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Title: “Recognizable Goodness”: A Response to Beversluis’ Understanding of God’s Goodness

Abstract: This paper defends C. S. Lewis’s understanding of God’s goodness. John Beversluis, a Lewis critic, argues that Lewis moves throughout his career from God’s goodness as “recognizable goodness” to God’s goodness as whatever God says is good. This move presents us with a problem. Humans, in order to say God is good, and order to know what is good and thus be moral, need an objective standard of goodness. If goodness can shift by God’s decree, then humans may never know what is good, nor be able to say that God is good. According to Beversluis, Lewis makes three shifts in the course of three works: *The Problem of Pain*, “The Poison of Subjectivism,” and *A Grief Observed*. Beversluis argues that Lewis’s use of the term good throughout these works, and its application to God, makes God morally unknowable or morally evil. It is the intention of this paper to show that Beversluis’ understanding of Lewis is flawed and ignores a significant metaphysical point about God and humans. God’s goodness can be known by us, but with the understanding that God and humans are metaphysically and morally different. To answer this question, this paper also examines some reasons Lewis offers for why a good God allows suffering. These reasons will tie into further, specific differences between God and humans, particularly the problem of our sin and God’s goodness.

Christian Worldview: If God’s goodness is not recognizable to humans, then we are in no position to be good or call God good. He is too far beyond us. This is not the view of God’s goodness that is given in Scripture. Scripture informs the reader that God is good, even in the light of suffering. Also, Scripture informs us that humans have a sin problem, and this problem affects how we view God’s goodness and how God demonstrates that goodness to us. This paper and the arguments therein can be used to initiate conversations about the goodness of God with those who might not otherwise have considered the topic.