Finishing yesterday (19Feb 84) a Craigville retreat for New Yorkers, I'm left with many feelings to mull over....the one occupying this thinksheet being the lover's perplexity face-to-face with evil, private and public. Here are a few observations on love, evil, and their confrontation.

1. In his GOD AND HUMAN ANGUISH (Abingdon/77, p.27), S. Paul Schilling, a good friend here on Cape Cod, says it well: "Evil implicit in complex group processes, though not traceable to physical nature, might be termed <u>natural</u> in that it is not willed by persons; yet it is <u>moral</u> in the sense that we can control it to some degree when we become conscious of it....In concrete human life natural and moral evil occur in close relation." Another categorization is Langdon Gilkey's "manageable" and "unmanageable" evils. Another: C.J. Ducasse's physical ("pains and discomforts arising from disease, from accidents, or from duress upon the body"), psychological (separation from loved ones by forced absence or death, loneliness, anxiety, fear, and frustration--states "not traceable to causes in or accidents to the body of the suffering person" or to wickedness in him or others), moral (character defects such as selfishness, greed, malice, hatred, and cruelty, which cause suffering to persons who have them as well as to others), and intellectual (irrationality, stupidity, poor judgment, and defective perception, which lead to ineffective handling of many situations). Gilkey's subforms of unmanageability are fate (political, economic, intellectual, and technological forces within history that, beyond all of our individual intentions, seem to drive us irresistibly toward social conflicts, wars, and depressions), sin (a powerful force within us that "subtly twists each of our acts and intentions into a glorification of self"--beyond our control because the selfcenteredness is a quality of our own wills, tainting even our best efforts to change), and death (the supreme instance of unmanageability, though oft deferable by caution and science and sometimes-- supremely in the case of Jesus--redeemable by love). I agree with SPS (to whom I'm indebted for the LG and CJD material above) that the traditional natural/moral division of evil is still the most useful, though even it is of limited value because of the complexity of good/evil situations/analyses.

2. Complexity and perplexity are related in more than etymology and phonics. Yes, as a Christian I believe that love wins proximate victories (while suffering proximate defeats) and the ultimate victory over evil; for "God is love," and "perfect love casts out" not only fear but all other evils. But what/now/how is the Christian to do against which evils? Here are a few suggestions:

(1) "Pray without ceasing" for guidance while singing without ceasing "On-ward Christian soldiers" (or, in the case of literalistic pacifists, some equally aggressive, not to say militant, hymn).

(2) When in doubt, attack. I give this suggestion in the most shocking form I can think of, in order to counter the common rule, which is When in doubt, do nothing. "Nice" people are permissive, not naming and certainly not attacking evil--both of which are "nasty." Jesus our Model was nasty enough to get himself killed.

+ L.G.

(3) After attacking, reflect as to whether you should repent, using as checklists CJD's "moral" and "intellectual" categories (parag. #1, above). If you reflect too much before attacking, you'll almost certainly commit a sin of omission. Remember the old bromide: To win, evil needs only that good people do nothing.

(4) But before attacking (with $, time, mind-heart, body), study the situation, worshipping the Lord "with all your mind." In the past, so much "good" action (e.g., reducing infant mortality in the Third World) has had evil results (millions to die this year of starvation in Africa).

(5) Avoid simplistic Bible-reading (e.g., "almsgiving") and its attendant false guilty conscience.