

Paper Title: God and the Problem of Evil in the Process Theology of W. Norman Pittenger and the Pastoral Theology of Rabbi Harold S. Kushner  
Author: McCartney, James J.  
Institutional Affiliation: Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Villanova University

This paper was prepared for "Science and Religion: Global Perspectives," June 4-8, 2005, in Philadelphia, PA, USA, a program of the Metanexus Institute ([www.metanexus.net](http://www.metanexus.net)).

Abstract:

W. Norman Pittenger and Rabbi Harold Kushner are strange bedfellows. The former is one of the greatest Christian process theologians of the twentieth century, and the latter is a Jewish Rabbi with a congregation in Natick, Massachusetts. What they both have in common is a profound insight into the problem of evil, derived by Pittenger through his processive understanding of the Divine, and reflected on by Kushner after the untimely death of his son Aaron from 'progeria' (rapid aging). In this study, I would like to compare and contrast the insights of these two authors as they try to deal with the issue of 'God and the problem of evil,' a problem that has vexed some of the greatest minds of history. Both Pittenger and Kushner have the advantage of having a contemporary understanding of science which greatly assists them in developing their thought, and, although Pittenger's approach is sort of from the top down, and Kushner's from the bottom up, they arrive at very similar understandings and conclusions.

W. Norman Pittenger's processive understanding of the Divine is primarily indebted to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. For Pittenger, God is 'pure unbounded love,' 'Love-in-act,' which is disclosed in a threefold quality of the experience of the Divine activity in the world, a trinity. But if God is the 'lure of Love,' how can we account for tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, children dying of cancer or other anomalies, or other planetary ills? If God is Love-in-act, why are there madness, disease, natural violence, and destructive natural force? It will be the task of the paper to provide Pittenger's answer to these questions.

Rabbi Kushner states at the outset of his book that this is not an abstract book about God and theology. He says that it is a very personal book, written by someone who believes in God and in the goodness of the world, someone who has spent most of his life trying to help other people believe, and was compelled by a personal tragedy to rethink everything he had been taught about God and God's ways. He then recounts the short life and death of his son Aaron, and says that he wanted to write a book that could be given to the person who has been hurt by life, and who knows in his heart that if there is any justice in the world, he deserved better. Thus Rabbi Kushner's book is aptly titled, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* and it is here that he develops his insights into the problem of evil that are remarkably similar to those of Norman Pittenger and which I will unfold in this study.

### Biography:

The Rev. Dr. James J. McCartney is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy of Villanova University near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He teaches courses in ethics, health care ethics, bioethics and the law, the philosophy of medicine, and the philosophy of law. He received a Ph.D. in philosophy from Georgetown University in 1981 and also has graduate degrees in cell and molecular biology (M.S., The Catholic University of America) and theology (M.A., Washington Theological Union). He has co-edited two books, *Health, Disease and Illness: Concepts of Medicine*, Georgetown University Press, 2004, and *Concepts of Health and Disease, Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Addison-Wesley, 1981. He has authored numerous articles and a book, *Unborn Persons: Pope John Paul II and the Abortion Debate*, Peter Lang, 1987. Two of his most recent articles deal with stem cell research: "Recent Ethical Controversies About Stem Cell Research" in *Stem Cell Research*, pp. 87-119, edited by James M. Humber and Robert F. Almeder, Humana Press, 2004 and "Embryonic Stem Cell Research and Respect for Human Life: Philosophical and Legal Reflections," *Albany Law Review* 65:3 (2002):597-624.

### Paper:

Dr. W. Norman Pittenger and Rabbi Harold Kushner are strange bedfellows. The former was one of the greatest Christian process theologians of the twentieth century, and the latter is a contemporary Jewish Rabbi with a congregation in Natick, Massachusetts. What they both have in common is a profound insight into the problem of evil, derived by Pittenger through his processive understanding of the Divine, and reflected on by Kushner after the untimely death of his son Aaron from 'progeria' (rapid aging).

Dr. Pittenger is known by many for his profoundly Christian and deeply sensitive reflections on human sexuality, but in this paper I wish to focus on Pittenger's processive understanding of the Divine, and God's relationship to the reality of natural evil. I will attempt to show through the theology of Pittenger that a processive understanding of reality, including the Divine reality we call God, deals with the problem of evil in a very coherent way, and provides hints for a pastoral practice that is much more compassionate and Christian than those approaches which see natural evil in some way as "the will of God."

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner states at the outset of his book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*<sup>1</sup>, that this is not an abstract book about God and theology. He says that it is a very personal book, written by someone who believes in God and in the goodness of the world, someone who has spent most of his life trying to help other people believe, and was compelled by a personal tragedy to rethink everything he had been taught about God and God's ways. He then recounts the short life and death of his son Aaron, and says that he wanted to write a book that could be given to the person who has been hurt by life, and who knows in his heart that if there is any justice in the world, he deserved better. Thus

---

<sup>1</sup> Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York: Schocken Books, 1981.

Rabbi Kushner develops his insights into the problem of evil that are remarkably similar to those of Norman Pittenger.

W. Norman Pittenger has written or edited more than seventy books in an academic career in Christian theology which has spanned most of the twentieth century, from 1939 to his death in 1997. His 'slant' on the Christian faith is that of a process theologian,<sup>2</sup> an approach to theology which he used for more than forty years of academic life.<sup>3</sup>

Pittenger's processive understanding of the Divine is primarily indebted to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Pittenger is especially touched by an observation of Whitehead in *Process and Reality* that the Galilean origin of Christianity does not emphasize the "ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover" as images of God. Rather, God's self-disclosure in Jesus of Nazareth "dwells upon the tender elements of the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and it finds purpose in the immediacy of a kingdom not of this world. Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also it is a little oblivious as to morals."<sup>4</sup>

For Pittenger, God is 'pure unbounded Love', 'Love -in-act,' which is disclosed in a threefold quality of the experience of the divine activity in the world, a triunity:

For the triunitarian doctrine of God... is based primarily on the living experience of men and women who believed that they were responding to God's activity in the world. They were familiar with the Jewish faith that through nature and history the one God of the universe is actively at work. They knew also that in Jesus Christ they had been in touch with a particular and decisive activity of God. And then in their response to that activity, first in Jesus Christ and then more generally to that which "God is up to" in the whole world, they knew a reality greater than themselves which impelled them to such a new life of loving concern that it must (they were convinced) be more than their own human doing.<sup>5</sup>

Pittenger claims that "the divine Lover whom we call God" is revealed by the fact that "in and behind this mysterious cosmic process of which we are a part there is an abiding reality, supremely worshipful, entirely unsurpassable by anything else, and utterly dependable in action --- a reality who for Christian faith has declared himself in one of our own kind."<sup>6</sup> Pittenger borrows from Whitehead the insight that, "as *primordial*, God is

---

<sup>2</sup> W. Norman Pittenger. *God in Process*. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1967, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> W. Norman Pittenger. *Becoming and Belonging: The Meaning of Human Existence and Community*. Wilton, CT: Morehouse Publishing, 1989, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred North Whitehead. *Process and Reality*. New York: The Free Press, 1969, p. 404.

<sup>5</sup> W. Norman Pittenger. *The Divine Triunity*. Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1977, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> W. Norman Pittenger. *Making Sexuality Human*. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1979,

the continuum of all possibilities, the treasure-house of potentiality to be applied to the creation; that, as *consequent* (or affected by that creation), God is the recipient of all value of good achieved in the creative advance; and that, as *superjective*, God ‘pours back into the world’ that which has thus been received from it but is now harmonized within the divine life that is ‘the Harmony of harmonies.’”<sup>7</sup>

Pittenger holds that God is committed to the creation with all its openness, indeterminacy, and freedom, is active in it as the ‘Lure of love’, and works “*from* the past, *in* the present, *toward* the future.... God is both active *and* passive; he or she initiates possibility, lures toward realization and is therefore ‘modified’ ... by that movement and its results.” Thus, “we can speak meaningfully of a divine enrichment by accomplished good in creation, and we can also allow for what might be called a divine sadness because of wrong creaturely decisions and what they bring about. God shares in the anguish of the world; God suffers with the world without being overcome by the wrong in it.”<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps a meditative reflection on the first chapter of Genesis can illustrate these ideas of Whitehead and Pittenger in a more poetic, less technical way. In that chapter, the priestly authors first assert that God is the primal source of all reality. But God first creates a vast waste with darkness covering the deep (chaos, possibility, potentiality). And then the Spirit of God (*ruah*) hovered over the surface of the water, light was created, and God saw that the light was good. (Good for God as well as good for creation!) Thus God is the recipient of the value of the creative advance (darkness to light) and pours back into the world what has been received from it (the light of Love --- God's hovering Spirit) in a further creative advance with the creation of sun, moon, and stars. “And God saw all that God had made, and it was very Good,” (i.e., harmonized with the divine life.)<sup>9</sup>

We must also remember that for Pittenger as well as for Whitehead, creative advance occurs within a quantum mechanical understanding of the physical world, in which a succession of indeterminate but statistically predictable matter-energy events connect and relate all future happenings with the present and the past in a way that is impossible to measure or accurately predict by the laws of Newtonian physics, and is impossible to conceptualize in any essentialist metaphysics. In this twentieth century model of how the universe unfolds, discontinuity, interrelatedness, attractive (and repulsive) forces, and decision (both conscious and preconscious) all play a very important role. Pittenger is one of only a few twentieth century theologians who have taken these

---

pp. 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> *Becoming and Belonging*, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>9</sup> All Biblical paraphrases and quotations in this section are taken from *The Revised English Bible, Genesis*: Chapter 1.

aspects of quantum physics and applied them to an understanding of God and reflections on Christian faith.<sup>10</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Rabbi Kushner's starting point is a much more concrete event than Pittenger's theological musings. His son Aaron had stopped gaining weight at about the age of eight months and his hair started falling out after he turned one year old. Eventually, Aaron's condition was diagnosed as 'progeria' – rapid aging. The Rabbi was told that his son "would never grow much beyond three feet in height, would have no hair on his head or body, would look like a little old man while he was still a child, and would die in his early teens."<sup>11</sup> What Rabbi Kushner felt that day was "a deep, aching sense of unfairness. It didn't make sense. I had been a good person. I had tried to do what was right in the sight of God. More than that, I was living a more religiously committed life than most people I knew, people who had large, healthy families. I believed that I was following God's ways and doing His work. How could this be happening to my family? If God existed, if He was minimally fair, let alone loving and forgiving, how could He do this to me?"<sup>12</sup>

Kushner points out that while he and his wife were wrestling with their faith as well as their grief, friends tried to help but really couldn't, and the books he turned to were "more concerned about defending God's honor, with logical proof that bad is really good and that evil is necessary to make this a good world, than they were with curing the bewilderment and anguish of the parent of a dying child."<sup>13</sup> Unlike Pittenger, Kushner is not a formally trained philosopher but rather a religious man who has been hurt by life and wanted to share with others how one could still find God in the face of seeming injustice and blind fate.

I now return to Pittenger. How does his triune experience of divine activity and becoming deal with the problem of physical evil? If God is the 'lure of Love', how can we account for tsunamis which kill hundreds of thousands of people, earthquakes, hurricanes, mudslides, children dying of cancer, or other assorted planetary ills? If God is Love-in-act, why is there madness, disease, natural violence, and destructive natural force? Can Pittenger's Christian theology of process provide an explanatory model for natural evil?

Although Pittenger touches on the problem of evil in several of his books, it is in one of his most recent books, *Becoming and Belonging*, that he deals with evil in the most sustained way. In fact, Chapter Two of this book is entitled "The Loving God and the Fact

---

<sup>10</sup> For a further discussion of these issues, see Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., "Theology and the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle," Unpublished Manuscript.

<sup>11</sup> *When Bad Things...*, p.4

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

of Evil,” much of which I will summarize here. First of all, Pittenger asserts that evil “is not willed by God, either directly or permissively, as if things might have been otherwise, but God allows evil to happen.” We might recall that in *Genesis*, Chapter 1, when the ‘ruah’ of God creates light, there is still plenty of chaos left, which God in a sense allows by allowing creation, but the spirit of God only wills that which can be called ‘good’. “Only insofar as there a world at all, with its necessary freedom, can God be said thus to be responsible.”<sup>14</sup>

God's limitation is sheer goodness. In that goodness God grants freedom to the creation with the result that decisions, conscious or unconscious, may and in fact do produce evil that God neither wills nor wants.... We should be realistic, facing the fact of evil in all its forms but ready also to see that the infinite resourcefulness of the divine Love-in-act can find ways of handling such evil, so that a positive good may result in the end.<sup>15</sup>

We can see examples of this in the outpouring of assistance, compassion, and generosity that generally follows in the wake of natural or humanly caused disasters such as the recent tsunami in Southeast Asia or the compassionate response, still being expressed, in the aftermath of the destruction of buildings and lives on September 11, 2001. Pittenger points out that most people generally lead reasonable happy lives and avoid dwelling on what is wrong with creation. “But there are also the moments of tragedy --- someone we love dies of cancer, there is an appalling airplane crash, we hear about a devastating earthquake or a tidal wave, famine strikes some part of the world --- when any man or woman who is at all sensitive will admit that this is not ‘a nice world’ but rather is filled with tragedy, sadness, and pain.”<sup>16</sup> And sometimes we observe the violence in the struggle for survival in various life species and wonder what ‘God is up to.’

Rabbi Kushner spends a great deal of time discussing what people think ‘God is up to.’ Some think of evil as necessary in the short run so that God’s justice will prevail at the end. Kushner rejects this explanation. Some think that God has God’s reasons for making bad things happen to them, reasons that they are in no position to judge (the image of the Divine tapestry is brought to mind, where we only see the underside of the tapestry, not the beautiful pattern on top). Kushner rejects this explanation. The possibility of suffering as education, to repair that which is faulty in a person’s personality, is also considered. Kushner rejects this explanation as well. Many consider physical evil as Divine punishment but, in the Rabbinic tradition, Kushner presents stories to show how this understanding is incompatible with a loving and reconciling Divinity in whom we believe. Finally, Kushner discusses the possibility that physical evil is a ‘test’ and claims that this would make God the inventor of sadistic ‘games’ with his most faithful followers, trying by torture to see how much they **really** love Him. All these explanations and more assume

---

<sup>14</sup> *Becoming and Belonging*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

that God is the cause of our suffering, and they try to understand why God would want us to suffer.

There may be another approach. Maybe God does not cause our suffering. Maybe it happens for some other reason than the will of God.... Could it be that God does not cause the bad things that happen to us? Could it be that he doesn't decide which families will give birth to a handicapped child, that he did not single out Ron to be crippled by a bullet or Helen by a degenerative disease, but rather that He stands ready to help them and us cope with our tragedies if we could only get beyond the feelings of guilt and anger that separate us from Him? Could it be that "How could God do this to me?" is really the wrong question for us to ask?<sup>17</sup>

Pittenger believes that we must "reconcile these appalling facts (of natural evil) with the belief that God is good and caring. Only so can we make sense of the world and ourselves in that world." Christians especially must deal with the issue of evil, but they have done so over the centuries with indifferent success. This is because Christians have often used an inadequate or mistaken 'model' or concept of God --- a "model of deity as 'despotic ruler' who is in complete control of everything that happens in the creation, and hence, must be responsible for all that takes place within it." We get a sense of this false image of deity at work when natural disasters are referred to as 'acts of God' in insurance policies and the law. But, "if the great central Christian affirmation is indeed that the clue to God's 'nature and activity' is the event of Jesus Christ, then it is imperative to see and say that 'God is love' and that God never acts in such a fashion that deity may correctly be regarded as responsible directly or even permissively... for anything and everything that takes place in creation. God's nature and God's activity are always caring and loving, persuading and luring, never sheerly coercive and never imposed arbitrarily on that creation."<sup>18</sup>

The corollary of this conviction that God is 'sheer Love' is "that creation has its freedom, its causative capacity, and its necessary accountability for what occurs in that freedom."<sup>19</sup> In *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II is close to this approach when he asserts that "some threats (to life) come from nature itself," but does not attribute this force to divine activity and in fact states that "they are made worse by the culpable indifference and negligence of those who could in some cases remedy them."<sup>20</sup> Pittenger argues that "the world is not some sort of object that God shoves around, intrudes into, and manipulates. To the contrary, it is there as a given fact with its specific characteristics that God respects and with which God deals."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *When Bad Things...*, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> *Becoming and Belonging*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>20</sup> Pope John Paul II. Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, paragraph 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Becoming and Belonging*, p. 19.

If the model of the deity as ‘despotic ruler’ is abandoned in favor of the belief that the ‘brief Galilean vision’ is our best intimation of God, then omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence must be redefined:

*Omnipotence* is the strength of the divine Love-in-act in a world that... possesses its own independence and freedom. *Omniscience* means that Love, God as Love, is all-knowing about what in fact happens and of the various possibilities that the creation may actualize --- but without dictating them. Omnipresence tells us that the divine love is everywhere and always present and at work to augment the good, often in very surprising places --a Christian would point especially to a humble human life, to a man born in a manger, and to that same man rejected and put to death, as the place where such active presentness is most clearly seen.<sup>22</sup>

Thus Divinity offers the unlimited and constant possibility of love, creativity, and goodness to a creation which often, but not always, accepts this lure of Love in creative advance. But even at the electronic level, ‘decisions’ sometimes bring significant and untoward results as the relatively new field of chaos theory is now bringing to light. The process of creation has been taking place for billions of years, with evolutionary groping, mistakes, and dead-ends. “Ours is an ‘unfinished world’.... We cannot expect, if that is true, to find everything perfectly accomplished. On the contrary, what we are bound to find is a continuing work in which the aim is to create something splendid and beautiful -- but that final end is not achieved.... Christian faith would insist that *God* is actively engaged and working toward that end, not remote from and unconcerned with what takes place, but genuinely and vigorously acting toward it and in it with respect for and use of creaturely freedom and accountability.”<sup>23</sup>

Rabbi Kushner expresses the same ideas in similar words (without the references to Christianity):

It may be that Einstein and the book of Genesis are right. A system *left to itself* may evolve in the direction of randomness. On the other hand, our world may not be a system left to itself. There may in fact be a creative impulse acting on it, the Spirit of God hovering over the dark waters, operating over the course of the millennia to bring order out of the chaos. It may yet come to pass that, as “Friday afternoon” of the world’s evolution ticks toward the Great Sabbath which is the End of Days, the impact or random evil will be diminished.

Or it may be that God finished His work of creating eons ago, and left the rest to us. Residual chaos, chance and mischance, things happening for no reason, will continue to be with us, the kind of evil that Milton Steinberg has called “the still unremoved scaffolding of the edifice of God’s creativity.” In that case, we will simply have to learn how to live

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.



with it, sustained and comforted by the knowledge that the earthquake and the accident, like the murder and the robbery, are not the will of God, but represent that aspect of reality which stands independent of His will, and which angers and saddens God even as it angers and saddens us.<sup>24</sup>

One final reflection of Pittenger on natural evil is important; namely, “that a considerable part of ‘natural evil’ is called that only when and as human life is involved.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, the formation of continents, continental drift, volcanic and tectonic activity, glaciation, even the extinction of the dinosaurs are all considered important geological events but not natural evils, unless one of the tectonic events happens to be a contemporary earthquake which kills thousands of people. In this regard I am reminded of the observation that we call Dutch elm disease ‘disease’ precisely because we value Dutch elms more than the parasites which feed on them. Otherwise we would say that Dutch elms were ‘fodder’ for these important bacteria. Assessment of ‘physical evil’ is related to the capacity of human being to create values, even the value of biological life, and then to apply these values to experiences and events. When we experience joy and endure pain and suffering, when we dwell in the hope of divine love and creative advance rather than in the shadow of death, we are celebrating the revelation of the Divine through the human manifested in the Incarnation.

In that event, with a distinctive clarity, God is seen to be actively present... and thus genuinely a sharer in creaturely existence at our human level. This conviction may then be taken as a clue for the reading of *all* that God does. This God will be seen as a suffering God who shares in the anguish of the creation yet is not overcome or destroyed by that sharing.... The various stories that tell of Jesus’ ‘resurrection’... tell us that Love expressed in the world, sharing the world’s pain, and knowing from ‘inside’ its anguish, cannot be holden of death.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, for Pittenger, Christian faith in the face of evil is “a call to action, and part of the action is for us to serve as God’s agents in overcoming evil wherever we see it and to work with God and with our fellow humans so that the divine purpose of God for creation may be more effectively realized.”<sup>27</sup>

Rabbi Kushner shares a similar point of view. Although he acknowledges that a ‘suffering God’ is central to the Christian belief system, he also holds that the notion of a ‘suffering God’, “a God who weeps”<sup>28</sup> is not that foreign to postbiblical Judaism. “I

---

<sup>24</sup> *When Bad Things...*, pp. 74-75

<sup>25</sup> *Becoming and Belonging*, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

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

<sup>28</sup> *When Bad Things...*, p. 115.

would like to think that the anguish I feel when I read of the sufferings of innocent people reflects God's anguish and God's compassion, even if His way of feeling pain is different from ours."<sup>29</sup>

In a Chapter entitled "God Can't Do Everything, But He Can Do Some Important Things," Rabbi Kushner considers the efficacy of prayer in relation to physical evil. He holds that we cannot pray for the impossible, or the unnatural – he would consider unnatural the attempt to ward off physical evils by means of prayer. "We cannot pray out of a sense of revenge or irresponsibility, asking God to do our work for us."<sup>30</sup> But prayer does put us in touch with others, people who share the same concerns, values, dreams and pains that we do. Ritual brings people together – it is one of the things that religion does best! Letting people into our grief when we are afflicted by physical evil is exactly what we need. Sharing our concern with others who have suffered is a way of sharing their pain and helping them to heal. We go to a religious service not to find God (we can do that in the privacy of our rooms) but to find a congregation. Kushner quotes a famous storyteller who once asked his father, "If you don't believe in God, why do you go to synagogue so regularly?" His father answered, " Jews go to synagogue for all sorts of reasons. My friend Garfinkle, who is Orthodox, goes to talk with God. I go to talk to Garfinkle."<sup>31</sup>

But Rabbi Kushner argues that prayer also puts us in touch with God. When we ask God to make us less afraid, by letting us know that He is at our side, whatever the next day might bring we will be able to handle it because we won't have to face it alone. "That is the kind of prayer that God answers." "People who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for the grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost, very often have their prayers answered."<sup>32</sup> Kushner holds that the God he believes in does not send us the problem; he gives us the strength to cope with the problem. He believes that God gives us strength and patience and hope, renewing our spiritual resources when they run dry. "We need only turn to Him, admit that we can't do this on our own, and understand that bravely bearing up under long-term illness is one of the most human, and one of the most godly, things we can ever do."<sup>33</sup> Rabbi Kushner summarizes his reflections thus:

How does God make a difference in our lives if he neither kills nor cures?  
God inspires people to help other people who have been hurt by life, and by helping them, they protect them from the danger of feeling alone, abandoned, or judged. God makes some people want to become doctors and nurses, to spend days and nights of self-sacrificing concern with an

---

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

intensity for which no money can compensate, in an effort to sustain life and alleviate pain.... Human intelligence has come to understand more about the natural laws concerning sanitation, germs, immunization, antibiotics, and has succeeded in eliminating many... scourges. God, who neither causes nor prevents tragedies, helps by inspiring people to help.<sup>34</sup>

In both these men of God, one Jewish and the other Christian, we see a remarkable convergence of ideas and insights in dealing with the problem of physical evil. Both men deny that God is the source of evil and use materials from their respective traditions to demonstrate this truth. Both see creation as ongoing, and see Divine activity as bringing order from chaos, love from strife, life from death. Both see humans as the partners of the Divine in ameliorating the human estate and in comforting those who have been hurt by life. Both challenge us, each in his own way, 'to light a candle rather than curse the darkness.'

---

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.