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Approaching Evil in Our Complex World, Inspired by Cyril Desbruslais SJ

Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ
Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, 411014

Abstract: How do we make sense of evil in our personal as well as social life? Cyril Desbruslais has shown us the way to move from a static world to a dynamic world to make better sense of evil. Following his approach, in this article, we want to approach evil in the complex world that we live in. in this article we assume that based on our contemporary scientific findings, our world, including the evil present in it, can be better understood as a complex one, rather than a dynamic one. By moving away from Augustine's static world to Irenaeus' dynamic, progressing and maturing

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world view, he provides us with a better appraisal of the mystery of evil.

Keywords: Augustine, Irenaeus, Cyril Desbruslais, Evil, Evolving world view

All of us experience evil and ask the question, Why? We feel immense pain and try to make sense of it. We experience betrayal and try to cope with it. Cyril Desbruslais has shown us the way to move from a static world to a dynamic world to make better sense of evil. Following his approach, in this article, we want to approach evil in the complex world that we live in. in this article we assume that based on our contemporary scientific findings, our world, including the evil present in it, can be better understood as a complex one, rather than a dynamic one.

1. Evil: The "Question of Questions"

The agonising question as to how a world of so much suffering and pain could be reconciled with a God of love and power is one of such magnitude that many thinkers (particularly those of a mystical bent) suggest that perhaps the best response we can come up with – and one most worthy of a person of religious faith – would be a humble, trustful silence. On the other hand, a hasty retreat behind a bulwark of "mystery" and "blind faith" only puts many of our contemporaries off. We can hardly blame those who scoff at such a response as being a convenient form of escape to cover up our ignorance, our unfeelingness and our laziness. Finally, it would be a safe bet to argue that this matter is the greatest stumbling block to faith and that every day more numbers are added to the list of lapsed believers and drop-outs from the ranks of those whose naive religious formation has not been able to help them integrate a painful human experience of suffering and death into a personal conviction concerning a God who cares.[1]

a. The Christian Difficulty

Any religious faith that implies belief in not just any kind of deity or vague force but a conviction that God is, at one and the same time, all-good and all-powerful is faced with a real challenge here. And since Christianity implies such an avowed creed, Christians have to come to terms with it in a particular way, sooner or later. Of course, belief in such a divinity is not the monopoly of Christianity alone. A similar conviction pre-dates our era and the sages of pre-Christian times had sought to wrestle with the matter long before we did. In fact, it is the philosopher Lactantius (260-340 AD) who has preserved for us the version of the objection as formulated by his master almost 600 years earlier:[2]

> God either wishes to take away evils, and is unable; or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? Or why does He not remove them?

Faced with this dilemma, not a few of our contemporaries have suggested a belief in a kind of limited, non-almighty divinity, "far more human and closer to us", who, like any loving and caring person on earth, would yearns to put an end to all suffering and pain, but is quite unable to do so. Metaphysics aside, such a modification of our conception of the deity would involve such a radical, essential and total

reworking of the Christian and biblical vision of God as to call into doubt the entire creed!

Desbruslais notes that the controversy has, indeed, spawned a specialised new word to refer to the quest, *theodicy*. It comes from two Greek terms, *theos*, which means 'God' (nothing new for us, there) and *dike*, which means 'justice'. In other words, *theodicy* would be a formed in parallel with jurisprudence and the law courts, where a defence lawyer would try to "justify" (prove 'just' or 'innocent') someone who had been accused of some crime or the other. In effect, the philosopher would be trying to acquit God of the charge of 'colossal mismanagement of the cosmos'! This whole approach assuredly smacks of the arrogant and the presumptuous (not to say the blasphemous and the impious), inasmuch we seem to abrogating the right and power to stand in judgment of God and defend him against charges of negligence, perceived as per our human and limited capacities – a "justifying of God's ways to man" of the worst order.

However much we can sympathise which such reactions – and we cannot deny that, as John Hick recalls, "[such a] solution to the problem of evil must be worse than the problem itself" inasmuch as it claims access to God's secrets and hidden purposes and plans – we can't simply brush aside the whole project. Theodicy might be aimed not so much as "justifying" (in the legal sense) God's ways to man, but *understanding* them. And if there can be proud and irreligious theodicies, there can also be approaches that are humble and sensitive to the mystery we are trying to apprehend (not comprehend)! This is all the more imperative when a major portion of the effort consists in trying to clear up and correct mistaken and misleading ideas about God and his action in the world.[3]

b. Grappling with Difficulties and Dealing with Omnipotence

However, there still remain some radical questions. For instance, why is there within us a tendency to evil at all? Why couldn't God not create us, like himself, as beings who only seek and do what is good? And if we want to say that sin and crime stem not from God but from the abuse of our freedom, why did God make us free at all, knowing that we could abuse this freedom? And what about other evils that have nothing at all to do with human wilfullness – natural calamities like earthquakes and cyclones, diseases and accidents due to natural frailty? After all, couldn't God have given us a world in which there were no viruses and tidal waves? Finally, why did he make us embodied at all? For, had we no bodies and were pure created spirits "like angels" we should not be prone to pain, disease and death? We have to grapple, as best as we can, with these upsetting questions.

There is no question of denying God's almightiness. But, all too often, people think that it means "God can do anything at all!" They would imagine that God can make square circles or men that cannot die! But, as we have been reminded, time and again, this is not at all the case.

The fact that God cannot sin and we can does not make us , as it might seem at first sight, "freer than God", inasmuch as we can do something that he can never bring himself to do. The ability to sin is not an expression of freedom: it is the result of a lack of freedom. Freedom, remember, is a means to an end: liberation. Because we are not fully liberated, it is possible for us to choose something which brings us fulfillment in only one isolated area of our many-faceted existence, but that harms our total personal growth (in other words, makes us less liberated).

We will have to show that God cannot, in effect, make finite persons who are not embodied, who are not placed in an evolutionary (non-finished product world) and so on, any more than he cannot sin or make square triangles. If God could have acted otherwise and yet did not, then one might raise doubts about his goodness or omnipotence. But such was not the case, as Desbruslais indicates.

c. Approaching the Mystery of Evil

Many thinkers prefer to speak of the problem of evil, rather than call it a mystery. This is because they are averse to the "easy-answer" approach that I alluded to above, whereby the whole gamut of agonised and agonising questions are covered up by a convenient cloak of pseudo-religiosity: "It's all a mystery. Ours not to question why, ours but to believe and die!"

However, Cyril Desbruslais still persists in referring to this issue as a mystery as the philosopher Gabriel Marcel ascribes to it. "I hereby seek to remind ourselves that evil is not 'a disorder which I view from outside,' but as a baffling reality that has its roots in me. Evil, then, is not just something that lies outside of me – the wicked world with all its unjust structures, false values, crimes and natural calamities. There lurks within me a selfish craving that battles against my better self: the call of evil outside of me finds a responsive chord within me." Here he recalls the insightful words of St Paul, the truth of which we all find verified in our own experience: "I cannot understand my own behaviour. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate... In fact, this seems to be the rule, that every single time I want to do something good it is something evil that comes to hand" (Rom 7:14ff). It is a sobering and oft-forgotten truth that when we wrestle with the horrendous fact of wickedness, we are struggling with a powerful aspect of ourselves. Indeed, a serious plumbing into the depths of wickedness within ourselves will more likely throw a lot of light

on its nature and origin than a detached survey of it, hypocritically, "from outside" as if it had no roots within us!

The way one approaches an issue cannot but have an impact on the kind of response one works out to it. The man who views something as a stumbling block will react to it in a totally different way from the one who sees it as a stepping stone! One may view a river as plainly and simply a bit of a nuisance, as something to be crossed, somehow or the other so as to get on with one's proper goal and purpose. Or one can dive in, enjoy the river and relish a swim!

So, it is with the mystery of evil. Of course, he is not at all suggesting that we try and view cancer, murder, war and train accidents as "nice things" (some theodicies try to do that – "nothing is evil in itself, but thinking makes it so!") Try telling that to someone wasting away from cancer or to a Dalit whose wife has been raped, stripped and paraded naked in the market place. And does anyone really believe that the only difference between Mother Teresa and Hitler is the perspective from which we view them? What I am saying is that the evil of cancer will be looked at differently by someone who sees it as a punishment for ones sins, or the sins of his parents or those committed in one's previous life and by someone who views it as not having been directly willed by God at all!

"The destiny of the human community has become all of a piece, where once the various groups... had a kind of private history of their own. Thus, the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one." (*GS* – Vatican II, "The Church in the Modern World", No. 5) Evil viewed against a static understanding of reality will be understood – and responded to – in quite a different way from evil understood against a

dynamic vision of reality. And this brings us up square with John Hick's observations on evil approached from the Augustinian (static) and more traditional angle and evil viewed from the Irenaean (dynamic) and less commonly known (yet real nevertheless) perspective.[4]

2. Phenomenology of Suffering

a. Ills Unlimited

At first sight, it would appear that the world around us affords us naught but a sorry spectacle of things gone awry. And which one of us has not, at some time or the other, felt stirred (and perhaps still is stirred) to get up and do something about the mess the world is in. Like Hamlet of old, Desbruslais recognises that "something's rotten in the state of Denmark", or India or wherever. But soon our youthful ardour and idealism balks before the immensity of the evil and injustice we are trying to take on. Once again, Cyril says that with Hamlet, we tend to cry out, in effect:

The time is out of joint. O, cursed spite,

That ever I was born to set it right!

And most of us, sooner or later, give up, in disgust, any attempt to venture into the lists against the powers of darkness and wickedness. "It's just a phase we all have to go through," we tell ourselves. And the majority of us resign ourselves sadly (and cynically) to the status quo. "Nothing can be done about it," we say, as if to excuse out option out.

b. Two Sources of Evil

As for "the mess the world is in", well that clearly seems to stem from two clearly defined and well separated immediate issues. There are things like the ill treatment of Dalits in India or internecine tribal battles in South Africa, the invasion of Kuwait and the consequent Gulf War and such like. These are obviously

the result of deliberate human choice. Human beings have – for whatever justifiable or non-justifiable reasons – wilfully decided to make these things come to pass. But there is a whole series of unpleasant things that no human being wished for nor caused: the earthquake that ravaged Uttar Kashi, the deformed little baby that is born to horror-struck parents, the sickness that carries off a youngster in the bloom of his or youth. Nobody wanted these things to happen, much less brought them into being!

There is a third class of painful events that are due to human causality, but not deliberately. This is the whole area of human error or accident. Due to a pilot's carelessness a plane crashes and he and all the passengers are killed. A cricket player hits the ball and it zooms to the boundary... where it strikes someone on the temple and he dies. An enquiry might or might not exonerate the pilot from "culpable error" in the first place or not: it is certain that he didn't consciously and deliberately intend, will and carry out with grim efficiency the killing of himself and all his passengers. In other words, though this calamity was due to man's instrumentality (our "first source", above), it cannot be put down to a mere "abuse of human freedom", but rather to the unfortunate consequences of human frailty.

c. "Nature, Red in Tooth and Claw"

However, a close look around us will make it strikingly evident that – whatever be Gandhiji's impressions on the matter – the world is hardly founded on non-violent principles. As Tennyson put it in *In Memoriam* (lvi), "Nature (is) red in tooth and claw". If one accepts Evolution (and there are more reasons in favour of accepting it than rejecting it), then we have to admit that "survival of the fittest" and "might is right" have been the bloody and brutal

laws that governed its progress. One could, of course, point out that it was not sheer physical force and strength that decided things for, on that account, man would never have been able to prevail. If a timely and "providential" (?) fall of a flock of convenient meteors did wipe out the lumbering dinosaurs, still puny man had to contend with woolly mammoths, mastodons and sabre-toothed tigers – all more than a match for his pigmy capabilities: man survived because his emergent intellect made him overall superior to these powerful beasts, which he killed and devoured before they could render him like service!

Still, in the sea, the big fish swallow up the smaller fish and, on the land, the bigger animals prey upon the smaller ones, not to mention the fact that, at every turn and twist, we massacre millions of microbes. By virtue of a grim kind of poetic justice, a tiny germ or virus can snuff out the life of an organism vastly greater than itself. Then there is the colossal phenomenon of prodigious waste that governs the working of the laws of nature. Of the billions of sperms and ova that come into being, only a miniscule percentage go on to constitute an embryo. The rest are discarded and forgotten. Indeed, lower animals spawn their offspring in prolific abundance because only a tiny proportion has any hope of survival. There seems to be a curious logic (to say the least) in the fact that a huge animal like an elephant is satisfied with leaves and insensate life whereas the much smaller cat has to terrorise, hurt and kill a mouse to fulfill its appetite. Details such as these warn us against coming up with a naive, simplistic and glib justification of God's/Nature's ways!

3. Hermeneutics: A Dynamic Approach

a. Augustine and Irenaeus and Their Differences

Desbruslais is indeed indebted to John Hick for drawing our attention to the fact that, historically, there have been two rival approaches to theodicy in Christian tradition. The roots of one, the more commonly known and generally followed, the one that

has received more conscious thematic elaboration, were laid by St Augustine of Hippo (354-430). It is to the lesser known but earlier St Irenaeus of Lyons (140-202) that we owe the other. It was neither critically elaborated nor extensively passed on but it is significant to know that from almost within the first century of the Christian era, an alternative reading of the Genesis story was current – one whose implications would yield a far more dynamic and evolutionary vision of the human person and his destiny, one far more in keeping with contemporary patterns of thought! If the former view was more originally characteristic of (and prevalent in) Roman Christianity, the latter was, in more sense than one, the product of the Greek point of view. In the end, the Roman viewpoint won hands down and the Irenaean-Greek insight, though picked up a bit by St Clement of Alexandria (150-214), never really got the chance to develop into the full-fledged theory of a school. Nevertheless, from time to time, various Christian thinkers seized upon inspirations coming from their wrestling with Scriptures in the light of experience (and vice versa), came up with ideas and approaches that just as easily could have been direct elaborations of Irenaeus' pristine discovery.

Perhaps we should let John Hick's own words summarise this key contrast. After all, it is he who first shared this provocative insight with all of us!

> Instead of the (Augustinian) doctrine that man was created finitely perfect and then incomprehensibly destroyed his own perfection and plunged into sin and misery, Irenaeus suggests that man was created as an imperfect, immature creature who was to undergo moral development and growth and finally be brought

> to the perfection intended for him by his maker. Instead of the fall of Adam being presented, as in the Augustinian tradition, as an utterly malignant and catastrophic event, completely disrupting God's plan, Irenaeus pictures it as something that occurred in the childhood of the race, an understandable lapse due to weakness and immaturity rather than an adult crime full of malice and pregnant with perpetual guilt. And instead of the Augustinian view of life's trials as a divine punishment for Adam's sin, Irenaeus sees our world of mingled good and evil as a divinely appointed environment for man's development towards the perfection that represents the fulfillment of God's purpose for him.[5]

b. Implications of Dynamic World-View and Evil

The key issue here is not whether Augustine and Irenaeus took the Adamic myth for a true story and believed that Adam and Eve were historic personages (probably both of these seminal thinkers did). It is their implicit philosophy of man and his environment that interests us and that is relevant for its far-reaching implications.

In Augustine's vision, Adam and Eve were created as perfect as finite beings could be. They could not have been absolutely perfect, for that would require them to have been uncreated and infinite (and that would be obviously out of the question). But he saw them as endowed with "preternatural gifts", such as immortality and the fullness of all knowledge and wisdom. As a result of the "Fall" – whereby they failed "the test" God had given them – they lost ("fell from") the high estate which God had granted them, far above their natural deserts or exigencies. Their nature became corrupt and various evil tendencies and

other pathways to sin opened up in them. Catholics and Reformers might differ here and there as to precisely the degree of corruption that had entered man and how much of his freewill still remained, but all seemed to agree that "concupiscence" (understood as the inner prompting to evil consequent upon his "sin") had begun to vitiate all man's efforts.

Furthermore, not only had man's very nature become "wounded" by this action, his whole life, as punishment, was to be lived out in a vale of tears and no longer in the pleasant Garden of Eden which would have been God's original intention, had Adam and Eve been a bit more co-operative. More than that, because of Adam's "sin", all his descendants were to be barred from Paradise and locked out in this wicked world of pain and woe: this is the famous Augustinian doctrine of "original sin" which would become a dogma of the Church.

It should be noted that there is nothing in the *Genesis* story to necessitate belief in anything like the above-mentioned gifts being lavished on our "first parents" and consequently being wounded/corrupted after Adam and Eve sinned. If this is so, can we genuinely speak of a "Fall" (since there was no previous elevated "state" to fall from)? And let us not forget that the phrase "original sin" is found nowhere in the Old or New Testament and nothing in either (not even in St Paul) would oblige us to hold that the affliction common to all of us was founded upon a common fault. It simply records the gradual universalisation of sin, as mankind freely and progressively turned his back upon God's call and values. We prefer to speak of "cosmic" or "universal" sin and the *development of the dogma* of original sin teaches us to dissociate it from the notion that our present condition is in any way a punishment for the revolt of an alleged person –

someone other than ourselves – committed in the mists of pre-history! The Adamic myth, in other words, aims at throwing light upon the *nature* of sin and its immediate consequences (alienation from ones fellow humans and from nature): it is *not* interested in telling us about *origins* (that is, how sin began – apart from the fact that it was basically man's creation, not God's).[6]

c. Two Understandings of Evil

The traditional Augustinian understanding of evil, which Aquinas also follows, sees evil as *privatio boni*, a privation of good. In other words, metaphysically speaking, evil is not a positive entity but, as Aquinas would put it, "a relative non-being". That implies, notes Desbruslais, evil, as such, does not exist. It is not so much as a being as an absence of a *due* perfection in some positive reality. Blindness is an evil in man, inasmuch as man is meant to see – the ability to see is a "due perfection" in the human person. But the "blindness" or inability to see of a chair or a stone is no evil: it is not a *lack* in these things for neither of them is supposed to see! In other words, the more common scholastic theodicy would totally reject what Leibnitz called "metaphysical evil", that is, the mere fact of imperfection in itself, whether it referred to a quality due or undue. For instance, in Leibnitz's book, the finiteness of a creature is a metaphysical evil – quite irrespective of the fact that infinity is not a "due perfection" of creatures and cannot be! Just for the record, Leibniz "explains" metaphysical evil by pointing out that imperfect or limited existence is better than no existence at all. Still, it is not very meaningful to call something an "evil" when it doesn't indicate something that is missing and should have been there in the first place!

Following upon the above more traditional understanding, evil is sub-divided into two main types: physical and moral. Physical evil would be the absence of some due tangible quality in some

material being. Thus, the inability to fly in an injured crow or deafness in a human person would be examples of physical evils. Moral evil would be the absence of a due orientation in a free personal act. Moral evil is another word for sin. A culpable lie is a moral evil inasmuch as it is an act of speech which lacks in its due orientation: the natural purpose (orientation) of speech is to reveal or share information/knowledge but in a lie, speech is used to conceal – which is to go against its very *physis*, or nature.

In the Irenaean approach, however, evil would be understood as a kind of unavoidable possibility in the context of immature man's necessary environment for the process of person-making. In other words, Adam and Eve's sin would be seen not so much as an inveterately wicked and malicious act of adults who could – and should – have known and acted better, but the clumsy fault of immature, childish folk, stumbling towards adolescence: something that would elicit pity rather than wrath. Sin is seen as evil but recognised as a practically inevitable option open to humans in their finiteness at the start of the evolutionary process. Physical evils (pain, suffering, illness and death) are seen not as divine punishments unleashed upon hapless humans but as the necessary attendant circumstances for that evolving world which alone would enable us to attain growth and gradual maturity. Human "error" is the natural consequence of our inherent frailty as finite and embodied. All these have not "entered the world" as a result of our having sinned (in and through our ancestors) in an "original state of grace", where we were endowed with "preternatural gifts" in a paradisical somewhere which could not hurt us in anyway!

So far Desbruslais has contributed to the phenomenon of evil from a dynamic perspective bringing in Irenaeus and

John Hick. Even though the attempt is heroic, we cannot still fully make sense of the evil. Even if we can better "understand" or interpret evil, we have not been able to "change" or improve it significantly. In the next section we see how modern perspectives of the world can help us further.

4. From Complex Perspective

We know that sometimes evil is caused unwittingly by good people with good intentions. At other times evil bad may also cause good results. So there is no necessary connection that good causes always produce good results or the other way around. The real world around us too complex and difficult to comprehend. So we try to understand this world using two mathematical theories: fuzzy logic and chaos theory.

a. Fuzzy Logic

It is a form of many-valued logic in which the truth values of variables may be any real number between 0 and 1 both inclusive. ... The term fuzzy logic was introduced with the 1965 proposal of fuzzy set theory by Lotfi Zadeh, a mathematician and computer scientist from the University of California. In mathematics, fuzzy sets (aka uncertain sets) are somewhat like sets whose elements have degrees of membership. ... By contrast, fuzzy set theory permits the gradual assessment of the membership of elements in a set; this is described with the aid of a membership function valued in the real unit interval [0, 1].

A fuzzy control system is a control system based on fuzzy logic—a mathematical system that analyses analog input values in terms of logical variables that take on continuous values between 0 and 1, in contrast to classical or digital logic, which operates on discrete values of either 1 or 0 (true or false, respectively.

Fuzzy logic is extensively used in modern control systems such as expert systems. Fuzzy Logic is used with Neural Networks as it mimics how a person would make decisions, only much faster. It is done by Aggregation of data and changing into more meaningful data by forming partial truths as Fuzzy sets.

Fuzzy logic is an approach to computing based on "degrees of truth" rather than the usual "true or false" (1 or 0) Boolean logic on which the modern computer is based. It is employed to handle the concept of partial truth, where the truth value may range between completely true and completely false.

b. Chaos Theory

Like fuzzy logic, the theory of chaos is an interdisciplinary theory stating that, within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems, there are underlying patterns, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization.

This mathematical theory looks at certain systems that are very sensitive. A very small change may make the system behave completely differently. ... Some systems (like weather) might appear random at first look, but chaos theory says that these kinds of systems or patterns may not be. Propounded by the French mathematician Henri Poincare, this theory assumes that seemingly simple events could produce complex and confounding behaviors. It is a theory that was seen to have great potential for discovery among many fields.

Complexity theory focuses on complex systems involving numerous interacting parts, which often give rise to unexpected order. ... Collectively known as dynamical

systems theory or nonlinear dynamics, neither chaos nor complexity theory is a theory in the ordinary sense of the word.

c. Our Complex World

We are not competent to propose a better theodicy (understanding and elimination of evil) in our highly complex and sophisticated world. Still some outlines may be proper. Drawing from the chaos theory, we have factals, which measures the "roughness of a surface." In the real world, there are no straight lines, no spheres and no smooth surfaces. The idealised smooth surface is present only in the mind of the observer. The actual world is a world of roughness and curvature, of different degrees, with an underlying homogeneity.

Similar to this analogy of smooth and rough surfaces, we can really hold that in the highly complex real world the binary between light and darkness, love and hatred and goodness and evil does not exist.

At the same time, we need to admit that evil exists. It's real. But its relationship to goodness is much more complex. In the movement from evil (0) to good (1) we are confronted with the analogue (opposed to digital or binary) chaotic possibility of apparent randomness. Within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems, there are underlying patterns, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization.

Can the degrees of realty, feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization help us to understand evil better and transform it? Can we affirm the unconditional love of God even when we acknowledge that evil exists, but is not absolute? Can we still make sense of the birth of a handicapped child and the death of a preborn? Are we better placed to understand evil in a complex world, rather than in a static or dynamic world? We need to dwell with these

questions so that the answers may transform us making us better and more loving. May be the mystery of love can transform sinners to saints, evil to goodness, in ways we do not at the moment fully understand.

Conclusion

We should acknowledge that when Desbruslais has moved from Augustine's static world to Irenaeus' dynamic world, he provides us with a better appraisal of the mystery of evil. Similarly, in the ever complex and evolving world, we need to formulate different theories to explain to ourselves the presence of evil in our hearts, in our communities and in the world. We need to recognise this evil in the presence of an ever-loving God, who is unconditionally on our side. Some hints we may draw from the highly complex world we are living in this world.

- The reality is rough and tough. Very much. Still we can experience smoothness to various degrees. Similarly, life is hard and cruel. Still we can experience the presence of love from our neighbours and its fullness from God.
- There is both love and hatred in our hearts. Just like there is darkness and light in our material world. We need to move through hatred to love, through darkness to light. Only God can do, with the cooperation of human beings. We do not fully understand the evil among us. But we can hope to understand it by bringing in the ever-loving God.
- We can believe that we are collectively moving towards unconditional, absolute love (goodness through complex and crooked world! The suffering and even death of that innocent child can only make

sense if there is a loving God who will deal with the injustice in His own way.

- We can hope that evil is somehow transformed into goodness and leads to its fullness. Just as Jesus transformed death to fullness of life (through resurrection). After affirming the incredible and unexpected cruelty and evil, we can truly be open to the God of Surprises.[7] Joyfully and lovingly, in spite of the tragic situation around us.
- Then as authentic persons we can live lives beyond cause-effect relationships or linear or static world. So we live our lives authentically and joyfully, without the reward/punishment paradigm. That will liberate and empower us in spite of the evil we encounter, without becoming part of it

Notes

[1] For this section I am indebted to Prof Dr Cyril Desbruslais SJ. See Cyril Desbruslais, *Philosophy of God for Today*, New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2019, 95-112. It may be noted that he has elaborately dealt with this problem (or better, mystery) of evil in his writings.

[2]Quoted by John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, Glasgow, Collins, 1978, 5.

[3] Cyril Desbruslais, *The Philosophy of Liberation: Revisiting Genuine Religious Experiences with Special Reference to Christianity*, New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2016, 73-74.

[4]John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 11 ff.

[5] Hick, 220-221

[6] More can be found in look it all up in his anti-Gnostic polemic, *Against Heresies*. There is an excellent translation in Vol. I of *The Faith of The Early Fathers.* See St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, tran. W. Jurgens, Bangalore, Theological Publications, 1984, pp. 84 – 102.

[7] Hughes, Gerard. *God of Surprises*. Luton: Andrews UK Ltd, 2010. The surprise, unexpected and complex dimension is easily perceived in the Holy Spirit.