Grebe, Matthias , and Johannes Grössl. T&T Clark Handbook of Suffering and the Problem of Evil. London: T&T Clark, 2023. T&T Clark Handbooks. T&T Clark Handbooks. Bloomsbury Collections. Web. 29 Feb. 2024. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780567682468>.

Accessed on: Thu Feb 29 2024 10:32:33 Greenwich Mean Time

Access provided by: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

Copyright © Joshua Hordern. All rights reserved. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Christian Ethics

Author:	Matthias Grebe Johannes Grössl
DOI:	10.5040/9780567682468
Page Range:	490–500
Description:	Introduction: Ethics, Suffering, and the Problem of Evil Ethics covers “the whole range of intellectual attention that is given to moral thinking and moral teaching by philosophy and theology”. Oliver O’Donovan, Self, World and Time (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 67. Ethics, as a discipline of normative reflection on normative thinking which seeks to distinguish and communicate good reasons for acting from bad ones, is not owned by either theology or philosophy. Whether ethical reflection on suffering and evil inspired by theology is more illuminating than that which eschews such sources lies outside the scope of this chapter. For disciplined Christian theological reflection on ethicsethics – Christian ethics – terms such as “good”, “justice”, “evil”, and “suffering” are necessary for scholarly and everyday ways of thinking and talking about how to live before God. Indeed, Christian ethics must pay close attention to the phenomena and categories upon which discussions of suffering and the problem of evil have focused. Were evil and suffering completely absent, ethics of almost any imaginable sort would be unnecessary. For Christian ethics, in particular, there would be no reason for God to act to deliver creation from evil; there would be no uncertainty as to how human agency should conform itself to God’s purposes and therefore no need for a sifting of good and bad reasons for acting; and there would be no need to pray “deliver us from evil”. However, the task of ethics, as we know it, is saturated by “our keen awareness that things are, or can go, terribly wrong”. Jeph Holloway, The Poetics of Grace: Christian Ethics as Theodicy (Eugene: Cascade, 2013), 5. Discerning and communicating what is good and bad in a state of affairs and what is right or wrong in a course of action are necessary burdens laid upon human creatures in our sorry circumstances. For Christian ethics at least, these burdens are aspects of human vocation, summoning agents to the tasks of right thinking and sober judgment whereby a living and pleasing sacrifice of their agency may be offered in service to God (Rom. 12:1-3). Responding to this call, humans must find right paths or “paths of righteousnesspaths of righteousness” (Ps. 23:3) amidst even “horrendous evils” and sufferings in the hope that evil has been and will be overcome by good (Rom. 12:21). Success in finding and following such right paths is served by this distinction between thinking and teaching (or “communication”). One chorus with which Christian ethics can add its distinctive voice concerns the relationship between pastoral care and theodicy. Many have remarked on the seeming tone-deafness of much theodicy literature to therapeutic or pastoral matters. E.g., Toby Betenson, “Anti-Theodicy”,

Philosophy Compass 11, no. 1 (2016): 56–65. For Christian ethics to be illuminating it must be both well-reasoned and pastorally attuned. Much of Christian ethics emphasizes this through ensuring its reasoning is closely integrated with the practical affairs of those who commit sins or suffer evils. For example, discussions of conscience as a form of pastoral theology is a longstanding aspect of Christian ethics. In more recent times, Christian ethics has displayed a marked tendency to deny that ethics can be well conceived and practiced if it is not closely attentive to people's everyday moral thinking, speaking, and acting amidst evil and suffering. E.g., Michael Banner, The Ethics of Everyday Life (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). This pastoral emphasis suggests that a particular contribution of Christian ethics will be to reflect on how to communicate well with someone who is suffering. It can do so normatively, posing critical questions about the quality of the trains of reasoning given for this or that thought, word, or action. Weaving together its reflective and pastoral dimensions, Christian theological ethics requires that people pose such questions as neighbors "alongside the moral thinker", O'Donovan, Self, World and Time, 72. walking through life amidst suffering and evil. What difference might this pastoral accompaniment make to ethics? Some frame theodicy in terms of harm and benefit, often in ways characteristic of utilitarian ethicsutilitarian ethics. See Peter Forrest, "Why Richard Swinburne Won't 'Rot in Hell': A Defense of Tough-minded Theodicy", Sophia 49, no. 1 (2010): 37–57. However, a utilitarian approach is by no means the primary or necessary form of intellectual attention to suffering in relation to ethics. Christian theological ethics cannot be comprehensively conceived in terms of a calculus in which God is justified if more benefit than harm follows from some event or situation. Instead, it must incorporate an exploration of how the compassion of Christ should discipline forms of Christian speech and action which faithfully follows God's avowed attentiveness to God's people. If the testimony of the prophet Jeremiah is to be believed, then God intends to prosper God's people and not to harm them, to give them hope and a future. God makes good on that intention by keeping covenantal company with them as they journey in hope amidst the most lamentable and even horrific circumstances. See Jer. 29:10-14. In the Psalms, a voice cries out amidst distress:Who will show us some good?Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord! Ps. 4:6. Such cries frame an answer to the question "What is God doing about evil?" Holloway, The Poetics of Grace, 6.: namely that God, through covenant faithfulness, keeps illuminating company with creatures, showing them good amidst evil. Reflecting this divine responsiveness, attentiveness to cries of distress is a proper beginning to ethics. With this introduction in mind, the rest of the chapter will adopt the following structure. The first section will consider moral thinking by discerning four generic foci which arise for

Christian ethics in relation to suffering and evil. It will accomplish this by exploring one particular stream of theodicy, closely associated with aspects of ethical enquiry, namely "non-identity theodicy", as developed by Vince Vitale. Vince Vitale, Non-identity Theodicy: A Grace-based Response to the Problem of Evil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). The second section will consider moral teaching or speaking – the communication between people concerning suffering and evil – by exploring negatively what kinds of speech are themselves in some way evil. The third section will consider how to find right paths amidst evil, with an emphasis on faith, hope, and compassionate, company-keeping love, with particular reference to healthcare. The overall argument is that ethics must pay normative attention to both how people think and how people teach or otherwise communicate amidst suffering and evil and that doing so requires close, pastorally sensitive companionship.

Moral Thinking: Four foci for Ethical Reflection on Suffering and the Problem of Evil Differences between theodicies matter for Christian ethics. But to chart how ethics should engage in detail with distinct theodicies is beyond the scope of this chapter; still less will it be possible to judge whether one theodicy is more ethically illuminating than any other through an extensive survey. A promising candidate, however, for discerning important generic foci for moral thinking about suffering and evil is Vitale's non-identity theodicy, which holds that "God's reasons for allowing suffering are to be found . . . in our present and enduring status as objects of divine love". Vince VitaleIbid., 199. Classical Augustinian ethics and the revival of Anglophone Christian ethics in the last century have taken love and its objects as an overall lens through which to read human life. Love refers both to God's love for creation and to human loves, ordinate or inordinate, through which a community may be united or divided, healed or sickened. See John Burnaby, Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2007); Eric Gregory, Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). A first focus for Christian ethics is the nature of love's entanglement with the world's suffering and evil. Non-identity theodicy holds that the people who exist and are thus available to be loved by God could not have existed had the evils which preceded their lives been even slightly different: a man and a woman may come to be married on account of the specific evils which have thrown them together. Similarly, children born of their union only come to exist partly because of those evils. Accordingly, if people have beloved and loving lives, they do so because of the evils which have made their existence possible. God should not be blamed for permitting evils without which no actual individuals could have come to exist and become objects of God's love. Thus, on this view, it makes little rational sense to wish away the world's evils or that God had given one a better life.

I cannot rationally wish to have been someone else. The life I live temporally and indeed eternally is inextricably entangled with evils and loves which preceded my existence and proceeded from my coming to be.Stump, EleonorePsalms“the desires of the heart” For Vitale, the question is how to justify God’s role in allowing suffering and evil in such circumstances. He answers by understanding the ethical core of theodicy in parental terms: A good parent is not the one who never allows suffering in a child’s life; a good parent –whether human or divine – is the one who creates children out of divinelovelove, who is committed to suffering alongside those children, and who is willing to make whatever personal sacrifices necessary to ensure that one day suffering can be overcome. Vitale, Non-identity Theodicy, 231. God’s parental love is particular – it is not any possible human that God loves; but rather God’s actually existing children. By a different route, Eleonore Stump advocates a similarly parental approach to God’s love amidst suffering. She extrapolates from God’s parenthood of the non-human creation in Job to God’s parenthood of human creatures, complementing Vitale’s approach, which moves analogically between human procreation and divine creation. Eleonore Stump, Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 187–93. By either route, God’s parental love, suffusing all creation, human and non-human, is basic to ethical discernment of what God is doing amidst and about suffering and evil. What such divine love requires of human love is then decisive for Christian ethical thinking. Human sexual love, which normally precedes procreation, is implicated within non-identity theodicy, making sexual and procreative ethics of central concern for reflecting on love’s entanglement with suffering and evil. Augustine’s reckoning that procreation is no longer strictly necessary because of the advent of Christ but nonetheless good is complicated by non-identity theodicy’s articulation of precisely why (pro)creation of new human creatures is not evil even though they are born into suffering. See Augustine, De Bono Coniugali. For this theodicy, divine love works in and through other forms of parental love: to be – and thereby be objects of divine love – is a great good that is only possible for those who exist. Such, on this view, is the “justificatory power of a worthwhile human life”. Vitale, Non-identity Theodicy, 203. Moreover, what proceeds from the arrangement of evils which led to our births and continue through human life is also a matter of loves or, as Stump puts it, drawing on the Psalms, “the desires of the heart”. Stump, Wandering in Darkness, 7. In this sense, loves concern what one is committed to amidst suffering and evil – for example, the well-being of a sick spouse and justice for the oppressed. To make any progress in ethics, understanding the God-permitted and necessary conditions under which human loves direct the lives of individuals and communities is essential. The generic ethical focus arising from this theodicy, therefore, concerns love. This gets ethics off on the right foot, focusing intellectual attention on sustaining right loves of what is good amidst the evil and suffering which is both permitted and necessarily constitutive of the conditions in which people make the venture of love. A second focus for ethics follows, namely concerning the evils which have preceded and the evils which now characterize a person's existence – evils which arise out of the human loves (whether good or bad) which have led to conception and birth. These provide the (inter-)generational context within which God's call may be heard. The specificity Stump, EleonoreO'Donovan, Oliverof sufferings and evils provides the detailed backdrop not for some timeless ethics but ethics in individuals' and generations' concrete histories. A key requirement of ethics, on this view, is a close reckoning with how evil has shaped people's lives before and during their earthly existence as an aspect of the allotted vocation God has for them. For people accepting God's call on their lives, their response is intimately interlinked with a conviction of God's love for them in their particularity. God's love connects their calling to the particular evils they suffer which they may confront in the course of their lives. Inasmuch as love is bound up with the precise context of their procreative acts, their moral thinking must engage in trans-generational suffering and evil, giving due weight to the promise that the effects of sin will be carried from generation to generation. Discerning which evils should be borne by one generation for the sake of future generations is then a key aspect of ethics. The generic focus for ethics, therefore, is upon the evil conditions of an individual's or community's life. These are not marginal to the call of God to an upright life. Rather, engaging reflectively and pastorally with those evil conditions will be vital to the discernment of vocation. To be clear, however, this claim does not explain the evil conditions themselves but rather gives expression to an important aspect of Christian ethical reflection in response to evil, that concerned with vocation. A third important focus for ethics concerns how ethical reasoningethical reasoning should engage with aspirations for the elimination of suffering. Vitale and Stump's parental framing of God's relationship to the particular creatures, whose beloved existence, worthwhile nature, and vocation are owed to suffering and evil, suggests that completely ridding one's own or others' existence of suffering and evil is not a rational goal. This claim makes sense of ethics' place in theodicy not only at the personal or familial level but also at a political level, at which the ethical reasoning commonly directs the force of coercive authority and law. Oliver O'Donovan has argued for political ethics as a form of theological apologetics, not as a distinct form of religious thinking but rather as a particular form of doctrinal exposition. Oliver O'Donovan, The Ways of Judgment (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), xiv. Clearly, theodicies may differ in their implications for how politics should operate in relation to suffering and evil. For example, an extrapolation of non-identity theodicy would be a politics in which, since the existence of beloved shared traditions, institutions and societal inheritances upon which human existence depends are owed to the evil conditions of the world, the elimination of all suffering could not be a rational aim. Thus, political ethics takes its cue from what may be discerned from reflection on the conditions of human procreation, applying it across the full horizon of human enterprise. Such a view chastens the prideful tendency common to politics that Saint Augustine famously observed. See Augustine, City of God, passim. However, it also affirms the role of temporal justice in providing the conditions for meaningful life even in the midst of suffering, for example through healthcare. Politics' important but provisional place in human affairs indicates the importance of eschatology to Christian ethics' interrelation with suffering and the problem of evil. The elimination of suffering cannot rationally be a work of human agency – transhumanist aspirations should be chastened by the perennial all-too obviously imperfect practice of politics. Instead, such a happy ending can only be hoped for as an achievement of divine agency. In sum, non-identity theodicy raises the generic question of what principled limit should be placed on the goals to which ethical, including political, agency is directed. A fourth and final focus for ethics follows from the third: namely, how reflection on suffering and evil positions ethics within such divine salvific agency. If it is right for Christian ethics to attend, with due realism, to inter-generational evils and sufferings, it must also be led, with ordinate hope, by the promise of God's love which endures to the thousandth generation. Amidst evil and suffering, how one thinks of human agency in relation to divine agency matters for ethics. Ethics which is attentive to the story of Christ must be properly evangelical, that is, defined and energized by the hope of the good news revealed definitively in Jesus Christ. Vitale remarks that "love in its preeminent form includes meaning-makers being willing to risk their whole selves for one another". Vitale, Non-identity Theodicy, 200. Humans are a type of being whom God could love in sacrifice and who also can love sacrificially. On this view, the entanglement of love with suffering and evil inspires not personal or political quietism but the venture of risky action, even to the point of complete self-sacrifice for love of God and neighbor, against the eschatological horizon of God's promised action to end evil and suffering, which has been guaranteed in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The call on human creatures to be a living sacrifice is a normative summons that all their ethical thinking should respond to fellow creatures as God does, though with far less certainty of rectitude or success. In summary, whether or not non-identity theodicy (or any particular version of it) is judged plausible, it provides a way of raising to prominence focal questions for ethics which should follow from consideration of suffering and the problem of evil.

Christian ethics as a form of moral thinking will need to incorporate (i) reflection on the role of God's love and human loves in the world, (ii) reflection on evil in constituting the precise conditions for the vocation of human moral thinking, (iii) modesty about personal and political capacities regarding the elimination of suffering, and (iv) energetic, hopeful commitment to participate in the suffering creation as a living sacrifice, in anticipation of God's eventual salvific agency. With these observations about generic issues for moral thinking in mind, we turn to certain generic problems which attend communication – moral teaching or speaking – regarding suffering and evil.

Moral Teaching: Avoiding Evils of Speech Ethics' normative reflection on moral thinking has significance for the attention it pays to moral teaching. Moral thinking involves normative reflection on how people share in common objects of love. As such, it involves an exercise in the communication of moral understanding whereby individual thought, consisting in some combination of affective insight, reflective analysis, deliberative discernment, and resolution toward action, becomes intersubjective. Joshua Hordern, Political Affections: Civic Participation and Moral Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch. 2. Such is what is properly incorporated under the heading "moral teaching". However, the term "teaching" may mislead if it suggests unidirectional speech rather than the conversation, contests, and afflictions of human interchange. While the end of ethics is some resolution about action, the necessary journey which ethics must take en route to action aims to bring order to moral understanding, principally (though not solely) through verbal articulation. Ethics then is not properly solitary or solipsistic but a corporate enterprise of thinking, teaching, and learning, a multidirectional sermo (conversation) in which understanding may grow. Such sermo may be human divine as well as human-human (and indeed non-human). Its paradigmatic theological context is ecclesial. The moral moralquality of speechquality of speech, by which teaching occurs, is therefore itself a core concern of ethics. "Speech" means not only the kind of communication in which Job's friends engaged but also that which constitutes letters, books, podcasts, articles, or any other kind of written or spoken word. Such speech can be bad or good not only in the reasons it proffers for action but in several other respects. We have already noted the problem of some theodicies' unpastoral speech. Here are four further evils of speech from which ethics – when worked out in moral teaching – needs to be delivered. Reckoning with these is the precursor to considering a positive ethical vision in the section entitled "Finding the paths of righteousness". First, speaking too quickly: amidst suffering and evil, there is a temptation to be quick to speak and slow to listen; to pronounce on what should be done before hearing what has been done or endured; without listening to those who have been hard done by or sinned against, upon whom evils have fallen; or with the assumption that there is anything to be done at all. This evil that threatens ethics as a corporate endeavor requires patient endurance and sustained intellectual attention, an immersive experience in which the contours of suffering and evil in a person's or community's biography are sensitively charted and traversed. The questions "What kind of evil is this?" and "How precisely has suffering taken form?" might be first words. But they should precede the questioners' attentive silence, succeeded primarily by further, exploratory questions. Second, not speaking at all: in avoiding the Scylla of hasty speech, there is yet a Charybdis toward which ethics might be dragged, namely making no articulate response at all to evil and suffering. It might be thought that evil and suffering are so inherently subjectively experienced as to be impenetrable to intersubjective ethical reflection, or any ethical reflection by anyone other than the sufferer: "this is my experience of evil and only I can interpret and act upon it." On this view, to claim ethical standing, others' speech should be an echo that reaffirms and in no way troubles the sufferer's self-consciousness. Moral teaching would be evacuated of content other than what obedience to a sufferer's self-perception requires. A response containing innovation or surprise – an "answer rather than an echo" O'Donovan, The Ways of Judgment, 113. – would be impossible. Such refusal to speak seems liable to connive in evil, allowing it to lie in the shadows or in the half-light which a single perspective – even that of a sufferer – may throw. Hordern, Political Affections, 77–81. This is why, politically speaking, legal and other public authorities lift the grievances of those who allege wrongdoing out of the private realm to make them matters of public concern so that the fullest light possible may be shed upon them. HordernIbid., 123. Third, speaking without judgment: a related evil is to speak without judgment as to the causes of evil and suffering. Jesus taught both "Judge not" and "Judge for yourselves". Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 12:57-59. It is true that speaking too quickly may be a "rush to judgment", as illustrated by Job's non-theological speechfriends' ascription of his suffering to his sin. Such evils involve speaking of what we do not know or can only know dimly. For example, on a skeptical theist view, this would include God's motives or intentions in specific circumstances. That there must be a limit to any talk of blame has been established by Vitale. Vitale, Non-identity Theodicy, 11: "[T]he extent of one's responsibility for something depends on one's ability to conceive how bad it is, and it is not clear that anyone other than God could have conceptual abilities great enough to bear primary responsibility for horrendous evils." This should caution moral teaching against irresponsible judgmentalism. At the threshold of speech crouches an unkind moralizing. While one cannot rule out considerations such as punishment and character formation in addressing the problem of evil, yet the warning to "judge not" calls ethical reflection to an epistemological modesty in charting such factors'

influence on events. On the other hand, people judging for themselves – as distinct from leaving judgment to others such as political authorities – matters for ethics. Human judgments of what is right should be attentive to God's judgments as to what has gone wrong and how, so far as is discernible. The temptation is to limit speech solely to "the evils which befall" our neighbors – to non-intentional evil – rather than to speak of evils which follow because of their own or other humans' intentional action. Against this tendency, Christian ethics will insist on conceiving evil and suffering, at least partly, in terms of sin and righteousness. Even the evils which befall humans as a result of so-called natural disasters are commonly, though not always, entangled with the disordered loves of humanity: for example, a selfish refusal to change a way of life in order to correct an injustice. A task of theological ethics, therefore, is to discern how the doctrine of sin – seen in human frailty, error, folly, and wickedness – which the church confesses, has worked out in detail and, where possible, to provide accompaniment on the path of repentance.
Fourth, not speaking of God. The particular task of theological ethics, with respect to suffering and evil, is to provide moral teaching which will aid those who will listen to accept God's call. As the PsalmsPsalms frequently say, teaching can keep sufferers upright even amidst evil or set them on their feet again when struck down so that they can walk the path of righteousness. Psalm 119, passim. Non-theological speech is not necessarily evil speech any more than theological speech is necessarily good. However, a consistent omission of theological speech with its peculiar offer of healing or insight is a form of evil, a deficiency of intellectual attention to divine love. As noted at the outset, this chapter must be largely silent concerning strictly non-theological philosophical ethics, for reasons of space; save to say that, while issues of theodicy only apply necessarily for theological ethicists, nonetheless constructive reflection on suffering and evil between philosophical and theological ethicists is important. In summary, in such conversation, theologians themselves should not be too quick to speak but also should avoid not speaking at all, speaking without judgment or speaking without reference to God.

Finding the paths of righteousness Christian theological ethics involves thinking on and communicating right paths in hope of God's deliverance from and in response to suffering and evil. Human participation in deliverance requires the renewal of corporate human reasoning toward agency. In short, ethics requires not only disciplining speech away from corrupting evils but also finding right paths toward healing in the company of others. In classic Christian terms, this is a matter of peregrinatio or Plotinuspilgrimagepilgrimage which allows for patient, multi-perspectival reckoning with evil and suffering, while resolutely insisting on there being an eschatological horizon toward which all creatures are summoned and against which their thoughts, words, and deeds are evaluated. By the time the horizon becomes the present reality, the plurality of perspectives on evil, both conceptual and existential, will have become fully focused upon the Lamb, who brings a unity of perspective around a single throne. In the meantime, to think and teach about suffering and evil apart from ongoing, pastoral engagement in the sorrows and joys of God's creatures will not qualify as theological ethics. The pilgrimage through this life which Jesus took in incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension should now be the way of the church, in company with the Holy Spirit. Such ecclesial pilgrimageecclesial pilgrimage incorporates fellow travelers' speech and attentive listening, requiring faith, hope, and, above all, love in the form of compassion. Faith involves the shared recognition that, while humans participate in evil, as doers of evil, sufferers and comforters, only God can account for and address evil decisively, both now and in eternity. Freed from ultimate responsibility, an active faith freely commits a people to loyally following Christ, facing and penetrating the depths of evil without turning their faces away, blocking ears, or speaking of what they do not know. Faith commits the self in the church to a Christological beginning, middle, and end to its ethical reflection when faced with evil and suffering. In the midst of evil and suffering, ethical thinking and teaching inspired by Christian faith are coordinated to the enduring yet corrupted created order held together now by Christ as creator, with its ultimate horizon in the renewed creation. Such faith sets ethics off on the right footing as a corporate, thinking, communicative way of life amidst evil and suffering. On this account, Christian ethics is pursued in company with God in Christ and with others who share the same faith. Faith like this requires hope that evil will not encompass the final future of the earth's creatures. Ethics is sustained by the hope that human agency can be incorporated within God's salvific purposes. Through hope, evil and suffering in a personal or community narrative may be reinterpreted to enable thought and agency to gain fresh energy and direction. The task of projecting the human gaze forwards defines ethics as a hopeful task, demonstrating in practice that suffering and evil will not have the last word on a life's meaning but will be overcome and ended. Therefore, accompanying faith and hope in moral thinking and moral teaching is the form of love most apposite to relationship with those who suffer evils, namely compassion. Compassion is, by its nature, corporate: it is paradigmatically a quality of relationships and central to ethics as a corporate, peregrine response to evil and the problem of suffering. While also being a reasonably reliable trait of a person – a virtue – compassion's chief function is to decenter individuals from self-regard and toward interpersonal relationship. A self-consciousness of the agent as one who is compassionate is liable to obstruct rather than assist with establishing a community that will bless the afflicted. Joshua Hordern, Compassion in Healthcare: Pilgrimage, Practice and Civic Life

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 102–15. It is not for nothing that it is the relationships between Job and his friends that the Scriptures especially scrutinize. Consider how healthcare provides a useful context for grasping compassion's nature. As one theological ethicist observes, "[B]ioethics [is] the paradigmatic field of . . . contestation" Hans Ulrich, "God's Story and Bioethics: The Christian Witness to The Reconciled World", Christian Bioethics 21, no. 3 (2015): 303–33, 313; for discussion, see Hordern, Compassion in Healthcare, 13 and ch. 5. about suffering's significance in this world's time. Consider especially the pain of miscarriage, a heartsore reality for many, which Vitale thoughtfully addresses. Vitale, Non-identity Theodicy, vii–ix. To my mind, compassion's relational nature is cognitive, affective, consensual, and often intercorporeal. Hordern, Compassion in Healthcare, 74–93. For compassionate healthcare relationships to form around a miscarriage requires the consent of those who lose a little one to make their thoughts available to a clinician. To understand loss will require affective-cognitive processes whereby the affections which are the beginnings of shared understanding enable someone's sorrow to be apprehended by another. Through "interaffectivity", reflective pastoral understanding of what evil has been suffered and collaborative deliberation as to what, if anything, is to be done, may be ventured. This consensual, cognitive-affective journey is often intercorporeal, making the proximity of somebody to another vital to the formation of compassionate relationship. As a sonographer scans for a fetal heartbeat, such intercorporeality is multiply instantiated. While compassion's nature frames ethics' work amidst suffering and the problem of evil, there is also compassion's content. In every compassionate encounter there are at least two ways of seeing the world – two doctrines of life – which specify that content. Doctrines might be relevantly different: for example, in respect of how distinct concepts of time change individuals' interpretation of evil and suffering. The horizon of bodily resurrection places a specific significance on a little one lost in miscarriage, incorporating them by faith and hope into future, intercorporeal relationship. The nature of evils suffered, therefore, is not only dependent upon the affections of those who have loved and lost but on the discordance between such loss and God's purposes for human life toward resurrection. Where doctrinal differences encounter one another, conversation may follow, leading to the possibility of a change of mind for one or more party. HordernIbid., 96–102. Similarly, differing notions of justice and injustice, and therefore of theodicy, may individuate the content of compassionate encounter. Ethics seeks primarily to fit reasoning and agency to God's justice – to find right paths rather than primarily defend God against critique. Nonetheless, as noted earlier, ethics – including political ethics – may operate in a mode of apologetic exposition. Compassion addresses evil both by reckoning with those at fault for evil and by caring for those who suffer evil. In either case, justice is inseparable from compassion: for those who work evil, there is yet mercy; for those who suffer evil, what is due to them as satisfaction or recompense is not unlimited but must be calibrated to the scale of evil suffered. In political terms, one task of ethical speech is to articulate what justice means in practice: assigning and applying tariffs as punishments for wrongs done. Such a reckoning, though a necessary good, is yet an incomplete representation of God's judgment. Compassionate company-keeping amidst suffering and evil will differ from and surpass what even the finest judgment of temporal justice can provide. For those who have become trapped by others' evil abuse into seeing themselves as less than God sees them, human justice may bring appropriate temporal satisfaction and protection. However, only the unity of divine compassion and justice can heal forever. Whether in the political context or not, it is in following Christ amidst suffering and evil that those engaging in ethical reflection may seek to approximate that unity and thus confess, however feebly, the loving righteousness of God.

Conclusion As noted earlier, Christian theological ethics may properly begin with the question: What is God doing about evil? The claim here has been that a theological answer will require a social theory which incorporates accompaniment, affection, and action, an ecclesiology which is reflective, compassionate, and concerned with justice. There can be no ecclesiology without that group of people assembled by God to live in faith, hope, and, above all, compassionate love. Those who would practice ethics in the midst of suffering and the problem that evil poses to pastoral care must pray: "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil". Such deliverance matters for all of ethics, from moral thinking through to moral teaching or communication. Deliverance will necessarily begin not from announcing one's judgments on others but from the confession of one's own sinful participation in generating the evil that the world suffers. After that, the task of keeping company, thinking judiciously, listening well, and speaking rightly is laid upon the church and all humankind by the One who suffered for sin, was delivered from death, and whose goodness was not overcome by evil.

Adams, RobertM. "Love and the Problem of Evil". *Philosophia* 34, no. 3 (2006): 243–251. McCord Adams, Marilyn. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. London: Cornell University Press, 1999. Vitale, Vince. "Non-Identity Theodicy". *Philosophia Christi* 19, no. 2 (2017): 269–290.