

## Evil and the God of Love

*Also by John Hick and published by Palgrave Macmillan*

BETWEEN FAITH AND DOUBT

DIALOGUES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

THE NEW FRONTIER OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE OF FAITHS

DEATH AND ETERNAL LIFE

GOD HAS MANY NAMES

FAITH AND THE PHILOSOPHERS (*editor*)

THE MANY-FACED ARGUMENT (*editor with A. C. McGill*)

PROBLEMS OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

AN INTERPRETATION OF RELIGION

THREE FAITHS – ONE GOD (*editor with Edmund Meltzer*)

GANDHI'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR TODAY (*editor with Lamont C. Hempel*)

JOHN HICK

---

EVIL AND THE GOD  
OF LOVE

palgrave  
macmillan



© John Hick 1966, 1977, 1985, 2007, 2010  
Foreword © Marilyn McCord Adams 2007

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First edition 1966

Second edition 1977

Reissued with a new Preface 1985

Reissued with a new Preface 2007

Reissued with a new Preface 2010 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-0-230-25279-0      ISBN 978-0-230-28396-1 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1057/9780230283961

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10

# CONTENTS

<i>Preface to the 1985 Reissue</i>	x
<i>Preface to the 2010 Reissue</i>	xii
<i>Foreword</i>	xv
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xx

## PART I

### *Introductory*

I. The Problem and its Terms	
1. Defining the problem	3
2. Is theodicy permissible?	6
3. The kinds of evil	12
II. The Two Poles of Thought – Monism and Dualism	
1. Monism and Dualism	15
2. The pure monism of Spinoza	17
3. A contemporary view of evil as illusion – Christian Science	23
4. Plato's dualism	25
5. The external dualism of J. S. Mill	27
6. The internal dualism of E. S. Brightman	30

## PART II

### *The Augustinian Type of Theodicy*

III. The Fountainhead: St. Augustine – Evil as privation of good stemming from misused freedom	
I. <i>Evil as privatio boni</i>	
1. Augustine and Manichaeism	38
2. The Plotinian theodicy	40

3.	The goodness of the created order	43
4.	Man mutable because 'made out of nothing'	46
5.	Evil privative and parasitic	47
6.	The identity of being and goodness	49
7.	The logical character of Augustine's doctrine	53
	II. <i>'The Free-Will Defence' in St. Augustine</i>	
8.	Sin as the basic evil	59
9.	The self-creation of evil 'ex nihilo'	62
10.	Sin and predestination	64
IV.	The Fountainhead: St. Augustine – The principle of plenitude and the aesthetic theme	
	III. <i>The principle of plenitude</i>	
1.	The Problem	70
2.	Augustine's Neo-Platonist answer	72
3.	The principle of plenitude in Plotinus	75
4.	Emanation and creation	76
5.	The pre-existing pattern	79
	IV. <i>The aesthetic theme</i>	
6.	The aesthetic theme in Augustine	82
7.	Animal pain in a perfect world	85
8.	Hell and the principle of moral balance	87
V.	Catholic Thought from Augustine to the Present Day	
1.	Augustine's theodicy writ large: Hugh of St. Victor	90
2.	Thomas Aquinas	93
3.	A contemporary Thomist presentation: Charles Journet	98
4.	Journet on sin and hell	107
VI.	The Problem of Evil in Reformed Thought	
1.	Augustine and the Reformers	115
	I. <i>Calvin</i>	
2.	Fall and predestination in Calvin	117
3.	Predestination versus theodicy	121
	II. <i>Karl Barth</i>	
4.	Barth's method	126
5.	The 'shadowside' of creation	128
6.	'Das Nichtige'	130

7.	The origin of 'das Nichtige'	133
8.	Criticism: (a) the origin of 'das Nichtige'	135
9.	Criticism: (b) the status of 'das Nichtige'	137
VII.	Eighteenth-Century 'Optimism'	
1.	A product of the Augustinian tradition	145
2.	King's 'Origin of Evil'	148
3.	Leibniz's 'Theodicy'	154
4.	The 'best possible world'	160
5.	'Best possible' – for what purpose?	167
VIII.	Dividing the Light from the Darkness	
1.	The main features of the Augustinian type of theodicy	169
	I. <i>The theological themes</i>	
2.	The goodness of the created universe	170
3.	Human suffering as a punishment for sin	172
4.	'O felix culpa . . . ' versus eternal torment	176
	II. <i>The philosophical themes</i>	
5.	Evil as non-being	179
6.	Metaphysical evil as fundamental	187
7.	The aesthetic perfection of the universe	191
8.	A basic criticism	193

## PART III

*The Irenaean Type of Theodicy*

IX.	Sin and the Fall according to the Hellenistic Fathers	
1.	The biblical basis of the fall doctrine	201
2.	From Paul to Augustine	205
3.	The beginnings of the Hellenistic point of view	208
4.	Irenaeus	211
5.	Eastern Christianity	215
X.	The Irenaean Type of Theodicy in Schleiermacher	
1.	Schleiermacher on 'original perfection'	220
2.	Schleiermacher's account of sin	222
3.	The relation between sin and suffering	226

4.	God as ultimately ordaining sin and suffering	228
5.	Schleiermacher and the instrumental view of evil	231
6.	Man's beginning and end	234
XI.	The Two Theodicies – Contrasts and Agreements	
1.	The contrast between the two types of theodicy	236
2.	Points of hidden agreement	238

## PART IV

*A Theodicy for Today*

XII.	The Starting-Point	
1.	The negative task of theodicy	243
2.	The traditional theodicy based upon Christian myth	245
3.	The 'vale of soul-making' theodicy	253
XIII.	Moral Evil	
1.	The shape of sin	262
2.	The traditional free-will defence	265
3.	The recent critique of the free-will defence	266
4.	Divine-human personal relationship	271
5.	Freedom as limited creativity	275
6.	The virtual inevitability of the fall	277
7.	Man created as a fallen being	280
XIV.	Pain	
1.	Pain and suffering	292
2.	Physical Pain	294
3.	Has pain a biological value?	297
4.	Pain and the structure of the world	304
5.	Animal pain	309
XV.	Suffering	
1.	Suffering as a function of meaning	318
2.	Pain as a cause of suffering	319
3.	A paradise without suffering?	322
4.	Excessive or dysteleological suffering	327
5.	The traditional answer: nature perverted by fallen angels	331
6.	Soul-making and mystery	333

XVI.	The Kingdom of God and the Will of God	
1.	The infinite future good	337
2.	Theodicy versus hell	341
3.	The intermediate state	345
4.	Some residual problems	350
5.	The biblical paradox of evil	352
6.	Its source in the duality of the Christian life	357
7.	Its eschatological resolution	362
XVII.	Recent Work on the Problem of Evil	365
	<i>Index</i>	387

# PREFACE TO THE 1985 REISSUE

THE sheer crushing weight of the pains suffered by men, women and children, and also by the lower animals, including that inflicted by human greed, cruelty and malevolence, undoubtedly constitutes the biggest obstacle that there is to belief in an all-powerful and loving Creator. Other considerations, pro and con, are finely balanced: on the one hand the existence of a law-governed universe, beginning with the 'big bang' some fifteen billion years ago and so structured as to produce the human mind and spirit, and on the other hand the explicability of each aspect of the functioning of the universe without reference to a divine Creator. Thus we find ourselves in a religiously ambiguous environment whose complex operations can, in principle, be fully described in naturalistic terms, but the very existence of which nevertheless remains a mystery which invites the thought of an uncreated Creator – but which nevertheless does not absolutely require this since we can instead choose to leave the mystery unresolved. Given this cosmic ambiguity the main ground for religious belief is to be found in religious experience, for here as elsewhere our experience constitutes the final basis for both action and belief; whilst on the other side the main challenge, even for those who participate in one of the great historic streams of religious experience and thought, is the fact of evil in its many forms.

The subject thus lies at the heart of the fundamental question of the reality or unreality of the Transcendent. This fact justifies the reissue of the present treatment of the problem of evil. Its main contribution is to establish historically and to defend theologically the kind of 'person-making' theodicy whose foundations were laid by the earliest systematic Christian thinkers, such as St Irenaeus, before the formation of what, under the influence of St. Augustine and others, became for some fifteen centuries established Christian orthodoxy. Both types of theodicy are today live options. The Irenaean type has proved attractive to many. At the same time the Augustinian typē has been powerfully advocated again in recent years by contemporary thinkers such as Alvin Plantinga, whose work is discussed in chapter 17. Since that chapter was written little new has happened in the theodicy debate, although there has been continued elaboration of the two main existing options. One new development however has been the first full-scale work on the subject from the point of view of process theology in David Griffin's *God, Power and Evil: a Process Theodicy* (1976). I have not written about this here, but have examined it critically in my *Philosophy of Religion*, 3rd edn (1983), chapter 4.

*Evil and the God of Love* was written before most of us had become aware of the way in which our customary language ignores the female half of the human race. Unfortunately economic factors have forbidden a purging of non-inclusive language from the text. All that I can do is to apologise for the systematic inappropriateness with which I have used 'man' and 'he' when I mean to refer to all human beings.

The problem of evil is not a special technical issue relevant only to theologians who choose to take an interest in it. It is an immense, ever-present challenge to religious faith, and no theologian who intends to engage with contemporary atheism and scepticism can avoid it. Further the way in which it is treated inevitably has far-reaching implications throughout any systematic theology. I hope therefore that the reissue of this book may do something to draw attention again to one of religion's most profound and pressing problems.

*Department of Religion*  
*Claremont Graduate School*  
*Claremont, California 91711*

JOHN HICK

# PREFACE TO THE 2010 REISSUE

NO apology is needed for reissuing a serious attempt to grapple with the biggest problem confronting religious faith. Those who consciously reject belief in God almost invariably do so because they cannot reconcile the idea of a loving and all-powerful God with the suffering and wickedness in the world. How can a good God allow the agony of terminal cancer and other painful diseases, the decay of the brain and personality in Alzheimer's disease, and the wickedness of the violent criminal or the torturer or those who undermine and destroy the developing personality of a child? This is the question faced in this book.

The tentative answer that I find does not come from the traditional Christian thought whose groundwork and developing shape were established above all by Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries. His basic system has been substantially accepted ever since by both the Roman and the Reformed churches. (The Eastern Orthodox tradition is significantly different.) For Rome, the Augustinian theology continues to be official, and theologians departing fundamentally from it are disciplined. Among the Reformed churches there is a division between the more orthodox and the more liberal, with many of the latter reinterpreting the old doctrines in new ways. The approach in this book falls in that category.

The Augustinian theodicy, or response to the problem of evil, begins with the Fall of humanity through its own fault. The biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden does not have to be understood literally. It can be seen as a mythic expression of the fact that we are all sinners, born into a sinful or 'fallen' world. But being sinners we have to be forgiven and reconciled to God if we are ever to be 'saved' and to enjoy eternal life. We cannot bring this about ourselves, but it is done for us by Christ in his self-sacrifice on the cross. This is the theological side of Augustine's thought. The philosophical side is his claim that evil is something negative, a lack of goodness rather than a positive reality. For example, blindness is a lack of sight, not an entity on its own. This negative character of evil explains why it can exist in God's universe: God did not create it, but it has come about through the misuse of human freewill. In this book I have a number of criticisms of this scheme.

In contrast to this there is another strand of Christian thinking which began with some of the Greek Fathers of the Church, particularly Irenaeus at the end of the second century. I have accordingly called this the Irenaean type of theodicy.

Instead of seeing humanity as having been created in innocent perfection and then falling, it sees us as having been created – as we now know, through the long process of evolution – as immature beings capable of growing through the experience of life in a challenging world. We are to grow gradually, in this life and beyond it, towards our perfection, which lies in the future, not in the past. Moral and spiritual growth can only take place in a world requiring our free decisions and calling for courage, self-sacrifice, determination, resourcefulness. This shows why this is, and has to be, an imperfect world, operating impartially according to its own laws, and containing what we call evil.

The first edition of this book was written during a sabbatical semester from the Princeton Theological Seminary, supplemented by a Guggenheim Fellowship to cover a further semester; and these were further extended by the summers before and after the 1963–64 academic year. The whole family moved to Cambridge, England, where we rented a house and the children went to school. During this period I was made a Bye-Fellow (i.e. a temporary fellow) of Gonville and Caius College, with a room in which to work in its then new building near the university library – a pleasant half hour's walk from home. I was entitled to either a free lunch in the College senior common room or a dinner at high table. Lunch was informal, dinner formal. I used the dinner option only rarely, preferring to be at home with the family. But dinner in College was quite a ceremony. We met, gowned, in the senior common room for sherry; then a march to the high table, a Latin grace, and an excellent several course meal with several wines; then retiring again to the senior common room for port and coffee. The Master of the College was then Sir Neville Mott, head of the Cavendish physics laboratory; and the President (i.e. president of the senior common room) was Joseph Needham, author of the multi-volume history of Chinese science, and a radical thinker both politically and religiously. There were many interesting conversations at high table and even more in the common room. But I spent my weekdays in my College room gradually writing this book, making considerable use of the university library.

At that time I was about half way from the very conservative Christianity of my law student days to my present position, now embracing a religious pluralism which sees the great world faiths as different culturally formed human responses to the same ultimate transcendent reality, and accepting the theological implications of this. This religious pluralism was later developed in *An Interpretation of Religion* (1989 and 2004), and its theological implications in *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (1993). But *Evil and the God of Love* was written from within a still orthodox Christian position. It still seems to me to represent the most viable Christian response to the mystery of evil.

An apology: *Evil and the God of Love* was written towards the end of the long period before male scholars, at any rate in Britain, had become aware of the way

in which our customary language ignores half of the human race. Unfortunately economic considerations have forbidden a purging of non-inclusive language from the text. All that I can do is to apologize for the systematic inappropriateness with which I have used 'man' and 'he' when I mean to refer to all human beings. I hope that this can now be overlooked, or forgiven, in the interest of the argument of the book.

*January 2010*

JOHN HICK

# FOREWORD

Most scholars would be grateful if, in the course of their careers, they could produce one framework-setting, discussion-shifting book or article. But John Hick is not a man to rest on his laurels. He did it once (in 1966) with *Evil and the God of Love*, the book whose second edition (1976) is reprinted here. Two decades later (in 1989), Hick did it again with his Gifford-lecture book *An Interpretation of Religion*, which grew out of intensive reflections on his work with interfaith relations (in Birmingham) and subsequent study of world religions – Hinduism and Sikhism in India, Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and Zen Buddhism in Japan. Over the course of Hick's rich and prolific career, his writings have reached thousands worldwide – sensitive and alert people wrestling with religious questions as well as college students and their teachers. Most of them have learned from him, sometimes by accepting, but at least as often by questioning and disputing what he has to say.

*Evil and the God of Love* is justly famous for its hallmark distinction between 'Augustinian' and 'soul-making' approaches to theodicy. Both attempt to explain how an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good God could be *justified* in creating a world with evils in the amounts and of the kinds and with the distributions we find in this world. But their narratives are different. On Hick's telling, Augustinian theodicies take their explanation from primeval beginnings: God made a perfect world and created human agency in perfect condition in ideal circumstances. Evil originated in the rebellious use of created free will; the other evils of human experience are to be understood as natural or punitive consequences of Adam's fall! By contrast, 'soul-making' theodicies are forward-looking: God creates humans personal (in God's image) but immature, so that through cooperation in a lifelong process of moral education they might grow up into God's likeness. God is justified in placing humans in this world with all of its potential for evil, because this sort of world is the best classroom for rearing us up into people who freely choose life together with God and citizenship in God's Kingdom. Augustinian theodicies try to maximize Divine opposition to evil by shifting blame for the origin of evil off God's and onto the shoulders of created free agents. Soul-making theodicies represent God as ultimately responsible for the existence of evil: allowing matter to evolve into personal life in this sort of world, makes evil virtually inevitable. But it is a price that God accepts because of the overall worthwhileness of the soul-making project.

Hick is the first to admit, in Western Christianity, Augustinian approaches have been the majority report. In *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick wants to argue that they are not for that reason the only *faithful* approach to theodicy. Hick hopes to persuade us that soul-making accounts are not only legitimate but religiously and philosophically preferable to appeals to Adam's fall.

Hick's case is the more powerful because of his determination to understand a position before he attacks it. Over half of the book is taken up with a historical survey of Augustinian positions, from Augustine himself right up to Barth. Hick's patient and detailed analyses acquaint readers with the philosophical frameworks in which Augustinian theodicies have been embedded. Hick also shows the relevance of developments within Second Temple Judaism and rabbinic theology, and points to the great variety of methods used to interpret the Bible down through the centuries. Valuable as this is for us in the present, back in 1966, it was startling for professional philosophers of religion, who were still labouring in an a- or even anti-historical climate that harboured positivist suspicions of the metaphysical system-building of the past. Hick's treatments reminded them (and still show us) how ripping theses out of their systematic context sacrifices nuance and alters meaning.

Having laid out his opponents' positions, Hick uses the distinction-drawing methods of analytic philosophy to undermine Augustinian claims to be uniquely grounded in the authority of Scripture. Hick distinguishes Scripture (and creeds) from the interpretive assumptions the Augustinians make in reading them, and denies that the authority of the former automatically transfers to the latter. Likewise, Hick distinguishes authoritative texts from the philosophical assumptions with which Augustinians explicitly or implicitly combine them. Hick insists that Neo-Platonic philosophy – with its fundamentally metaphysical understanding of good and evil, its principle of plenitude and Great Chain of Being, and metaphysically necessary natural kinds – is logically independent of anything that can be found in the Bible, and therefore does not inherit any *sola Scriptura* authority. By showing how Augustinian approaches mix Scripture with logically independent interpretive and philosophical theses, Hick means to rebut their presumption that any orthodox Christian would have to accept them. By illustrating from Irenaeus how the Bible story of Adam's fall can be read differently as an episode in the childhood of humanity, Hick opens the way for more conservative Christians to take soul-making theodicies seriously.

Hick's logically next step is to argue that soul-making approaches are decidedly superior, for several reasons. (1) *Personal versus Impersonal*: In *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick represents the choice in favour of Augustinian over soul-making theodicies as a decision to conceive of the problem of evil primarily in metaphysical rather than personal terms. All Christian theodicies posit personal players: God, whose policies in creating and governing stand to be justified, and creatures (humans,

perhaps angels). In *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick insists that what is at stake in the problem of evil is not at bottom why the universe is riddled with privations or whether all possible degrees of being are represented and harmoniously arranged, but the integrity of personal relationships between God and God's personal creatures, and among the created persons themselves. For Hick, what is bad about sin is not that it is a metaphysical defect, but that it breaches a personal relationship. In *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick counts it as an advantage of soul-making theodicies that they encourage us to conceptualize the problem of evil in a *person-centred way*.

(2) *Freedom and Ignorance*: Where Augustinian theologies do 'get personal,' is in their attempt to locate the origin of evil in Adam's fall. But Hick rejects this 'self-creation of evil *ex nihilo*' as philosophically unintelligible. Evidently, Hick thinks that perfect created free agency in a perfect environment would not be able to choose evil for no reason or for evil's sake (although Hick does think the latter is possible here and now). Hick also seems to think that vivid and direct awareness of God would be compelling, in the sense of making it extremely difficult if not impossible – while it lasted – to choose against God. Hick concludes that ignorance is necessary to put human persons in a position to choose God freely. According to Hick's soul-making theodicy, the required ignorance is guaranteed by our organic embeddedness in this world, which both 'weaves a veil and makes a way' for us to choose whether or not to enter into an awareness of God.

Interestingly, at least one Augustinian concedes Hick's criticism and anticipates Hick's remedy. In *De Casu Diaboli*, Anselm hypothesizes that God wanted rational creatures to be as Godlike as it is possible for any creature to be, and hence to be not only just, but somehow *self-determined* with respect to justice. According to Anselmian action theory, however, a rational creature can will something *X* only insofar as *X* seems good for the agent (under the aspect of advantage), or insofar as *X* seems good in itself (under the aspect of justice). A rational creature can refuse maximum advantage only for the sake of justice, and it can refuse maximum justice only for the sake of apparent advantage. Given full knowledge of God's punishment policies, the rational creature would see that it had nothing to gain by willing more advantage than God willed it to will, and would not be able to do otherwise than conform itself to Divine commands. To open the opportunity for *self-determination* to justice, God created the angels in ignorance of Divine punishment policies. Angels can sin because they mistakenly believe that they can gain something thereby. This modification of the Augustinian fall story makes the fall intelligible by positing unfallen free agents in less than optimal initial conditions, knowledge-wise. God is responsible for their ignorance. Yet, this is not an *additional* responsibility but part and parcel of God's making rational creatures with the possibility of self-determination in the first place.

(3) *Science and Religion*: Standing within the circle of liberal theology, Hick also rejects Augustinian approaches as incompatible with the findings of the natural sciences: the theory of evolution proves that evil – ‘nature, red in tooth and claw’ – antedates the emergence of humankind and so cannot originate in human sin. Hick admits that if Augustinians posit a scientifically impossible beginning, his own soul-making theodicy seems to require a scientifically incredible end. For human happily-ever-after intimacy with God is mostly, if not exclusively, *post-mortem*. For many if not all of us, moral education will have to continue beyond the grave if we are to be fit for Utopia. Yet nothing in the natural sciences would lead us to believe in human life after death. Evidently, Hick hopes to distinguish between claims that are incompatible with science (such as a historical fall) and states of affairs (such as human life after death) that science can not predict but also does not or can not rule out.

(4) *Divine Goodness and the Morally Outrageous*: If God is personal, Divine Goodness – in whatever sense metaphysical – must also shape God’s personal character. The Bible speaks of God’s covenant love and faithfulness, of Divine justice and mercy and kindness. Divine Goodness must somehow include all of these, but it makes a difference which characterization dominates and organizes the others. Augustine and Anselm forward Divine justice, Neo-Platonically conceived. Analytic philosophers of religion front-and-centre moral goodness. Hick’s choice of love signals that he will not rest his theodicy on any claim that God has no obligations to treat creatures one way rather than another. Nor will he be satisfied with what is merely morally permissible. What Hick demands to know is how God could *love* created persons and still locate them in an evil-strewn world such as this? Given his focus on Divine love, Hick readily rejects traditional, Augustinian-sponsored doctrines of hell and/or double predestination, which imply that God after all does hate something that God has made!

In *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick’s own soul-making theodicy forwards a personal God of love, whose aims are freely entered loving personal relations among God and created persons. The evils of this present world and any others we may inhabit are justified as part of the pedagogical process that is a means to that end. Universal salvation guarantees that the high costs of soul-making will eventually pay off for everyone. Ever since 1966, readers have been reacting: some find Hick’s ideas attractive, others provocative. Certainly, in professional circles, they are impossible to ignore.

All the while Hick’s work was challenging others, his own thinking was continuing to develop. I will close by pointing out two ways in which the perspective of *An Interpretation of Religion* differs from that won in *Evil and the God of Love*. First, Hick’s study of world religions led him to back off from the notion that ultimate Reality is personal. According to the theory advanced in his second monumental book, world religions are different complexes of responses

by human beings to Reality with a capital 'R'. While some strands of some religions conceive of ultimate Reality as personal, ultimate Reality itself transcends all human practices and conceptualizations and so transcends the personal versus impersonal divide. One consequence is that Hick is no longer concerned with *theodicy* (the question of justified actions can be raised only in connection with persons) but *soteriology*. Hick asserts that the world's great religions are complexes of beliefs and practices which are aimed at soul-making, at facilitating the individual's growth from self-centredness to other-centredness or Reality-centredness. The ultimate goal, which everyone will eventually reach, surely after death and perhaps after many life-times, is union with the Real. Religions are to be evaluated in terms of the pragmatic or moral criterion of how well they achieve this aim. Thus, in *An Interpretation of Religion*, Hick keeps his picture of this world as a vale of soul-making and retains his universalism, but he drops the 'loving personal relationship with a loving God' as the destiny towards which we move.

Second, Hick's endorsement of religious pluralism leads him to a different conception of religious language. In *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick is focused on defending a reasonable form of Christianity, one that does not contradict the truths of history or the natural sciences as those disciplines deliver them to us. Hick already casts mythology in a positive light, identifying it with great and persistent imaginative pictures used by religious groups to convey meaning and significance. But in *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick still contrasts mythology with religious experience, historical facts, and theology. And he seems to treat some theological tenets as making literal truth claims that must be tested for consistency with the literal claims of history and the natural sciences.

In *An Interpretation of Religion*, however, Hick expands the category of the mythological for two related reasons. First, and more obviously, if the theologies of all of the world's great religions purported to make literal truth claims, they would be incompatible with one another, and not all of them could be literally true at once. For Hick, such a consequence would only serve to perpetuate Christian arrogance in forwarding their religion as *the* true one. Second, and more fundamentally, Hick reckons that the gap between human cognitive faculties and the Reality to which religious thought and practice is responding, is too great for any human conceptual schemes to represent congruently enough for literal truth. Thus, Hick concludes that not just narrative stories and pictures, but even the metaphysical theses of the world's great religions, are at most mythologically true.

Overall, *Evil and the God of Love* was and is an important book, which deserves to be read and re-read many times. *An Interpretation of Religion* is also a great book – in my judgement, best studied afterwards. In Hick's case, one great book has led to another!

*Regius Professor of  
Divinity, Oxford*

THE REVEREND CANON  
MARILYN MCCORD ADAMS

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A.H.</i>	<i>Against Heresies</i> , by Irenaeus.
<i>C.D.</i>	<i>Church Dogmatics</i> , by Karl Barth.
<i>C.F.</i>	<i>The Christian Faith</i> , by Friedrich Schleiermacher.
<i>C.G.</i>	<i>The City of God</i> , by St. Augustine.
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessions</i> , by St. Augustine.
<i>En.</i>	<i>Enneads</i> , by Plotinus.
<i>Ench.</i>	<i>Enchiridion</i> , by St. Augustine.
<i>Essay</i>	<i>An Essay on the Origin of Evil</i> , by William King.
<i>F.F.F.</i>	<i>For Faith and Freedom</i> , by Leonard Hodgson.
<i>F.W.</i>	<i>On Free Will</i> , by St. Augustine.
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> , by John Calvin.
<i>J.G.</i>	<i>The Justification of God</i> , by P. T. Forsyth.
<i>L.A.I.U.</i>	<i>Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited</i> , by Austin Farrer.
<i>M.E.</i>	<i>The Meaning of Evil</i> , by Charles Journet.
<i>N.E.</i>	<i>New Essays in Philosophical Theology</i> , edited by A. Flew and A. MacIntyre.
<i>N.G.</i>	<i>The Nature of the Good</i> , by St. Augustine.
<i>P.T.</i>	<i>Philosophical Theology</i> , by F. R. Tennant.
<i>S.c.G.</i>	<i>Summa contra Gentiles</i> , by St. Thomas Aquinas.
<i>S.T.</i>	<i>Summa Theologica</i> , by St. Thomas Aquinas.