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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The problem with the problem of mourning

Leigh Vicens

Department of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics, Augustana University, Sioux Falls, SD, USA
Email: lvicens@augie.edu

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Abstract

In her recent book *The Image of God: The Problem of Evil and the Problem of Mourning* (2022), Eleonore Stump takes up a question she thinks has been unduly neglected by contemporary philosophers of religion: Is the world as good as it would have been had original sin, and all subsequent sin and suffering, not occurred? Stump contends that if we do not answer this question in the affirmative, we are left with a problem – a picture of a world which is a disappointment to God; and this picture could in turn undermine belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good Creator. In response to this problem, Stump sets out to defend the *felix culpa* view, according to which the world is even better with the Fall than it would have been without. However, I argue in this article that the *felix culpa* view has unacceptable consequences regarding God's desires and will, that we can live with the problem of mourning unresolved, and that we need not affirm the *felix culpa* view to resolve the problem of mourning anyway.

Keywords: problem of evil; sin; mourning; *felix culpa*

In her recent book *The Image of God: The Problem of Evil and the Problem of Mourning* (Stump 2022), Eleonore Stump takes up a question she thinks has been unduly neglected by contemporary philosophers of religion: Is the world as good as it would have been had original sin, and all subsequent sin and suffering, not occurred? Stump contends that if we do not answer this question in the affirmative, we are left with a problem – a picture of a world which is a disappointment to God. And, she reasons, such a disturbing consequence – 'the depressing and distressing condition of creation' (Stump 2022, 9) – could undermine belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good God. In response to this problem, Stump sets out to defend the *felix culpa* view – the view that the world is even better with the Fall than it would have been without. However, I argue in this article that the *felix culpa* view has unacceptable consequences regarding God's desires and will, that we can live with the problem of mourning unresolved, and that we need not affirm the *felix culpa* view to resolve the problem of mourning anyway.

Stump distinguishes the problem of evil, to which she has already offered a response in *Wandering in Darkness* (Stump 2010), from the problem of mourning, which is the focus of *The Image of God*. On her view, an adequate response to the problem of evil would show that God is justified in allowing evil in the world, including the Fall of humanity resulting from humanity's original sin. For instance, suppose that our loving union with God is a great good which outweighs all the evil of the world, but our uniting to God in love is not possible without our having the freedom to reject God and do evil. And suppose we do exercise the

freedom to reject God and do evil – but God is justified in allowing us to do so, since we (or some of us) ultimately achieve loving union with God. This is a possible reply to the problem of evil.

Still, we may wonder whether Creation would have been better if it 'had not been so damaged by human evil' (2022, 4) – if, say, we had all simply exercised our freedom to love God and do only good. This leads to the problem of mourning: 'Even if God was justified in allowing a world with a Fall, why is mourning not the right reaction to the way the world is?' (2022, 7). This characterization of the two problems highlights how Stump sees human (indeterministic) freedom as central to an adequate response to the problem of evil. For a response to the problem of evil that assumed determinism would already make clear that God only allows human sin and suffering to make the world better than it could have been without such evil.[1] To put the point differently we may appeal to the distinction Stump relies on, between God's *antecedent* and *consequent* will: 'God's antecedent will is what God would have willed if everything in the world had been up to God alone. God's consequent will is what God actually does will, given what God's creatures will' (Stump 2022, 4). On this set of definitions it follows that if the whole world were determined by God, God's antecedent and consequent wills would be identical. But since on Stump's view they are apparently not – since God does not antecedently will human sin[2] – we are left with a residual worry: 'why should we not suppose that there is a defeat for God, a sadness, a deficiency of *some* sort, in the fact that God's consequent will is different from his antecedent will, that God's "Plan A" for the world had to be replaced by God's "Plan B?"' (Stump 2022, 5). This is what Stump refers to as 'the problem of mourning'. The challenge, then, is to show that mourning is *not* the proper response to the world – for the Creator (Stump 2022, 4) or for created persons, reflecting on their lives and what might have been (Stump 2022, 7).

In the remainder of the book, Stump defends an idea she calls 'Christianity's response' to the problem of mourning (Stump 2022, 25): the *felix culpa* view, according to which 'the post-Fall world and the lives of those in grace in this world are somehow better, more glorious, more of a triumph for the Creator, than the world and those lives would have been had there been no Fall' (Stump 2022, 11). In fact, Stump maintains that all that is needed to respond to the problem of mourning is something analogous to a *defence* (rather than a *theodicy*) in response to the problem of evil: 'consistent stories in which the claims of the *felix culpa* view are embedded and which are such that no internal inconsistency or uncontested empirical evidence rules out supposing that the stories could be true in the actual world' (Stump 2022, 25). She also narrows her focus from the value of the whole world to that of individual lives, so that the task is to demonstrate that 'it is possible for any post-Fall life of a human being to be better than that life would have been in a world without a Fall' (Stump 2022, 116). A test for whether a person's life is better with some instance of evil than without it is whether, looking back, the individual would wish that 'God had done otherwise with respect to him' (Stump 2022, 242), or rather would understand the evil to be integral to some good and so not wish it away.

Stump ends up analyzing the stories of Mary Magdalene and the apostle Peter as 'test cases' for her defence (Stump 2022, 256); and she argues that these stories do, or at least possibly do, 'embed' the claims of the *felix culpa* view. In other words, it seems possible that Mary's and Peter's lives were better with the evil they suffered than they would have been without it. And both of them suffered greatly. On the assumption that Mary Magdalene is Mary of Bethany, and also 'the sinner who crashes the dinner party in the story in the Gospel of Luke' (Stump 2022, 278), Mary experienced significant injustice, marginalization, humiliation, shame, and grief in her life: she was considered by her own community an untouchable (Stump 2022, 203); at the death of her brother she felt abandoned by Christ and distressed at the thought that she did not matter to him (Stump 2022, 204); and because of her low social status and invisibility within her community, she was prevented from

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anointing and burying her beloved Christ's body (2022, 199, 202, 204). Peter's suffering was due to his own grave sin and subsequent guilt, in betraying Christ in his hour of need. Stump considers Peter's sin to set 'some kind of upper bound for human wrongdoing' (2022, 279), writing, 'Peter could not have been more disfigured in his sins or more separated from Christ than he was during the time between his betrayal of Christ and Christ's resurrection' (2022, 287).

But Stump argues that Mary's and Peter's suffering (and Peter's sin) enabled them to love Christ more deeply, and thus magnified the image of God in them – the image, that is, that Christ revealed in his passion, in accepting suffering for the sake of love (2022, 285). Because of their suffering and separation from Christ, 'each of them cleaved to Christ with a greater openness to receive Christ's love and to reciprocate it than they had before' (2022, 290). While Christ could have spared them much of this suffering – for instance, by revealing to Mary ahead of time that he would resurrect Lazarus (2022, 286–287), or by advising Peter so as to prevent him from betraying Christ (2022, 288), neither of them rebuked him for failing to do so. Stump takes this to show 'that in their own eyes by the end of the story they have gained something more worth having than what they lost … They do not wish that Christ had done otherwise with respect to them' (2022, 289). More generally, Stump contends that it is possible that the experience of evil re-forms every human being into 'a perfection of that person's true self' (2022, 28) and that this perfection would not have been achievable without the Fall.

Stump's response to the problem of mourning raises many questions. Is it really possible, given what we know of Mary Magdalene and Peter, that their suffering magnified the image of God in them? Stump says that Mary 'would not have cleaved to Christ with such intensity if his relationship to her did not offer her refuge from what she had been accustomed to before' (2022, 278) and that 'Peter's deepest heart's desire for Christ was strengthened through his ordeal' (2022, 288), but these claims seem false: both characters are represented as being quite attached to Christ from their first encounter with him, and there's no reason to think that had their lives not included significant suffering, they would have been less attached to him. I also doubt, even granting Stump's claims about Mary and Peter, that these claims would generalize to all people, such that it is possible 'for any post-Fall life of a human being to be better than that life would have been in a world without a Fall' (2022, 116). Michelle Panchuk has argued, convincingly to my mind, that significant suffering does not tend to 'promote the kind of psychic integration that allows for interpersonal closeness with God' (2024). Finally, it is unclear how the *felix culpa* view that Stump sketches meets her own criteria for the permissibility of divinely allowed suffering: 'for God to be justified in allowing the suffering of a human being when the suffering is entirely involuntary, the benefit defeating that suffering needs to be the warding off of a greater harm and not the achieving of a greater good' (2022, 17). After all, the benefit described in her defence seems to be a matter of achieving a greater good – the intensification of the image of God in human beings – rather than the warding off of any greater harm.[3]

However, I will concentrate not on these aspects of Stump's account, but instead on a problematic implication of the central claim of Stump's *felix culpa* defence that the world is generally better with sin and suffering than without.[4] Stump denies that there is a best of all possible worlds, or that God must will a better world over a worse one, since there will always be a still better world (2022, 18). Yet, it seems to follow on her view that God *wills* or *desires* the world with the Fall over one without. We can get at this implication in a number of ways. First, we may concentrate on the language Stump uses to describe the realization of our true selves. It is not simply a *consolation* to God, in the sense that while the world is marred by sin, at least there is some silver lining to cheer God up a bit. Rather, it is a *victory* for God: the world is 'more of a triumph', 'more of a success' (2022, 10), and 'more glorious' (2022, 11) than it would have been without the Fall. Stump writes, 'the creation

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with its history of sin and suffering is *more worth celebrating* than the creation would have been had there been no Fall' (Stump 2022, 15, emphasis added). While Stump begins with the worry that the fallen creation might be a disappointment to God, the language she uses to describe her *felix culpa* view makes it seem that God would have been disappointed *had there been no Fall*, since this would have been less of a success (or in other words, more of a failure) for God! And so, the Fall seems to be something that God desires or wills, on Stump's view.

Another way to this conclusion is to begin with the assumption that God wills the perfection of humanity, or the intensification of the image of God in us. But this perfection is not possible without the Fall; and so it seems that God must will the Fall as a means to our perfection. Above I interpreted Stump as suggesting that God does not *antecedently* will, but only *consequently* wills, human sin and suffering. Recall how she defines these terms: 'God's antecedent will is what God would have willed if everything in the world had been up to God alone. God's consequent will is what God actually does will, given what God's creatures will' (2022, 4). Stump might reason that God does not antecedently will sin, since on her view sin is not 'up to God alone', but 'what God's creatures will'. However, a critic might note a crucial difference between Stump's view and others according to which God cannot be said to antecedently will sin. For instance, consider the free will defence that is a common response to the problem of evil. On this view, God wills the good of human freedom, and this capacity makes possible human sin, which will occur, perhaps predictably, if God grants humans freedom. God prefers a world with free creatures and without sin. But it is *up to humans, and not God, to bring about a world with the good* (human freedom) *and without the evil* (human sin). Contrast this with Stump's view, according to which the Fall and subsequent suffering are integral to our becoming perfected in the image of God. On Stump's view it is *not up to humans to bring about a world with the good* (the perfection of humans in the image of God) *and without the evil* (the suffering caused by human sin). Without sin, there could be no human perfection. And so even though human sin is not up to God, a critic might reason that given God's preferences, that if it *were* up to God, God *would* will it, for the good that it would bring about; and so on Stump's view, God antecedently wills human sin.

However, Stump may have a way to avoid the conclusion that on her view, God antecedently wills sin. The question is whether from the fact that a person prefers some end that can only be achieved by a certain means that are *not* up to her it follows that the person would will those means if it *were* up to her. Suppose, for instance, that I have a dear friend with a serious drug addiction which I prefer for her to overcome, knowing that she will not do so unless she makes some (free) choice that leads her to experience serious harm as the result of her addiction.[5] Does it follow that, if it were up to me, I would make it the case that she makes such a free choice? It's not clear one way or another. First, there is the difficulty of imagining that I *could* will this – just snap my fingers and make the counterfactual true. This is so far from my ordinary experience of moral agency that I don't have any intuitions about whether or not I would do this, if I could. Then there is the fact that it is also far from my ordinary experience to be completely confident that there is only one means to a certain end, rather than hope for some alternative and better way. As long as I could hope that my friend would overcome her addiction without making a choice that would lead her to serious harm, I doubt that I would snap my fingers and make it the case that she brought herself to harm. But on the *felix culpa* view, God is supposed to know with certainty that our perfection is not possible without the Fall. Perhaps if I had similar certainty, and I was used to making things the case by fiat, I *would* will my friend's choice that would lead to her overcoming the addiction! In any case, it seems clear that I would *desire* not only my friend's overcoming of the addiction, but also (*ex hypothesi*) the only means possible for this to occur. And so we may at least conclude that on Stump's view, God *desires* the Fall for the good that it makes possible.

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Stump explicitly denies this conclusion, writing in a footnote,

> Someone might suppose that even if a perfectly good God cannot cause one of his creatures to do evil, God might nonetheless have a desire that his creatures sin for the sake of bringing about the post-Fall world of the *felix culpa* view. But this supposition is mistaken also. On Christian doctrine, God loves every creature that he has made, and so he also desires the good for every creature. But it is not good for a human person to do evil. And so a perfectly good God does not desire that any creature of his do evil (2022, 317).

I agree heartily with Stump's premise here: we must not affirm that God desires that creatures of his do evil. And if by 'desire' she means that God judges it good in itself, and so wants it for what it is, then we can affirm with Stump that on her view, *God does not desire sin*, or suffering for that matter: for both are intrinsically bad (Stump 2022, 242, 299). But the point still stands that on Stump's view, *God has a preference that sin occur rather than not, for the good that it makes possible*. Using the terminology from the doctrine of double effect, we can say that on the free will defence – in which God allows human sin for the sake of human freedom – human sin is like a (foreseeable) *side effect* of God's will to create free creatures. But on Stump's *felix culpa* defence, the Fall is like the *means to the end* of perfecting the image of God in humanity. I use the word 'like' here because the doctrine of double effect applies to cases of *causal agency* – to agents, that is, who cause certain means in order to bring about their desired ends. In Stump's defence, God does not cause human sin. But given that God prefers a world in which humanity is perfected in the image of God, and God knows that it is only through the Fall that this perfection is achievable, he must also prefer human sin as the means to the end that he prefers.

While Stump is at pains to show that God in no way prefers sin, her own presentation of the story of Peter's betrayal suggests otherwise. As mentioned above, Stump thinks that Christ could easily have prevented Peter from betraying him. And she implies that Christ knew that he had the power to do this – otherwise the question of why Peter did not blame him for failing to do so wouldn't even make sense. But, Stump thinks, Christ *chose* not to take action that would have 'spared [Peter] his betrayal and his grief' because, though he could have, Peter 'would have been a person in whom the image of God was less fulfilled in consequence' (2022, 288). Such comments suggest that Christ chose not to intervene because *Christ preferred the situation in which Peter sinned* and so was ultimately transformed more into his true self.

While Stump's defence is not a deterministic one – God does not determine everything that happens in the world, and in particular God does not determine sin – it is similar to deterministic defences and theodicies in an important respect. Consider two fierce critics of deterministic models of providence. First, here is Timothy O'Connor, critiquing Derk Pereboom's theological determinism: '[The view] entails that God purposely stitches the world together in such a way that the evildoer's heart is darkened in just the right way and to the right degree that he purposes (with relish) to commit some horrible act toward another' (2016, 135). O'Connor goes on to reason that 'the morally good person resists any identification with gross wickedness in [herself] or in others and instead sets herself against it' (2016, 136) – implying that on a deterministic view, God is *not* set against human sin, but instead is to be in some way identified with it. Peter Byrne similarly critiques a deterministic theodicy proposed by Paul Helm thus:

> There is an obvious question raised by the Helmian theodicy. How does it square with the Pauline injunction that one should not do evil that good may come of it? The

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> place of that injunction in traditional moral theology is to set limits to how far we can pursue good by way of doing evil as its precondition. There are some acts that are so heinous that one may not do them for the sake of the bringing about a greater good or warding off a greater evil … But Helm's God has precisely planned, purposed and necessitated acts of murder and instances of other kinds of horrendous wickedness so that good may come of them. Helm argues, following Marilyn McCord Adams, that the vision of God which will come to us … will swallow up and defeat all horrendous evils … But why should we not say that such a vision would be sullied, dirtied by God having to purpose, and the innocent to endure, such evils? This is not the objection that the innocent have to suffer for the sake of others' benefit, but the complaint that even where they partake of the redeeming good, it is cheapened by the means employed to reach it (2008, 200).

On Stump's view, of course, God does not 'stitch the world together' in such a way as to ensure evildoing; God does not 'bring about', 'plan', or 'purpose' human sin so that good may come. And so God cannot be 'identified with' sin in this way. And yet, God cannot be totally opposed to sin, either. If we can only become our true selves in a world where monstrous evil occurs, and God desires that we become our true selves, then God seems to be rather like someone cheering on evildoers from the sidelines. While Stump asserts that sin is intrinsically bad, it should be noted that the determinist can (and does) assert the same. But for both, the occurrence of sin still seems something to celebrate – indeed, *felix culpa* literally means *happy fault* – because it brings about a more glorious world. And this implication is against the spirit of the Pauline injunction Byrne appeals to in the quote above. It is not just impermissible (for creatures or the Creator) to *cause* sin to occur that good may come, but also to *antecedently will* or *desire* or *prefer* that sin occur that good may come.[6]

Not only does the *felix culpa* view generate an ethical problem for God's willing or desiring or preferring sin, but it also generates a problem for our own attitudes toward sin. In previous work (Vicens 2012), I argue that the belief that God determines sin leads to a problematic sort of doublemindedness, since we are supposed to be regretful over our sin, and yet, on the assumption that God determines it for some greater good, we should also be glad that we sinned. Stump's view, while not deterministic, leads to the same problem, for we should be glad that sin makes possible our perfection in the image of God. In arguing for the *felix culpa* view, Stump cites much Christian tradition, including the following: the Lord's prayer 'does not include a petition that the person praying be spared suffering' (2022, 11); Paul in his letters and the apostles as described in the book of Acts celebrated their sufferings, understanding them to contribute to their glory (2022, 12); Christ referred to his own crucifixion as his glorification (2022, 12); and early Christians did not pray that they would be spared persecution, but rather expressed pride over, and gratitude for, the martyrs' endurance (2022, 13). However, all of this is compatible with the idea that, while the Fall did not make the world better, still, given that it did occur, one can benefit from suffering, and so one should not go to great lengths to avoid it. Furthermore, as Stump notes, the Lord's prayer *does* involve a petition to be delivered from evil, which is traditionally taken to mean sin (2022, 12), and while the early Christians were (sometimes) unconcerned about suffering, they certainly were concerned that the persecuted 'bear up under torture' (2022, 13), meaning that they not be brought to sin. But if their sinning would, as Stump hypothesizes, enable them to cleave more to Christ and so more fulfil the image of God, why should they pray so fervently that this not occur? There is little evidence in the Bible or the early Christian tradition of such a double-minded attitude toward sin, even if Christians have sometimes celebrated the opportunity to suffer.

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Is there any way to maintain the *felix culpa* view while avoiding the implication that God wills or desires or prefers sin? Mark Murphy has suggested a way. In his book *God's Own Ethics: Norms of Divine Agency and the Argument from Evil*, Murphy addresses a parallel problem of how he might avoid saying that the God who intends the evolution of rational animals also intends the natural evil that is integral to the process of evolution by natural selection. Murphy writes the following:

> One might intend that some end be realized, knowing that some evil will result from it, but judging it to be worthwhile overall to bring about that good even with the side effect of that evil. One later forms the intention to bring about some other end, making use of the evil that resulted from one's prior intention being realized in order to bring it about. Obviously, in so acting, one did not *intend* the evil in question. For by hypothesis, when one formed the aim of bringing about the first good, the evil was a foreseen consequence of it, not at all intended. And one could not have intended it after the fact in bringing about the second good, for one cannot intend what has already come to pass (2017, 118).[7]

Setting aside Murphy's temporal language – since while God might not intend things at distinct times, his intentions might follow a logically serial order – we can put the idea as follows: God intends some good G_1 with the foreseeable side effect of evil E. God is justified in allowing E because G_1 outweighs E and is not possible without allowing for the possibility of E. But since E is not necessary given G_1, it might still be disappointing to God that E occurs, if the world would have been better without E. But as it turns out, the world is not disappointing to God, because E causes some other good G_2, which was not possible without E, and the world is better with the combination of E and G_2 than it would have been without either. So the actual world, with E, is a victory for God in the sense that it's better than it would have been without E – even though God did not intend E.

Applying this schema to Stump's defence, we can begin by asking what might be substituted for the variables G_1 and G_2 above (assuming that E is the Fall and all subsequent sin and suffering). One possibility is that G_1 is libertarian freedom. But if God is supposed to be justified in allowing evil on the basis of G_1, then libertarian freedom won't do – at least, not for Stump. On her view, for God to be justified in allowing evil in a person's life, and so, for the problem of evil to have a satisfactory response, the suffering that a person experiences as a result of evil must be 'defeated' in that person's life. Stump writes, 'To say that [an individual's] suffering was defeated for her is to say that there was a benefit from her suffering, that that benefit came primarily to her, that it would not have come without her suffering, and that it significantly outweighed her suffering' (2022, 5). But the good of libertarian freedom alone does not meet these conditions – for instance, there is no necessary connection between libertarian freedom and suffering. And indeed, Stump does not appeal to the bare good of libertarian freedom in her response to the problem of evil. Using the example of Harriet Tubman, she writes that 'her suffering was defeated for her in the luminous excellence of her life; through her suffering she became the person so many people, me included, are now glad to honor' (2022, 5). Thus Stump suggests that G_1 is human excellence. But then, G_1 does not seem conceptually distinct from G_2, which is also supposed to be human excellence, or the perfection of one's true self.

Indeed, it seems that Stump's responses to the problem of evil and the problem of mourning are one and the same. Referring back to the condition on a satisfactory response to the problem of evil mentioned above – that the benefit to an individual could not have come without her suffering – Stump writes,

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> the modality of that condition can be understood in different ways. On the theodicy Aquinas accepts and that is common in Christian tradition, the outweighing benefit could not have been gotten for post-Fall human beings without the suffering; but then the condition on the defeat of suffering is that the benefit could not have been gotten without the suffering *given that this is a post-Fall world*. For Aquinas and others in the Christian tradition, the benefit of defeating suffering is union with God; but, on Christian doctrine, the benefit could have been gotten in a world without a Fall and without suffering of any sort … Consequently, there is a sense in which human suffering is not defeated even if Aquinas's theodicy is successful with regard to post-Fall evil (2022, 6).

Stump goes on to note that her own response to the problem of evil largely follows Aquinas's, and so raises the problem of mourning. This means that for Stump, there is no G_1, or good which meets the outweighing condition and justifies God in allowing the Fall, apart from G_2, the good that the Fall makes possible. Thus, Murphy's suggestion would not seem to help Stump, since, as Murphy notes, 'what is important is that G_1 is judged to be a worthwhile end, such that it is worth seeking even though E flows from it and even apart from G_2 being able to be realized through E, such that the agent would (or might well, or could) aim at G_1 even apart from the prospects of G_2 being realized thereby' (2017, 118).[8]

While Stump's interest in offering a resolution to the problem of mourning is understandable – who wants a mournful God? – I wonder if we should resist the urge to do so. There is a reason the problem of evil has troubled philosophers and religious believers for millennia, while the problem of mourning hasn't received much attention before the publication of Stump's book. After all, the problem of evil, on what I take to be the most cogent formulation of the problem, concerns God's goodness to every person he has created, and the meaningfulness and worth of their lives.[9] The problem of mourning, in contrast, seems like something we could live with unresolved. Suppose, for instance, that the actual world is not better than it would have been had no sin ever occurred, and that we human beings are not made better – more loving, and so more perfected in God's image – than we would have been in a world without the Fall. (This isn't necessarily to say that the world or human beings are worse without the Fall: the world/human beings with and without the Fall might be equally good; or perhaps they are incomparable.) But suppose it's true that God allows all this evil for some great good that outweighs the evil, not only for the whole world but for every individual he has created. Isn't this enough?

Stump insists that we cannot accept that God might be saddened by the fallen state of his creation. In considering the case of Harriet Tubman, whose suffering she takes to have been 'defeated … in the luminous excellence of her life', Stump notes that something sorrowful remains:

> The suffering of Tubman's early life under the abuse of her slave masters lived on in her memory. More to the point perhaps, it also lived on in the wounds on her body and in her psyche. And then there are the consequences of the deprivations she endured. She was not allowed any education in her formative years, for example. A deprivation of nurture for the mind is also a lasting suffering. What might she have been if she had learned to read as a child? What is it like to know that those around you whom you admire have a power of mind derived from education that is permanently lost to you because of the great injustices done you by your oppressors? (2022, 5–6).

Stump suggests that it would be comforting – to Tubman, and to God – to know not only that *given the Fall* she could not have received the benefit of excellence without suffering

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injustice, but that the Fall itself made this benefit possible. However, I find this thought not comforting, but disturbing, for the reasons given already: it would mean that God considers the world with all its terrible injustices committed against Tubman and other slaves to be more a victory, more worth celebrating, and so on, than a world without any injustice. If I were Tubman, I think I would prefer to view the Fall and all subsequent sin and suffering as something that God sorrows over. And it should be noted that divine sorrow over human sin is a common biblical theme.

Stump might reply that the problem of mourning is not concerned with this kind of sadness, which is like a judgement about the intrinsic disvalue of sin, but instead with a judgement about the value of the whole world, sin included. In other words, she might mean that what we cannot accept is that God is ultimately disappointed with the world, given the Fall. But I don't see why, if we reject the assumption at the heart of the *felix culpa* defence that the world is better with the Fall and all subsequent sin and suffering than it would be without, then we must accept that God will be disappointed with the world in the end. In heaven, there will be no more sin or suffering, and because of this 'mourning … will be no more' (Revelation 21:4). Because God will make all things new, the re-creation will be at least as good as it was before the Fall. Indeed, it will be infinitely good! Stump thinks that a test for whether a particular person's life is better with some instance of evil than without it is whether, looking back, the individual will not wish the evil away. But such a test could be passed even without the *felix culpa* assumption. Suppose the conditions Stump lists for a satisfactory response to the problem of evil are met for an individual: though she suffered greatly in her life, it turns out that there was a benefit from her suffering, the benefit came primarily to her, given the Fall it would not have come without her suffering, and it significantly outweighed her suffering. Let us imagine that her greatest suffering was the untimely death of a beloved child, over whose loss she grieved for years. And suppose, with Stump, that the benefit to this individual is that her love for God and other people was greatly deepened in and through this loss – but suppose, contra Stump, that this benefit might have been possible without the suffering, if there had been no Fall. And now let us imagine this individual in loving union with God and other blessed saints in heaven – including her beloved child. Will she, in all eternity, spend time ruminating on what might have been – regretting the Fall and the corruption of humanity that led to the (temporary) loss of her child? I doubt it, for her joy will now be complete. Indeed, at the end of her book Stump gives a similar reason for thinking that the existence of (a populated) hell does not re-introduce the problem of mourning: 'The rejection of God's love on [a hardened sinner's] part cannot take away from God and the others united with God the great good of love that is reciprocated' (2022, 304).

Stump also introduces into her discussion of hell another reason that might be appealed to here for thinking that there will be no mourning in heaven, even if the *felix culpa* view turns out to be false. She reasons that if God were to mourn over the corrupt state of a hardened sinner in hell and yearn for what he might have been, God would be taking 'as the object of his affections a non-existent person' – 'a figment of God's imagination' – rather than the actual person, which would not be loving (2022, 302–303). I am not sure such a response helps with the problem of hell (and perhaps Stump does not, either, since she goes on to rephrase the problem and offer another response – the one mentioned above). But we might appeal to the basic idea here, that of loving the actual rather than the merely possible, to address the main problem of mourning – not over the existence of eternally damned individuals, but over sin and suffering in this life. Consider, then, not an unrepentant and damned sinner, but a person whose life is shaped by sin and suffering in ways that end up making a positive contribution to her life. Suppose, for instance, that a person's husband was unfaithful to her early on in their relationship, but they recommitted to each other and had a long and loving marriage thereafter; or suppose that they lost a child in infancy,

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and that because of this loss, they decided to have another child, who they came to love dearly. Was the individual better off with the marital infidelity, or the death of that first child? Perhaps not. Perhaps she would have had an equally strong marriage without the infidelity, and if her first child had survived, she would have loved him as much. But would she, looking back, wish these evils hadn't occurred? Perhaps not. Take the child case: if her infant hadn't died, she never would have had that second child – an actual person with whom she is in an actual loving relationship. And something similar might be said about her marriage, and the person she and her spouse have become as a result of what they experienced and worked through: perhaps each loves who the other has actually become because of their actual, shared history.

Does this leave us with a problematic sort of doublemindedness, similar to what I have argued Stump's *felix culpa* view entails?[10] No, for there is an important difference. Whereas Stump claims that the world is *better* with the Fall than without, I have not described these hypothetical cases this way: the comparison is not between a better child or marriage and a worse one, but between an actual child or marriage and a merely possible one. One does not, in the cases I'm imagining, regret the death of one's first child while judging that one is better off having suffered that loss because one has this second child instead. Rather, one's joy at birthing and raising a healthy second child eventually eclipses one's grief over the loss of one's first, *without necessarily involving any comparative judgement about the two.*

This suggests that Stump has a way out of the problem of mourning (if she wants one) without endorsing the *felix culpa* view. She may reject the assumption that in order for a world with sin and suffering not to be a disappointment – to God or to created persons – it must be better than it would have been without such evil. For we can reject this assumption and still not wish our lives had gone differently or mourn the world God has made. We may judge the world, and our lives, to be *good*, such that *joy* will be 'the right reaction to the way the world is'.

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Notes

1. One example of a response to the problem of evil compatible with determinism is the (revised) version of John Hick's soul-building theodicy developed by T. Ryan Byerly (2017), according to which God causes both natural and moral evil because these are required for the development of certain human virtues, such as courage and forgivingness. Derk Pereboom (2016) also presents a number of deterministic responses to the problem of evil, including, in addition to a version of Hick's soul-building, a deterministic revision of Stump's own defence. He also points to Marilyn McCord Adams's response to the problem of horrific evil – according to which evil might facilitate our identification with Christ and union with God – as compatible with determinism.
2. In fact I will argue that on Stump's view, God *does* antecedently will sin. But she seems to deny this.
3. As one anonymous reviewer notes, this is not a problem intrinsic to her response to the problem of mourning, but instead, an issue of consistency with what she says in response to the problem of evil. Could this criterion for a successful response to the problem of evil be given up? I think there are reasons to maintain the criterion, but a defence of this claim goes beyond the scope of the present article. Vince Vitale defends a similar criterion in *Non-Identity Theodicy* (2020).
4. While these claims are put forward as only possibly true, I will drop the modal language in what follows to consider what would follow if they turned out to be actually true.
5. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting such a case to consider.
6. In critiquing Alvin Plantinga's *felix culpa* theodicy, Kevin Diller makes a series of similar points, writing, 'Unlike a free will theodicy, in a Felix Culpa theodicy God desires evil as a means to his good purposes. This move has a dangerously distorting moral and theological impact. We can no longer condemn evil and injustice as wholly antithetical to what is good. Evil is ultimately the will of God … Defenders of either theodicy may maintain that God's hands remain clean, creatures carry the blame for evil, evil is ultimately destroyed and creation is redeemed. The contrast between these two theodicies is a razor's breadth but a chasm's depth' (2008, 96).

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7. Murphy notes the similarity of this reasoning to F.M. Kann's so-called 'Doctrine of Triple Effect'.
8. Could Stump's defence be modified to fit Murphy's schema? Perhaps so, though this would require a significant change to her response either to the problem of evil or the problem of mourning. But I find the schema suspicious anyway. After all, what is causally responsible for the fact that the world is so good is something that God did not even intend (and, on Stump's view, did not determine). And yet, if this (undetermined) thing that God did not intend didn't occur, the world would count as a 'defeat' for God, or a 'deficiency' that could undermine our belief in the perfection (and so, existence) of God (2022, 9)! Such a picture seems in tension with divine sovereignty or aseity. However, I recognize that others may not share this intuition – and Murphy does not (personal communication).
9. Marilyn McCord Adams, for instance, contends that on an adequate response to the problem of evil, it must be the case that 'each created person will have a life that is a great good to him/her on the whole' (1990, 355) and in addition that God will 'make all those sufferings which threaten to destroy the positive meaning of a person's life meaningful' (1990, 356). Stump indicates similar standards, as discussed above.
10. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this question.

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