

A dark, moody landscape featuring a vast, open field in the foreground. In the background, there are low hills or mountains. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, but a bright, fiery red glow emanates from behind the clouds, casting a dramatic light over the scene. The overall atmosphere is somber and contemplative.

If God, Why Evil?

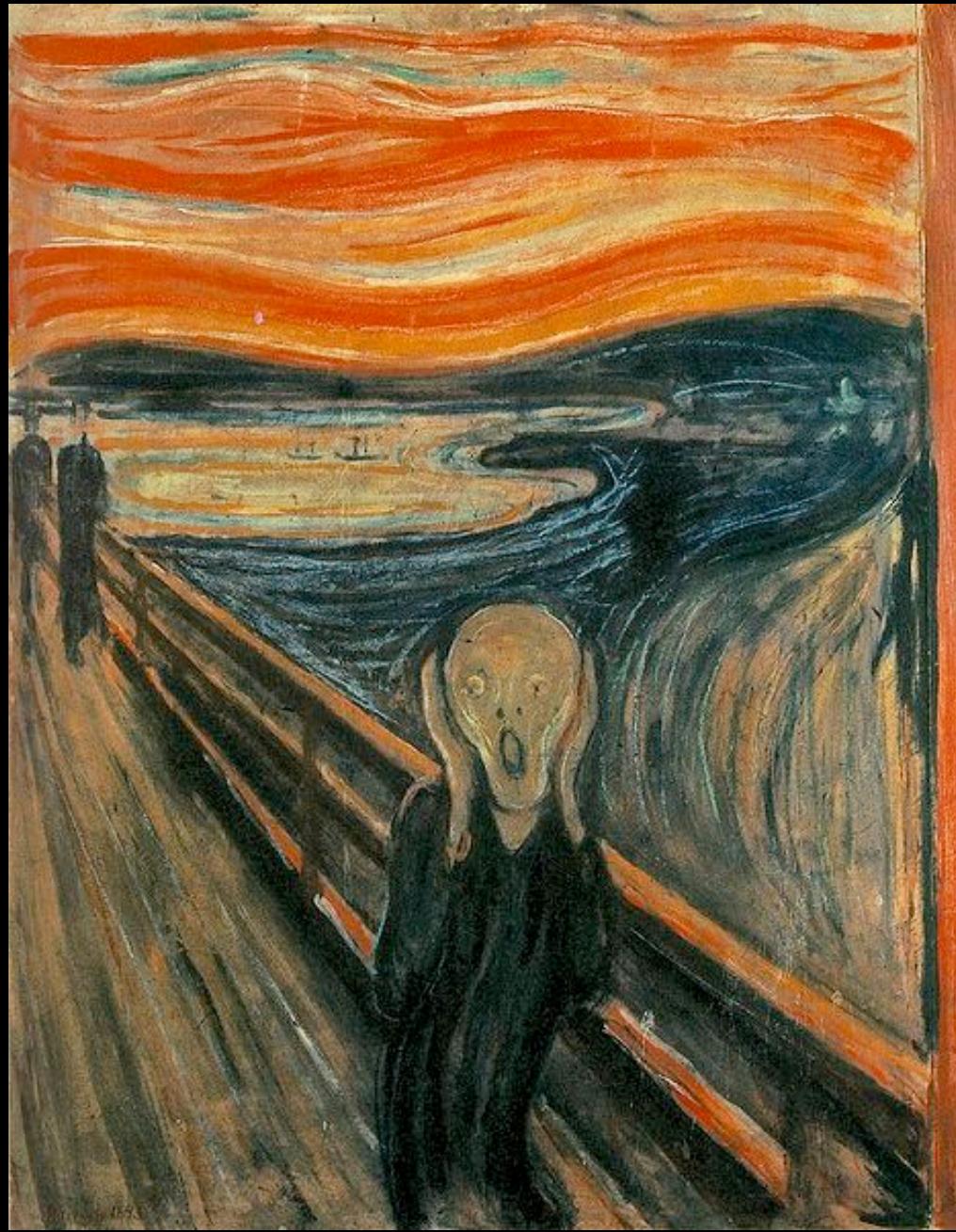
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Robert Burns



Alfred Lord
Tennyson





Outline of Our Topic

- What is the Problem of Evil?
- Two Forms of the Argument from Evil against Theism
- An Argument from Evil for Theism
- Christianity and the Problem of Evil
- Summaries

What is the Problem of Evil?

1. The problem is an intellectual obstacle to **belief that God exists**. As such, it is an obstacle to Christian belief.
2. The problem is an emotional obstacle to **trusting in God**. As such, it is an obstacle to Christian fellowship.

Important Distinctions

- The intellectual vs. the pastoral
- The abstract vs. the concrete
- The moral problem of evil vs. the natural problem of evil
- The logical argument from evil vs. the evidential argument from evil

Our chief concern . . .

evil as an intellectual obstacle
to Christian belief in God

Two Forms of the Argument from Evil

- The logical argument from evil
- The evidential argument from evil

The Logical Argument from Evil

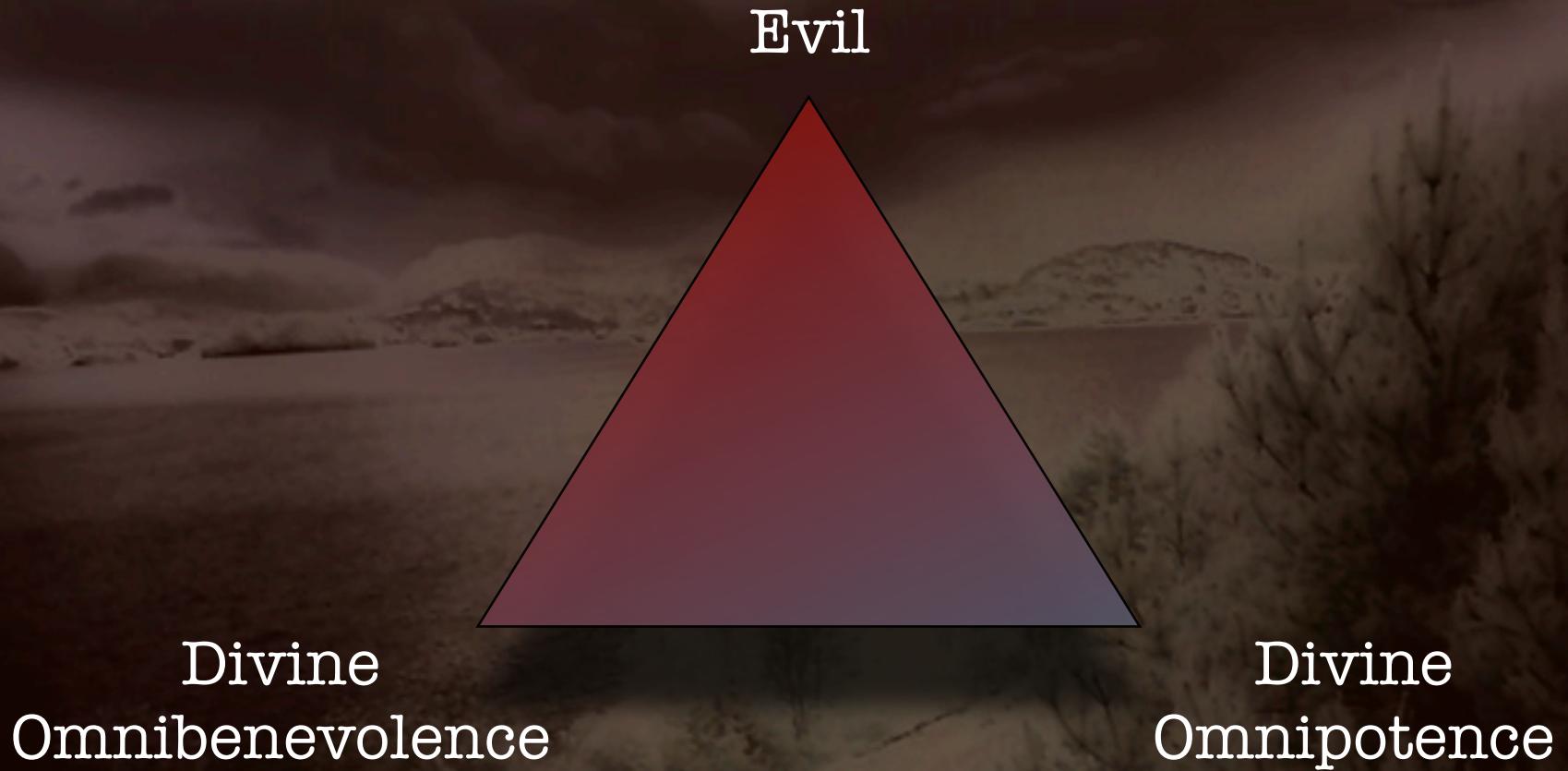
- Its basic claim
- Its formulation
- Our objective
- The Achilles' heel of the argument

Preliminary Formulation of the Logical Argument

1. If God exists, then evil does not exist.
2. But evil does exist.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

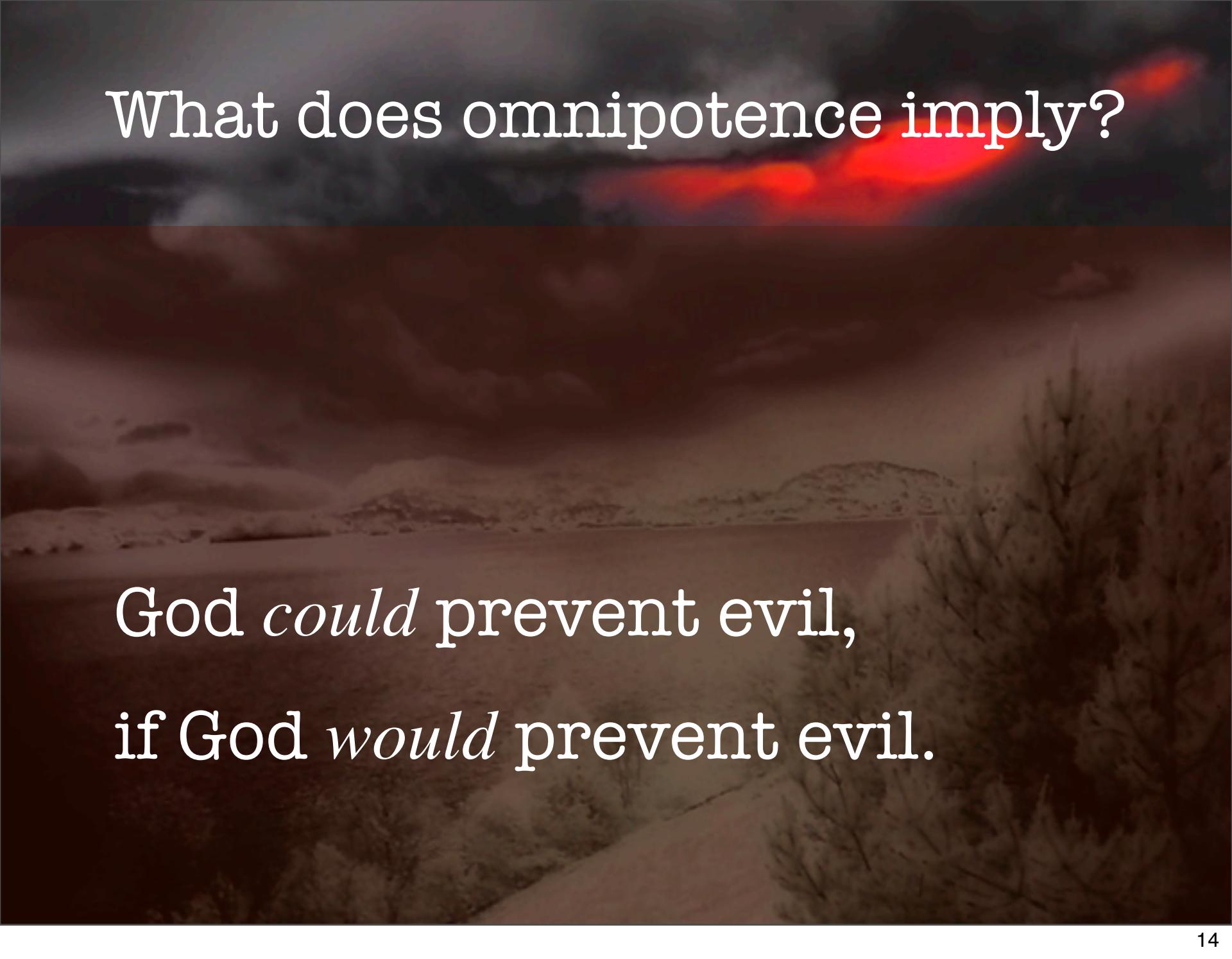
NB: This argument is valid (modus tollens)

An Inconsistent Triad?



What does omnibenevolence imply?

God *would* prevent evil,
if God *could* prevent evil.

A dark, atmospheric landscape featuring a vast, open field in the foreground. In the background, there are low hills or mountains. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, with a bright, fiery red glow visible on the right side, suggesting a sunset or a fire. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

What does omnipotence imply?

God *could* prevent evil,
if God *would* prevent evil.

An Inconsistent Triad?

- 1 God is perfectly good (omnibenevolent).
- 1 * A perfectly good being always eliminates evil as far as it can.
- 2 God is omnipotent.
- 2 * There are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do.

Full Formulation of the Logical Argument from Evil

1. If God exists and is omnipotent and perfectly good, then God does not exist.
 - 1A. A perfectly good being always eliminates evil as far as it can. [1*]
 - 1B. There are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do. [2*]
2. Evil exists.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

Our reply . . .



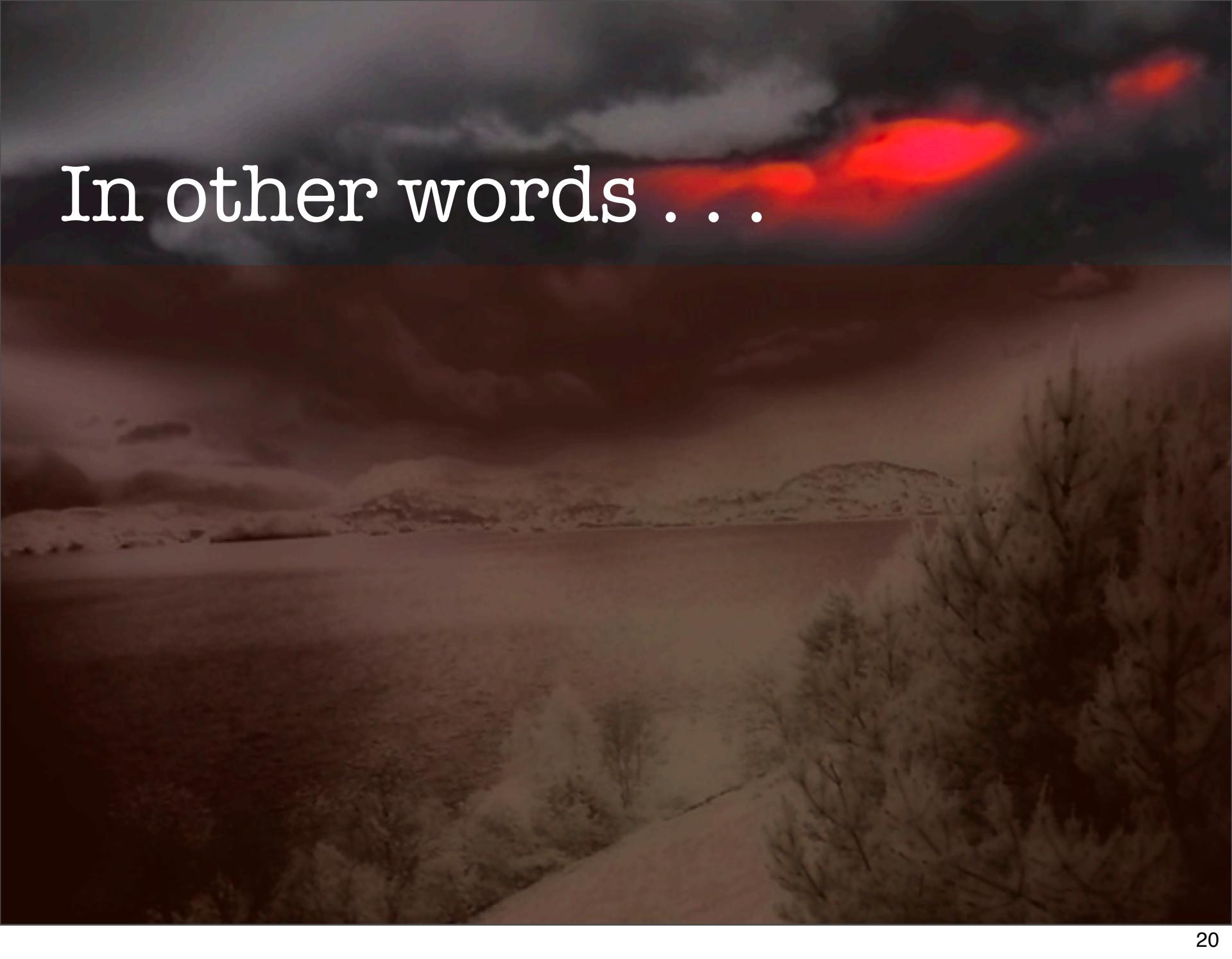
Dispelling the Impression of Inconsistency

1. Inconsistency does not entail irrationality.
2. Burden of proof: the atheist must show that the theist should accept 1A and 2A.
3. Evidence for the existence of God is evidence that the existence of God is compatible with the existence of evil.
4. The existence of God is demonstrably compatible with the existence of evil.

Showing the Logical Compatibility of God and Evil

Reply to 1A (a perfectly good being always eliminates evil as far as it can): It is logically possible that God has morally sufficient reasons for permitting all the evils there are.

Reply to 1B (there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do): It is logically possible that God could not create free creatures who never sin.

A dark, atmospheric landscape, possibly a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds. A bright, glowing red and orange patch of light is visible in the upper right corner, suggesting a fire or a low-hanging sun. The foreground is dark and indistinct, with some silhouettes of trees or bushes on the right side.

In other words . . .



for all we know . . .

1. an omnipotent God is not able to create a world of significantly free creatures who do no evil;

and,

2. an omnibenevolent God has a morally sufficient reason (perhaps known only to himself) for permitting even the most horrendous evils.

The Achilles' Heel of the Logical Argument from Evil

Its strength is its greatest weakness:
its logical form . . .

The Evidential Argument from Evil

- Two worries about the Free Will Defense
- Some key terms
- The basic formulation of the evidential argument from evil
- A reply to the evidential argument from evil
- The Achilles' heel of the evidential argument from evil

Two Worries about the Free Will Defense

Worry #1: Does the theist really believe that God has a morally sufficient reason for all the evil there is?

Worry #2: What about natural evil?

Some Key Terms

“Gratuitous evil”

“Inscrutable evil”

“Apparently gratuitous evil”

What is **gratuitous** evil?

Evil is **gratuitous** if there is no morally sufficient reason God **could** have for permitting that evil.

What is inscrutable evil?

It is evil such that, if God exists and does have a morally sufficient reason for permitting that evil, **we do not know** what that reason is or could be.

Note: If we know of some reason God *could* have for permitting some instance of evil, then that instance of evil is not *inscrutable*.

What is “apparently” gratuitous evil?

It is evil that **Seems** gratuitous, on the grounds that it is inscrutable.

A dark, atmospheric landscape featuring a cloudy sky with a prominent red glow on the right side, suggesting a sunset or fire. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted trees and a path or road leading towards a distant, snow-capped mountain range.

So what's the argument?

Basic Formulation of the Evidential Argument from Evil

1. If God exists, then gratuitous evil does not exist.
2. But gratuitous evil (probably) does exist.
3. Therefore, (probably) God does not exist.

NB: This argument is valid (modus tollens), but premise (2) is merely probable.

Why think there is gratuitous evil?

The only **evidence** we have for the existence of genuinely gratuitous evils is the **inscrutability** of some evils.

A Reply to the Evidential Argument from Evil

Does gratuitous evil exist?

1. The burden of proof
2. Agnosticism about proposition (2) of the argument
3. Evidence that proposition (2) is false
4. Rich track record of “theodical suggestions”
5. Is the existence of inscrutable evil morally justified?

The Achilles' Heel of the Evidential Argument from Evil

Does gratuitous evil exist?

An Argument from Evil for Theism!

1. Evil exists and is a **departure** from the way things ought to be.
2. If evil is a departure from the way things ought to be, then there is a **way** things ought to be.
3. If there is a **way** things ought to be, then there is a **design** plan for things.
4. If there is a **design** plan for things, then there is a **designer**.
5. This designer we call **“God.”**

Gratuitous Evil Revisited

Genesis 50:18-21

Hebrews 11:37-40

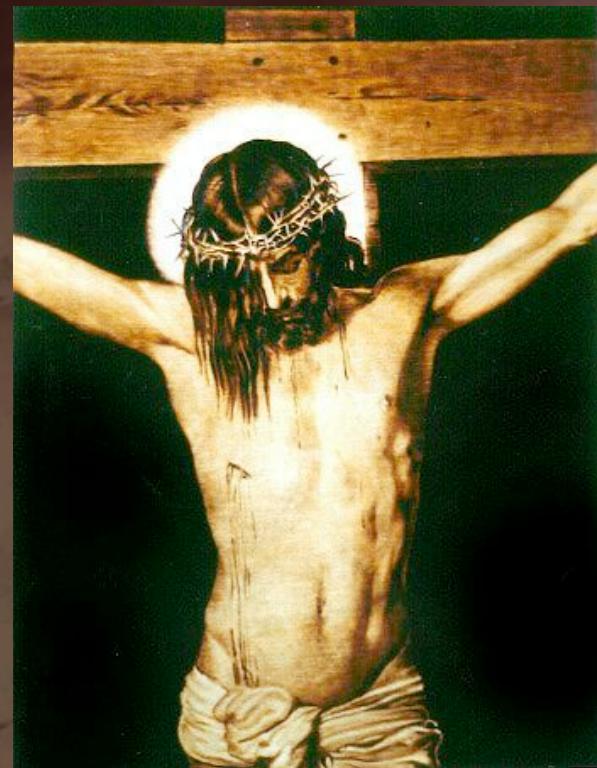
Book of Job

Isaiah 55:8-10

Isaiah 53

Gratuitous Evil Revisited

The crucifixion
and resurrection
of Jesus



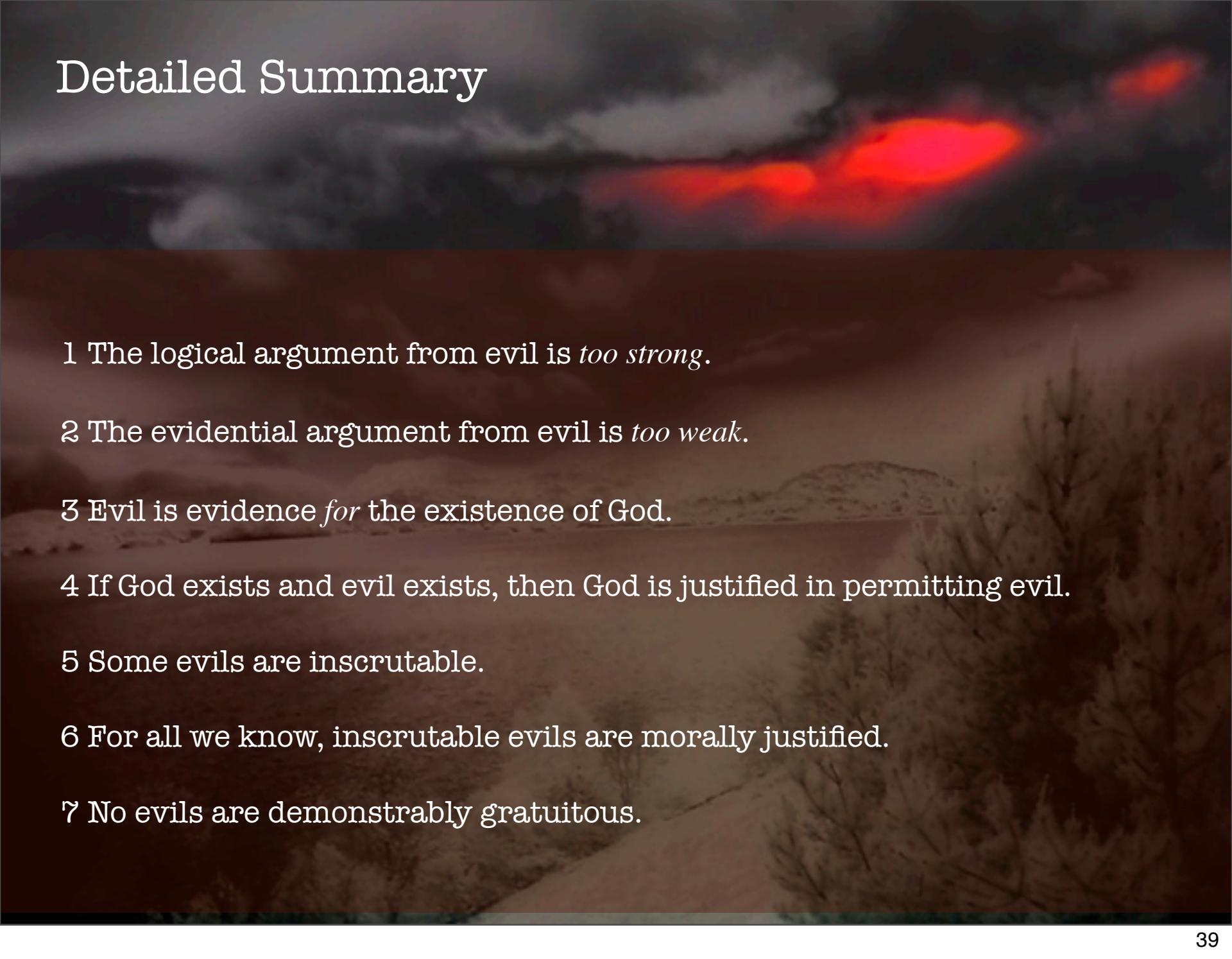
Christianity and the Problem of Evil

1. If God exists, then evil will be defeated.
2. God takes moral evil seriously.
3. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered the consequences of evil.
4. The Christian has a reasonable hope.
5. How are we to make sense of evil without God?

General Summary

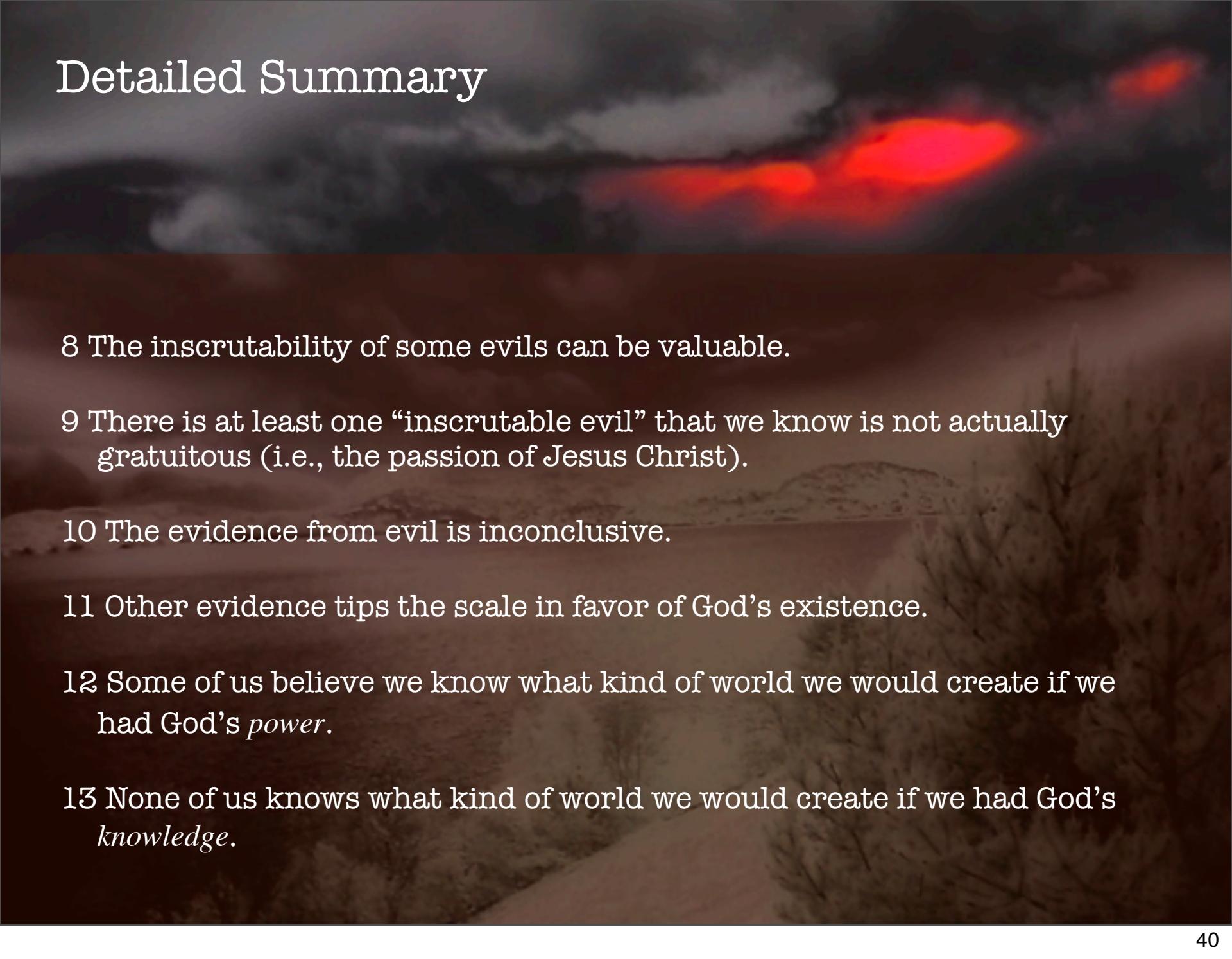
1. The logical argument from evil is defeated.
2. The evidential argument from evil is defeated.
3. Evil is actually evidence for the existence of God.
4. Christianity offers a uniquely hopeful perspective on evil!

Detailed Summary

A dark, atmospheric landscape featuring a bright red lava flow in the upper right, contrasting with dark, smoky clouds and a dark, rocky foreground.

- 1 The logical argument from evil is *too strong*.
- 2 The evidential argument from evil is *too weak*.
- 3 Evil is evidence *for* the existence of God.
- 4 If God exists and evil exists, then God is justified in permitting evil.
- 5 Some evils are inscrutable.
- 6 For all we know, inscrutable evils are morally justified.
- 7 No evils are demonstrably gratuitous.

Detailed Summary



- 8 The inscrutability of some evils can be valuable.
- 9 There is at least one “inscrutable evil” that we know is not actually gratuitous (i.e., the passion of Jesus Christ).
- 10 The evidence from evil is inconclusive.
- 11 Other evidence tips the scale in favor of God’s existence.
- 12 Some of us believe we know what kind of world we would create if we had God’s *power*.
- 13 None of us knows what kind of world we would create if we had God’s *knowledge*.

A dark, atmospheric landscape, possibly a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds. In the upper right, a bright, glowing red and orange patch of light suggests a fire or a setting sun. The foreground is dark and indistinct, with some silhouettes of bare trees on the right side.

The End

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Special thanks to:

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