumed that God, in spite of his perfect goodness, is not obliged to create the best possible world: As mentioned before, if there is no best possible world, since it is logically impossible for God to create it, what is required in creation for God is to create not the best possible world but an extremely good world, which is good enough that God's goodness, mercy, and love would permit him to create it.

If this is the case, whether there is another highly eligible possible world that does not contain sin and suffering will have no relevance to God's creating a world that contains divine atonement and thus includes sin and suffering, assuming that this world is a highly eligible world thanks to the infinite value of divine atonement. For, what matters in God's creation is not whether God's created world is better than all other possible worlds but whether the world itself is good enough to be created by a perfectly good God.

When considered this way, Plantinga's claim in the weak version of the *Felix Culpa* argument would simply be that divine atonement does make a possible world highly eligible. Thus, with regard to God's allowing sin and suffering that make necessary conditions of divine atonement, what is claimed in this weak version of the argument is not that it is *absolutely necessary* for God to allow sin and suffering to achieve his ultimate aim of creating an extremely good world; rather, it is such that *it would be necessary* for God to allow sin and suffering *if he were to create* an extremely good world that contains divine atonement among all other extremely good possible worlds.

However, some may still wonder how a world that includes sin and suffering, which are intrinsically bad, can be one of the possible worlds that are extremely good. We may find Plantinga's answer to

this question in his theory of incommensurability: “[T]he good of God’s existence is incommensurable with creaturely goods. But it is also incommensurable with creaturely evils. No matter how much sin and suffering and evil W [i.e. a world] contains, it is vastly outweighed by the goodness of God.”⁴⁵ Similarly, the value of divine atonement “cannot be matched by any aggregate of creaturely goods,” and “no matter how much evil a world contains, the aggregated badness would be outweighed by the goodness of incarnation and atonement.”⁴⁶

3. The *Felix Culpa* Argument as a *Theodicy*

So far, I have argued that the weak version of the *Felix Culpa* argument does plausibly show that it is possible for God to achieve his ultimate goal of creating an extremely good world by way of creaturely sin and suffering. However, see that Plantinga’s ultimate aim in his *Felix Culpa* argument is to develop a successful *theodicy*, i.e. a highly likely theory that morally justifies God’s allowing sin and suffering. Thus, for the weak version of the *Felix Culpa* argument to be a success, it needs to show not only that it is logically possible for God to allow sin and suffering as necessary conditions for achieving his ultimate aim of creating an extremely good world, but also that God indeed is morally justified to allow sin and suffering that specific way.

However, see that any version of the *Felix Culpa* argument does not provide a plausible explanation of how the goodness of the world as a whole defeats sin and suffering of each individual; thus, in this

⁴⁵ Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 9.

⁴⁶ Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 10.

argument, the good of the world as a whole and the good of the individuals who sin and suffer remain asunder. If this is the case, there will be a possible world where God saves only a small number of people by way of divine atonement but leaves a huge number of innocent individuals in the midst of unfair suffering. If God actualizes this world, God may be morally blamed for using individual sufferers only as the instruments to achieve his aim of creating a world that is extremely good as a whole, while leaving his creatures, who deserve his care, untended in the midst of unfair suffering.

The issue here is quite clear: Whether God's achieving his ultimate aim in creation alone would morally justify God's allowing sin and suffering in a plausible way.

In his *Felix Culpa* argument, Plantinga seems to believe so. According to him, God's allowing sin and suffering is morally justified solely because God infinitely increases the value of the world as a whole by allowing sin and suffering. Thus, what justifies God's allowing sin and suffering is its consequent state of affairs, i.e. a world that is extremely good as a whole. When considered this way, it is quite obvious that this justification is based on consequentialism.

Concerning my claim that Plantinga's argument is based on consequentialism, I take Samuel Scheffler's definition of consequentialism as a standard understanding of it: "Consequentialism in its purest and simplest form is a moral doctrine which says that the right act in any given situation is the one that will produce the best overall outcome, as judged from an impersonal standpoint which gives equal weight to the interests of everyone."⁴⁷ Thus, according to this doctrine, what is good or bad is primarily a state of affairs, and the rightness of an

⁴⁷ Samuel Scheffler, "Introduction," in *Consequentialism and its Critics*, ed. Samuel Scheffler (Oxford University Press, 1988), 1.

action is only derivative of the goodness of a state of affairs, which is the consequence of the action. In other words, an action is right if and only if it produces the best overall state of affairs. Also, since the goodness of a state of affairs is calculated from an impersonal standpoint according to the consequentialist presumption, the best overall state of affairs justifies “whatever actions, [...] irrespective of the agent’s relation to them.”⁴⁸ In this sense, agent-neutrality is an important character of consequentialism.⁴⁹

In the *Felix Culpa* argument, Plantinga adopts the consequentialist assumption concerning the proper object of the value judgement: What is good or bad is a state of affairs.⁵⁰ On this assumption, a perfectly good God is morally obliged to create the best possible state of affairs, i.e. the best possible world; or, when assumed that there is no best possible world, God is obliged to create at least an extremely good world, which is infinitely valuable.⁵¹ When assumed that consequentialism is God’s moral principle in creating a world, since the primary concern in terms of God’s morality is how to maximize, or infinitely increase, the overall value of the world as a whole, which is evaluated from the impersonal point of view, not how to prevent sin

⁴⁸ Scheffler, “Introduction,” 5.

⁴⁹ There are some consequentialists who argue that agent-neutrality is not necessary for consequentialism. For example, see Jonathan Bennett, “Two Departures from Consequentialism,” *Ethics* 100 (1989): 54-66; John Broome, *Weighing Goods* (Basil Blackwell, 1991); John Skorupski, “Agent-Neutrality, Consequentialism, Utilitarianism [...] A Terminological Note,” *Utilitas* 7 (1995): 49-54.

⁵⁰ “[W]hat sorts of things are good or valuable or excellent [...]? Then answer is easy; states of affairs (perhaps among other things) are good or bad” (Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” 5).

⁵¹ Concerning this issue, according to *satisficing consequentialism*, “the right action is the action(s) that produces *enough* good” (Driver, *Consequentialism*, 41). Clearly, ‘an extremely good world’ will not be *the best* possible world, for it will always be possible that there is another extremely good world, which is better. However, under the specific circumstance of ‘no best possible world,’ God’s creation of an extremely good world may still be considered, at least loosely, as the best overall outcome.

and suffering of each individual in it, God will be morally justified to permit sin and suffering in his created world if permitting sin and suffering is necessary to make the world as a whole infinitely valuable;⁵² thus, on this consequentialist assumption, the *Felix Culpa* argument may provide a successful justification for God in permitting sin and suffering. However, would it be proper to defend God's perfect goodness on the basis of consequentialism?

I claim that Plantinga's consequentialist argument does not make a successful theodicy that plausibly justifies God's allowing sin and suffering: Since it justifies God's allowing sin and suffering only in terms of the infinite good of the world as a whole, it fails to address critical moral issues that are related to each individual person who suffers, such as whether each sufferer is fairly treated when God allows her to suffer or whether each sufferer's integrity is properly respected and kept intact in the course of God's creating an extremely good world by way of creaturely sin and suffering.⁵³

⁵² Concerning this consequentialist issue, Adams mentions that "[p]ossible worlds approaches to the problem of evil easily slide into a consequentialist assumption: that because agents are to be evaluated in terms of the state of affairs they bring about, it is enough to defend Divine goodness by pointing to the laudable overall qualities of the possible world God actualizes" (Adams, "Cur Deus Homo?: Priorities among the Reasons?," 128-129.)

⁵³ In response to my objection, some may argue for the value of 'being of use,' as Richard Swinburne does in Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, Oxford University Press, 1998, and Richard Swinburne, "Theodicy, Our Well-Being, and God's Rights," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 38 (1995): 78-83: That each individual makes a part of God's plan of salvation through her suffering has by itself a great value for the sufferer herself, i.e. 'being of use.' I do not deny that the value of 'being of use' is of great importance. However, I do not believe that 'being of use' is *intrinsically* valuable, either. Suppose that God actualizes a possible world where an innocent individual suffers *eternally* for the sake of the whole world. Suppose further that the good of the world depends mostly on this innocent individual's suffering. Would anyone claim that this state of affairs is extremely good enough for the sufferer herself, to the extent that a perfectly good God is sufficiently justified to actualize this state of affairs, because this sufferer possesses the great value of 'being of use?' On the contrary, it seems manifest that this state of affairs lacks the virtue of justice, and thus

If Plantinga is totally committed to consequentialism, he may argue that my objection here is not relevant to the *moral* justification of God's allowing sin and suffering: Since what is morally relevant with regard to God's action is the value of the consequent state of affairs, the sufferer-related issues that I mentioned above do not affect the moral judgement on God's action, unless they somehow affect the value of the world as a whole, which is impossible according to Plantinga's theory of incommensurability, i.e. a claim that the aggregated badness of creaturely sin and suffering is vastly outweighed by the goodness of divine atonement.

However, although I admit that it may be theoretically possible that God acts on the consequentialist principle, I argue that, if he does so, this God will obviously contradict the traditional Christian faith in him, according to which God cares about not only his created world as a whole but also individual persons, especially the least and most vulnerable ones.⁵⁴ Concerning this issue, Adams claims that "from a Christian point of view, [...] it is important to distinguish [...] God's '*global*' goodness, or goodness at cosmos production, from God's '*person-oriented*' goodness," for the bible not only tells of God's interest in "cosmic excellence" but also "God's love and mercy towards individual created persons."⁵⁵

that God is not justified to actualize this world.

⁵⁴ For example, according to the scripture, Jesus, in his famous teaching on the final judgement, says to people, "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40; NABRE). Thus, in the Gospel, Jesus is described as a shepherd who goes out to search for the lost sheep, leaving the other ninety-nine in the desert (Lk 15:1-7). If God were a hard-headed consequentialist, he would not leave to search for the lost sheep: First, even if he lost one sheep, if the other ninety-nine are safe, this state of affairs would still be good enough; second, to go out to search for the lost sheep while leaving the other untended would risk the safety of the ninety-nine and thus the good of the whole.

⁵⁵ Adams, "Cur Deus Homo?: Priorities among the Reasons?," 129.

See that I am not trying to discuss some theological issue here. Rather, I am trying to show that, assuming that Plantinga, in his argument, aims to defend not merely any certain cosmic deity of creation but a perfectly good God of Christianity, the entity that Plantinga is in fact justifying in his *Felix Culpa* argument on the basis of consequentialism is very different from the God of Christianity whom he originally intends to defend.

Thus, let us assume that, from the perspective of traditional Christianity, God is not only a creator but also a father-like deity (hereafter, let me call this 'Father'), who takes care of *each* created person's good. It seems quite obvious that, without this assumption, any believer would be easily alienated from his or her own act of belief: Whenever it is necessary, Plantinga's consequentialist creator will be willing to abandon any individual for the good of his created world as a whole; and no one can be assured of his or her own salvation regardless of his or her belief in this creator because anyone can be a sacrificial lamb for the sake of the created world as a whole.

Considered this way, God seems to have a *double responsibility* in his relationship with the created world. On the one hand, God as a *creator* relates himself to the created world as a whole. From the creator's standpoint, God needs to maximize the value of the created world as a whole, or at least infinitely increases cosmic excellence, as judged from an impersonal perspective. On the other hand, as a *Father*, God relates himself to *each* person in the created world. From the Father's standpoint, God is responsible for the good of each person with whom God has a personal relationship, which may be analogous to the relationship between a parent and a child.

With these two responsibilities taken into consideration, it seems obvious that theistic responses solely based on the consequentialist

principle of maximization from the impersonal perspective are problematic with respect to God's responsibility as a good Father: If God does not fulfil his responsibility as a good Father in his relationship with any person, God's perfect goodness will be seriously threatened; in this case, if God is not a good Father, even if he is a good creator, he will fail to fulfil his double responsibility.

It seems that Plantinga himself sees the need for addressing the good of each individual sufferer, not only the good of the world as a whole, to justify God's allowing sin and suffering. Thus, before finishing his *Felix Culpa* argument, he briefly mentions that there may be "a *constraint* on the conditions under which he [=God] would permit involuntary and innocent suffering":⁵⁶

Perhaps God's reason for permitting me to suffer is not that by undergoing this suffering I can thus achieve a greater good [...] but because he can thus achieve a better world overall. Nevertheless, perhaps it is also true that he would not permit me to suffer for that end, an end outside my own good, unless he could also bring good for me out of the evil.

However, I claim that to impose such a constraint on God may only be an *ad hoc* maneuver: If consequentialism were the only moral principle on which God acts in accordance with the *Felix Culpa* argument, what would be the ground for this constraint? It is quite obvious that this constraint itself is not justified or endorsed by consequentialism, for, as mentioned before, the good of the world as a whole does not necessarily coincide with the good of the individuals in the

⁵⁶ Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa'," 24-25.

world; if this is the case, what will be the reason for a consequentialist God to be morally bound by this constraint?

When considered this way, in relation to this person-oriented constraint, Plantinga may face this dilemma: Plantinga should claim either that this constraint is not necessary for the moral justification of God's allowing sin and suffering or that it is necessary. In the former case, Plantinga should admit that there is a possible world where God is morally justified to allow sin and suffering but does not keep this constraint; in this possible world, although God may achieve his ultimate aim in creation, i.e. creating an extremely good world, a lot of innocent people may suffer unjustly even without any compensation for their gratuitous suffering. If this is the case, as I have claimed before, it will be hard to say that this God is a perfectly good God, at least from the traditional Christian point of view, which Plantinga is supposed to take. On the other hand, in the latter case, Plantinga will be admitting that the *Felix Culpa* argument alone does not make a success, which is contrary to his own claim that his argument is a successful theodicy. To make a successful justification, consequentialism alone is not enough; rather, the *Felix Culpa* argument needs to adopt and incorporate person-oriented moral principles.

4. Conclusion

So far, after critically analyzing Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* argument, I have tried to show that this argument does not make a successful theodicy, *pace* Plantinga. His argument may roughly be presented as follows: God's goal in creation is to create an extremely good world; what make a world extremely good are divine incarnation and

atonement; since sin and suffering are necessary conditions of divine incarnation and atonement, God is justified to allow sin and suffering with respect to his achieving the goal of creation. In this paper, I have presented this argument in three versions: According to the strong version, an extremely good world must contain divine atonement; according to the moderate version, a world where free creatures sin and then experience divine atonement is more valuable than a world where the same free creatures do not sin at all; finally, according to the weak version, a world that contains divine atonement is one of the extremely good possible worlds.

Critically considering each version, I have claimed that only the weak version may be logically persuasive. However, it does not lead to the conclusion that this weak version of the argument thus constitutes a successful theodicy: As a theodicy, the *Felix Culpa* argument needs not only to logically prove that God can achieve his ultimate goal of creating an extremely good world by way of allowing sin and suffering, but also to persuasively show that God's allowing sin and suffering this way is morally justified, which Plantinga seems to fail.

Concerning this issue, Plantinga may argue, based on consequentialism, that a consequent state of 'an extremely good created world' in itself justifies God's allowing sin and suffering; however, this claim may betray the faith in God of the traditional Christianity, whom Plantinga himself aims to defend. This Christian God, since he takes a double responsibility both as a cosmic creator and as a Father to each individual, cares not only for the good of the world as a whole but also for the good of each individual; on the contrary, a consequentialist deity will intend to maximize the net value of the world as a whole, even by unfairly sacrificing individuals when necessary.

Thus, since Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* argument does not properly address God's responsibility as a Father in his relationship with each individual because of its consequentialist assumption, it does not provide a successful justification for God's allowing sin and suffering. Hence, I claim that the *Felix Culpa* argument does not make a successful theodicy; or, at least I may say that the deity whom Plantinga is in fact justifying by way of this argument is not the same God whom he aims to defend.

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Received: 14 April 2019

Reviewed and Edited: 29 May 2019

Finalized for Publication: 28 June 2019

■ Abstract ■

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In his *Felix Culpa* argument, Plantinga aims to present a theodicy, in which God is justified to allow sin and suffering in spite of his omnipotence and perfect goodness. According to Plantinga, God's ultimate aim is to create an extremely good world, and what make God's created world extremely good are divine incarnation and atonement. Now, since sin and suffering together make necessary conditions for divine incarnation and atonement, God is justified to allow sin and suffering in concern with achieving his ultimate aim at creation.

One of the core issues of this argument is how the value of atonement contributes to the total value of an extremely good world created by God. Concerning this issue, Plantinga suggests three value assumptions; so, I have developed three versions of the *Felix Culpa* argument in accordance with his value assumptions. First of all, according to the strong version, since atonement is the most valuable among all possible contingent states of affairs, all extremely good possible worlds must contain atonement in it. However, Plantinga's claim that atonement is the most valuable from the perspective of God's love is not persuasive enough; for, God's love will always be the same in all possible worlds, and people in the afterlife will have perfect knowledge on God's love regardless of their experiencing actual sin and atonement in this life. Also, since God's existence alone is of infinite value according to Plantinga, it is not clear why atonement — and sin and suffering as its necessary condition — is necessarily required for the creation of an extremely good world.

Secondly, according to the moderate version, a possible world where free creatures sin but are redeemed by way of atonement is more valuable than a possible world where the same creatures do not sin and thus do not experience atonement. One reason for this claim will be that the latter lacks God's tender love that is formed from forgiveness. However, God's love will always be the same in all possible worlds where there are free creatures and thus there is a possibility of sin. Also, those who are free but always in harmony with God's will must know God's willingness to forgive sinners perfectly even without sinning. Thus, the moderate version fails to show why a world with atonement is better than a world without it.

Finally, according to the weak version, a world that includes atonement, in spite of its containing sin and suffering which are intrinsically bad, is one of the extremely good worlds that are eligible for creation. I take this claim as a persuasive one; however, what matters here is whether this claim makes a successful theodicy, not just a defense. Does the claim that God thus achieves his ultimate goal of creation successfully justify God's allowing sin and suffering?

Plantinga, in his *Felix Culpa* argument, claims that the value of a consequent state of affairs, i.e. an extremely good world, successfully justifies God's allowing sin and suffering; and this proves that his argument is based on consequentialism. However, Plantinga's consequentialist God obviously differs from the Christian God: the former primarily aims at maximizing the value of the world as a whole even at the (unfair) sacrifice of the individuals in it, while the latter, who has a double responsibility as a Creator of the world and as a Father to each individual in it, cares about the good of each individual as well as of the world as a whole. Thus, considering that Plantinga aims at developing a theodicy that justifies the Christian God, since the *Felix*

Culpa argument cannot suitably address God's responsibility as a Father to each individual person, it does not make a successful theodicy.

- ▶ Key Words: Plantinga, Theodicy, The *Felix Culpa* Argument, Atonement, Consequentialism, God's Double Responsibility.

플란팅가의 ‘복된 탓 논증’에 대한 비판적 접근

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플란팅가는 ‘복된 탓 논증’을 통해, 하느님이 그의 전지전능함과 완전히 선함에도 불구하고 죄와 고통이 존재하는 세계를 창조하는 것이 정당화됨을 설명하는 신정론을 제시하고자 한다. 곧, 하느님의 목적은 극히 좋은 세계를 만드는 것인데, 이 세계를 극히 좋게 만드는 요소는 다름 아니라 성자의 육화와 대속이며, 죄와 고통은 이런 육화와 대속의 필요 조건이기에, 하느님이 죄와 고통을 허용하는 것은 창조 목적의 성취라는 측면에서 정당화된다는 것이다.

이 논증의 가장 핵심적 문제 중 하나인 대속의 가치가 어떻게 하느님에 의해 창조된 극히 좋은 세계의 종합적 가치에 기여하는가 하는 문제와 관련하여 플란팅가는 세 가지 가치 가정을 제시하는데, 본 논문에서는 그에 근거하여 복된 탓 논증을 세 가지 버전으로 재구성하였다. 우선 강한 버전에 따르면 대속은 우연적인 가능 사태 중 가장 가치로운 것이며 따라서 모든 극히 좋은 세계는 반드시 대속을 포함해야 한다. 그러나 하느님의 사랑이라는 측면에서 보았을 때 대속이 가장 가치로운 사태라는 플란팅가의 주장은 설득력이 떨어지는데, 하느님의 완전한 사랑은 모든

가능 세계에서 동일할 것이며, 그 사랑에 대한 완전한 지식도 죄와 대속에 대한 실제적 경험의 여부와는 관계없이 내세에서 동일하게 가지게 될 것이기 때문이다. 또한 ‘하느님의 존재’가 대속과 마찬가지로 무한한 가치를 지니고 있다는 플라팅가의 주장은, 극히 좋은 세계의 창조를 위해 왜 굳이 대속과 그 필요 조건인 죄와 고통이 요구되는지 의문을 갖게 한다.

다음으로 온건한 버전에 따르면, 자유로운 피조물들이 죄를 짓고 대속을 통해 구원받는 세계가 동일한 피조물들이 죄를 짓지 않기에 대속도 없는 세계보다 가치로운데, 이는 아마도 ‘용서하는 하느님의 사랑’이라는 요소를 후자의 세계가 결하기 때문일 것이다. 그러나 죄의 가능성이 있는, 자유로운 피조물을 포함하는 모든 가능 세계에서 죄인을 용서하고자 하는 하느님의 사랑은 늘 동일할 것이다. 또한 자유로우면서도 하느님의 의지를 늘 따르는 피조물들은 하느님의 의지를 완벽히 알 것이기에 죄인을 용서하는 하느님의 사랑 또한 죄와 용서의 실제적 경험 없이도 잘 알 것이다. 따라서 온건한 버전 역시 어떤 면에서 대속을 포함한 세계가 그렇지 않은 세계보다 나은지 설명해 주지 못한다.

마지막으로, 약한 버전에 따르면, 대속을 포함한 세계는 그것이 포함하는 죄와 고통에도 불구하고 하느님이 창조할 만한 극히 좋은 가능 세계 중의 하나다. 이는 그 자체로는 설득력이 있는 주장이지만, 문제는 이 주장이 과연 성공적인 신정론을 구성하느냐 하는 것이다. 곧, 하느님이 궁극적인 창조 목적을 달성한다는 사실이 그 자체로 하느님의 죄와 고통의 허용을 도덕적으로 설득력 있게 정당화할 수 있는가다.

플라팅가는 복된 닻 논증을 통해 ‘극히 좋은 세계의 창조’라는 결과가 하느님의 죄와 고통의 허용을 성공적으로 정당화한다고 보았으며, 이는 그의 논증이 결과주의적 윤리 원칙에 근거하고 있음을 보여 준다. 그러나 이러한 결과주의자 하느님은 그리스도교의 하느님과는 분명한 차이를 보여 주는데, 전자는 필요에

따라 개인의 희생을 통해서라도 세계 전체의 종합적 가치를 극대화하고자 하는 반면, 후자는 창조주로서 또 각 개인의 아버지로서 이중의 책임을 지고 세계 전체의 선과 각 개인의 선을 모두 도모하기 때문이다. 따라서 플란팅가의 신정론이 그리스도교의 하느님을 정당화하고자 하였음을 전제한다면, 복된 탓 논증은 그 결과주의적 전제로 인해 하느님이 각 개인과의 인격적인 관계에서 지니는 아버지로서의 책임에 대해 적절히 다루지 못하기에 하느님이 죄와 고통을 허용하는 것에 대한 성공적인 신정론을 제시하지 못한다.

▶ 주제어: 플란팅가, 신정론, 복된 탓 논증, 대속, 결과주의, 하느님의 이중 책임.