


Theodicy and the Contemporary Views of God: A Proposed Integrated Theodicy

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ABSTRACT	Article History
<p><i>There are two irrevocable and yet seemingly contradictory truths that God is Omni benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient and yet evil has pervaded, permeated and reigning supreme in the world. Theodicy is an attempt to integrate and resolve this antinomy. The erudite philosopher and skeptic David candidly captures this dilemma of a benevolent God and the prevalence of evil. The cryptically remarks that, "Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing: whence then is evil."</i></p> <p><i>It goes without say that, "In varying degree, one problem (of evil) is difficult for all type of strong theism." It is imperative to examine the nature of evil and its correlation to the concept of God. There are two kinds of evil which are the natural and moral evils. The natural evil does not involve human willing and acting, but is merely an aspect of nature which seems to be working against man's welfare. They are the destructive forces nature: hurricanes, earthquakes, tornados, volcanic eruptions and the like." The moral evil may be, "traced to the choice and action of free moral agents. There we find war, crime, cruelty, class struggles, discrimination, slavery and injustices too numerable to mention."</i></p> <p>KEYWORDS: Theodicy, natural evil, moral evil, God's sovereignty, human responsibility, Free will Theodicy, integrated theodicy</p>	Original Research Article
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I. INTRODUCTION

There are two irrevocable and yet seemingly contradictory truths that God is Omni benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient and yet evil has pervaded, permeated and reigning supreme in the world. Theodicy is an attempt to integrate and resolve this antinomy. The erudite philosopher and skeptic David candidly captures this dilemma of a benevolent God and the prevalence of evil. The cryptically remarks that, "Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing: whence then is evil."¹

It goes without say that, "In varying degree, one problem

(of evil) is difficult for all type of strong theism."²It is imperative to examine the nature of evil and its correlation to the concept of God. There are two kinds of evil which are the natural and moral evils. The natural evil does not involve human willing and acting, but is merely an aspect of nature which seems to be working against man's welfare. They are the destructive forces nature: hurricanes, earthquakes, tornados, volcanic eruptions and the like."³The moral evil may be, "traced to the choice and action of free moral agents. There we find war, crime, cruelty, class struggles, discrimination, slavery and injustices too numerable to mention."⁴

All these evils are devastating with serious ramifications

¹ Millard J Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book house, 1984), 412.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

of the human race both individually and collectively. As a result the human being is constrained to contemplate on these evils in Juxtaposition with their views of God.

The problem of evil is a direct affront to the conception of God in both the primitive church and the contemporary church. It is evident that," In all times and in all places we find pain, we find sufferings, we find evil. Evil is no less pernicious, and no less perplexing in the modern world than it has been. This poses a tenacious problem for those who believe in a God, good and loving, all-powerful and infinitely smart. For surely a God who is good, loving would not allow there to be widespread pain and suffering in the world. And surely a God who is omniscient and omnipotent could ensure that no such world would exist. But does such a world exist in our world?"⁵

The antinomy is the reality of evil and the existence of Omni benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient God seems to be two contradictory and irreconcilable truths. As a result theodicy is an attempt to reconcile these two truths without attempting to deny minimize one of the truth. The problem of evil is compounded by the theism of God. There are those who attempt to resolve the impasse by either denying the existence of God, reducing the influence of God or even denying the reality of evil.

This problem of evil is resolved by an Atheist when he denies the existence of God. Michael L Patterson lucidly explains that the problem generates a moral protest when he quips that, "How can God let this happen?"⁶ It is evident among the atheist that the apparent contradiction between the existence of a benevolent God and the prevalence of evil in the world then it is a case for there being no God. The Atheist," claim that since there is something morally problematic about a morally perfect and allowing all the evil and suffering, we see, there must not be a morally perfect God after all."⁷This argument is the Gibraltar of the Atheist argument against God that Hans Kung dubs it as, "the neck of atheism."⁸The atheist position is taken in light of the overwhelming presence of evil in the world that postulates the non- existence of God.

The problem of evil, sin and suffering has a very simple solution to the polytheism view of God. As Sir Norman Anderson in his classic masterpiece Christianity and world Religion assert that, "In polytheistic religion this

problem finds a comparatively simple solution. There are good gods and bad gods, benevolent gods and malignant gods. So all depend on which of these different deities is in control at any particular time or place. They are in continual, or at least intermittent, conflict and neither one nor the other is necessarily destined to prevail."⁹ This view does attempt to rationalize the existence of a benevolent God and an evil in the world but asserting multiple God both good and evil that necessitate such a sorry of affairs.

Ditheism is a contemporary doctrine of God that seek to deal with a mortal blow the problem of evil by elucidating that, there exists, "two equal and distinct gods. It is a form of dualism which holds that the universe is comprised of dualities good and bad, light and darkness, light and darkness, body and mind."¹⁰This explains that since there is a god of evil and a god of good who are co-equal and co-eternal. Therefore evil and good will persist in a titanic battle that is endless. Hence this position explains the prevalence of evil and the reality of God by creating two gods. It is however preposterous to imagine that there are two unmoved movers and two uncaused cause. It is equally unfathomable to imagine that God and evil are at par as imagined by this theodicy. This view of theodicy negates and obliterates a sovereign God who reigns supreme on earth and he is Omni benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent. Secondly it equates evil and good to be at par without any moral compunction. It is hopelessly futile theodicy for it does not contemplate any future victory of good over evil. The theodicy seeks to obfuscate evil and good to be inherent qualities of earth. This position cannot be sustained by either scripture or reason. This position is an oxymoron, logically untenable and Biblically unsustainable, the prevalence of evil in the world by a position that is called open theism. This is a view that tends to obfuscate God's sovereignty and his omniscience by the fact of human free will. In open theism, the future is either knowable or not knowable. The open theist insists that God voluntarily limits this knowledge of free will choices so that they can remain truly free."¹¹The position negates or minimize the Gods' for knowledge since the future free will choices of individuals cannot be known by God a head of time or prior to the event."¹²This position shifts the problem of

⁵ Chad Mister and James K Dew, Jr Eds, *God and the problem of evil: Five views*, (London: Intervarsity press, 2017), P 1-10.

⁶ Michael L Peterson, *God and Evil: An introduction to the issues*, (Boulder, Nevada: west view press, 1998), P 9.

⁷ James R Beebe, "Logical problem of Evil," *Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy* <https://www.lep.utn.edu> Retrieved on 20th June 2018, at 17:05 GMT.

⁸ Hans Kung, *on Being a Christian*, (Garden City, New York: Double day, 1976,) 432.

⁹ Norman Anderson, *Christianity and world Religions*, (Leicester, England: Intervarsity press, 1984), P 118-119.

¹⁰ Matt Slick, "what is Ditheism" <https://carm.org/about-philosophy> Retrieved on 21st June 2018 at 00:23 GMT.

¹¹ Clark Pinnock. *The openness of God: A Biblical challenge to the traditional understanding of God*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity press, 1994), P 10-12.

¹² Gregory. A. Boyd. *God of the possible*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2001), 15.

evil to be exclusively dependant on human will and choices. It reduces God's sovereignty and for knowledge absolving God from all the blame. Alvin plating amplifies this position by asserting that:

God's creation of persons with morally significant free will is something of tremendous value. God could not eliminate much of the evil and suffering in this world without thereby eliminating the greater good of having created persons with free will with whom he could have relationship and who are able to love one another and do good things.¹³

The paradox of the reality of a benevolent God and the prevalent evil both natural and moral evil has provoked a lot of contemporary response. These responses have an indisputable correlation with the view of God. The reality of evil that has pervaded and permeated the entire globe with detrimental ramifications and cause untold sufferings and unmitigated pain. Hence it has caused many theologians to rethink how to conceptualize God in light of the prevalent realism. As Millard J Erickson succinctly observes that, "One way of showing the tension of the problem (of evil) which we have been describing is to abandon the idea of God's omnipotence."¹⁴ This position more often takes the form of dualism that was prevalent in Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism which proposes that there is no one but two ultimate principles in the universe.¹⁵ This position implies of necessity there is unrelentlessly though indecisive tug of war, "between God and the evil power with no certainty as to the ultimate outcome. God is attempting to overcome evil, and would if he could, but he is simply unable to do so."¹⁶ Edgar S Brightman an erudite philosopher developed the concept of a finite goal to deal with the intractable and enigmatic problem of evil.¹⁷ Hence he reduced God to be a personal consciousness of eternal duration and eternal active will. This position deals with reality the malevolent evil both natural and moral by acknowledging that God is impotent in dealing with this avalanche of evil. They ultimately reduce God to be a mere sentimental wimp who is benevolent but nonetheless powerless, sentimentally well meaning but lacks the gumption to deal decisively with evil. This seems to be a plausible explanation to explain the status quo in the world. This position is prevalent in the many contemporary view of God in which God is depicted as either far removed or even remote or there are plethora's

of God who co-exist. It is evident in henotheism that "tends to set one God above the rest."¹⁸ The reality of evil in henotheism is explained by the existence of a multiple Theos with some being malevolent and some being benevolent. It is implied of necessity by this position that since either the supreme deity accommodates or may never vanquish the other gods then evil will always be there. Deism is the other nuance of this Theodicy in that, "deistic God is remote and impersonal absentee, and may well be defined in such abstract terms as the first cause, the infinite and the supreme power." God is the ultimately creator but left the world with its own devices as a clock maker leaves the clock after making it. This position depicts God as either ambivalent absent or uninvolved in the world this explains the reality and prevalent of evil. The other fact is that God created the world but may have been overwhelmed by what he created. Hence God is rendered irrelevant and overwhelmed by the world. He may even be sponsored stupefied just as we are by the evil as it unfolds hence he is unable to appropriately respond. This may give way to the idea that 'God is dead? He may have existed but at the moment, he is irrelevant to deal with the contemporary challenges hence there is need for God for he is irrelevant in dealing with evil. Hence we don't need God in the contemporary world. The subtle flipside elucidation of this position of the finitism of evil is to approach God modifying good is that God is all and all is God. This position in its sophistry approached the enigma of evil but stating the all apparent evil is good. This position is that of absolute theism that is everything is caused by God and evil is just an illusion or a figment of man's fertile imaginations. This also necessitate that the concept of the goodness of God be readjusted to fit the reality of evil that is prevalent in the planet earth. Gordon Clark recklessly stated that, "I wish very frankly and pointedly to assert that if a man gets drunk and shoot his family, it was the will of God that he should do it."¹⁹

This view is categorical that God is the ultimate worse of everything including evil. As Gordon Clark lucidly puts it that, "Let it be an equivocally said that this view certainly makes God the cause of evil."²⁰ This position of God being perceived as the author of evil springs from contemporary understanding of God, It perceives God as a monistic reality of God that the nature of everything is one and it is related to pantheism.²¹ This is the reality that God is the reality of everything hence there can be no other cause of evil except God. This Theodicy of God

¹³ Alvin Platinga, *The nature of Necessary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974)

¹⁴ Erickson, 414

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Edgar S Brightman, *A philosophy of Religion*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prince Hall, 1940), P37.

¹⁸ G M Bromiley "God," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol2, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WMB Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 496

¹⁹ Gordon H Clark, *Religion, Reason and Revelation*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961), 221.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, (Pensacola, Florida: Chapel Library, 1982), 156.

being thought to be the initiator of everything including evil is for the purpose of the extension of his purpose and goal. In the Islamic understanding of God and evil is that evil is necessary for the fulfillment of God's purpose. It must be noted that a careful scrutiny of the narratives of the Quran, "demonstrates that the so called problem of evil- and by extension, human suffering –is not treated in the Quran as a theoretical problem but rather as an instrument of actualization of God's purpose."²² Hence this concept of God is categorical that God is the creator though

The pantheist view of God have an ambivalent concept of evil and the problem of evil for in them God is everything and everything is God. Hegel who is considered as a closet pantheist held that, "all apparent evil is really good in the making; it only looks and feels bad only because its character as good is not yet complete."²³ This position minimized the potency and malignancy of evil in order to maintain the balance between the prevalence of a benevolent and omnipotent God with an avalanche of evil that is persistent on earth unabated. Hence evil is reduced to be apparent but it seems evil only because of we have not seen its ramification at the end. It is crystal clear that in this position God is inextricably intertwined with evil hence evil is good and there is no destruction between evil and good. The transcendency and the otherness of God is completely lost while his holiness is ridiculed and trifled. The position of pantheism tends to be very superficial on its perspective on evil and it does take into cognizance the Biblical reality of total depravity and the diabolic nature of evil. It tends to be unrealistic and disparage the untold suffering that humanity undergoes in the stark reality of sin. This view does minimize the sovereignty of God, reduce his transcendency and ostracize and hem God into sin. Hence the position fails to do justice to both God and the reality of sin for the two are not only diametrically opposed but antagonistic to one another.

This pantheistic view of the problem of evil has a presupposition that there is a greater purpose in evil hence evil is contingency in fulfilling the will and plan of God. This position in essence makes God the author of evil for a greater good. In fact the term, "a world containing moral and physical evil is better, because metaphysically richer than one containing well, only and that God must have created the best of all possible worlds."²⁴ Hence God is the creator of evil and this view has a sentimental or romantic view of evil in that it is for

a greater good that is unfathomable but however God is indeed the creator or initiator of both good and evil. This view makes the message of Christianity to be superfluous, redundant and irrelevant. It may also inspire people to look for beauty and aesthetic value in evil which is farfetched for in reality sin is very diabolic and has serious ramification in an individual life both natural and moral evil. John thick holds this position when he endorsed the universality of salvation and he affirmed categorically that, "nothing less can justify all the evil that God for soul- building purposes permit in his world."²⁵ This position is that God even if he is not the creator but he indeed permitted sin but sin is contingent in the soul making of man. Hence sin is necessary for the soul creating in man. This makes God to be dependent on sin to fulfill his purpose.

The process theologian who ascribe to the theology of change picture God as finite and struggling against evil in the hope of mastering it one day.²⁶ Hence God is overwhelmed, outwitted and outfoxed by evil. Michael L Patterson is categorical on the view of God among process theologians in Juxtaposition with the reality of the problem of evil. He asserts that:

Process philosophers and theologians believe that this scenario of God and the world adequately handles the theoretical problem of evil. Since God is no longer conceived as an impotent creator and thus able to control all events. He is not culpable for the presence of evil in the world. Nevertheless process theodicy projects a deity who is deeply involved in profoundly affected by the experiences of finite creatures.²⁷

This position of process handles the problem of evil by denying God's omnipotence hence God is presented as an overwhelmed spectator who is sentimental but impotent to deal with evil. This articulation of process theologian is not in tandem with the classical view of God. It is crystal clear, "according to process thinkers, the classical theological concept of omnipotence is metaphysically impossible because it is conceptually incoherent." This is because of the process metaphysics is grounded on the premise that one existence of a world of finite being is necessary and that every existing being has the inherent power of determination, consequently it is utterly impossible for God to completely determine the actions of creatures. He can only persuade but not coerce.²⁸ He also reduces God's goodness to be a mere projection of

²² Nasrin Rouzatu, *Evil and Human suffering in Islamic Thought- Towards a mystical Theodicy* MDPI, Basel, Switzerland <http://creativecommons.org>. Retrieved on 1st July 2018 at 09:32 G.M.T

²³ J. I Packer, "Theodicy." *New Dictionary of Theology*, (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1988), P679-80.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Michael L Paterson, "God and evil in process Theology." *Process Theology*, Ronald Nash, ed, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), 124.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

his aesthetic value. They render God from being personal to an impersonal principle that is not worthy to be worshipped or adore. Neither is he in control of the affairs of men. The distinction that they make between coercion and persuasion is abstract and untenable. In trying to absolve God from evil they have created a caricature of God who is sentimental, overwhelmed, impotent and an impersonal principle. Hence the wind boggling question is if it is indeed worthy to reduce God's majesty and power in order to explain the reality of the problem of evil. Their arguments are cryptical, elliptical and cannot be sustained by either logic or scripture. The scriptural God is sovereign and he reign supreme and not a whip that the process theologians have created in their own capricious whims.

The other form of theodicy is diminishing or rejecting the reality of evil. The evil is considered a non-being? St. Augustine who was a Neo platonian Christian regarded all being as good thus regarding evil as non-being.²⁹ Evil is a privation, corruption or perversion of something which was previously or otherwise good. As a result evil has no substantial being in itself but it is parasitic on good. Augustine is cryptical on the origin of evil for it entered through the actions of otherwise good beings-angel and humans.³⁰ This view of dealing with the problem of evil minimizes evil or put its value to aesthetically fit in God's plan," all events are part of God's righteous plan, and therefore although they may involve evil in themselves, they are intended by God for morally justified purposes." This position made us to logically conclude that it is a panentheistic view of God in that God is everything though he is also distinct and transcendent. Evil may be part of God's schema of things though God is distinct and evil is a negation or a lack of the goodness of God but it is not a real or tangible thing according to Augustine. This panentheistic perspective of God and evil is evident if not implied in Augustinian theodicy. The view here is that God is involved in everything and that everything will culminate in giving God the glory and honor and evil just a lesser God and part of God's aesthetic goodness. This view inadvertently makes God the originator of evil for nothing exists a part from God. This position does not clearly expound the malevolent and diabolic nature of evil and sin.

All the shades of finitism theodicies can be summed up as a position that," denies and qualifies the omnipotence of God and says that the finite cannot avoid evil. It takes various forms of dualism,"³¹ position is manifested in very many religions and such as Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism and Manichaeism presented the cosmic dualism of God and Satan. Plato and Aristotle were of the

metaphysical dualism of God.³²

It goes without say that concept of God has ramifications on the formulation of theodicies. There is a theodicy that is devotional. It is categorical that, "the apparent contradiction between evil and an omnipotent and good God should not be handled logically but faithfully as depicted in the book of Job."³³ It is evident in the book of Job that despite Job's initial complaint to the Lord and his purported comforters that his suffering had been inflicted on him unjustly, Job finally accepted the difficult situation by repentance and faith when he was confronted by the overwhelming greatness and wisdom of God.³⁴ This theodicy seeks to have a pragmatic attitude of faithfully accepting evil and suffering without logically seeking to explain it. This devotional theodicy does not seek to comprehend and elucidate the nitty gritty of the miasma of Omni benevolent God and the pervading presence of evil. It seeks a pragmatic acceptance of the reality of evil with an unquestionable trust in God that it will end well as in Job's story. This theodicy sees evil and a mystery and God's way his power and goodness are also mysterious, unfathomable and enigmatic hence it cannot be logically explained and no amount exposition will erase this reality. This theodicy is good for devotion; however it may be a leap into the deep adage. It does not attempt to answer critical questions of that are real and not artificial in the reality of God's Omni benevolence goodness and the reality of evil. A blind and strong faith is not a panacea for all the challenges of the problem of evil. The words of Anselm are an antithesis to this theodicy of evil as mysterious,³⁵ and God working as mysterious, for I do not seek to understand that I may believe that I may understand while Augustine quipped that, I believe in order that I may understand.³⁶ This is a theodicy of faith and trust and it is known as simple fideism. This fideism seeks not to answer the question of evil in juxtaposition with God's Omni potency and Omni benevolence.

There is a theodicy that can be surmised from the God is dead concept of Friedrich Nietzsche where there was a dialogue between a mad man who confronts a mob in the market who do not believe in God. The mad man proclaims that God is dead and that, "You have killed him-you and I."³⁷ This is indeed an allegory of the post modern concept of humanity reigning supreme and God being relegated to irrelevancy and hence humanity have to solve the problem of both natural and moral evil and the suffering that it entails. This may be through government and scientific innovations and preparing to

²⁹ "Theodicy New world encyclopedia, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Theodicy>, retrieved on 5th July 2018 at 20:32 G.M.T.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay science*, translated by water Kauffman, (New York: Vintage, 1979), P 125.

mitigate natural disasters through early warning and preparedness. This Theodicy is an o theodicy in that it is anthropocentric man should try to circumspectly comprehend and mitigate the evil. This human centered theodicy lacks the gumption to explore the origin of evil. The position that God is dead is illusionary and may lead to nihilism and annihilationism. It does not command hope or the remedy for evil that is rampant in the contemporary world. This view look at God as a mask for the unlearned but the ramifications are dire and the consequences are terrible. Hence this purported theodicy is impotent in dealing with the reality of evil and projecting a God of the Bible but rather it conjures a God made in the likeness of humanity a dead God, in whom there is no hope.

The other extreme theodicies that is the ante theodicy theory that in fact it thinks that theodicy is immoral. This is because of the fact that it seeks to justify evil. Dean Stratton succinctly puts this argument by stating that:

“Even if theists can successfully respond to the evidential argument from evil, there is a further difficulty to be faced in the moral argument of evil. If evil is the harbinger of greater good, why should we oppose to its occurrence, and why indeed, should we be expected to be prevent.”³⁸

This form of explaining evil is critical of theodicy for theodicy seeks to justify evil which is preposterous and illogical to sustain. It makes theodicy to be superfluous and unnecessary. While it is true that it is impossible to defend God but there is problem in trying to scrutinize the problem of evil and its ramification on our conception to God. Apologetics is not an exercise in futility but our obligations as Christians as it is dearly stated in 1 peter 3:15. The tone of theodicy should be naïve to either think or imagine that it is a panacea in solving the enigmatic problem of evil. Hence it should be approached with humility and faith.

The other anti theodicy position is propagated by Fyodors Dostoyerskys masterpiece novel entitled *The Brothers Karamazon*. In this Novel Ivan cannot reconcile the reality of an Omni benevolent God and the malignancy and evil. Hence he retreats to accept that theodicy is morally difficult. He accepts the reality of God’s existence and his purposes will triumph at the end but he cannot come to terms with the cruelty of the world and is just contended that the two truths are incomprehensible and exclusive hence, “please understand, it is not God that I do not accept, but he has created. I do not accept God’s world and I refuse to

accept.”³⁹This presupposition is that evil is so malignant and there is apparently no need or reason to justify it. Albert Camos commenting on the same reality is candid that in the world view of the book, “If evil is essential to divine creation, then creation is unacceptable.”⁴⁰This is a theodicy of protest in the stark realities of evil. It fails abysmally to reconcile two apparent contradictions by avoiding one of the realities. This position is a manifestation of escapicism, unrealistic and it cannot be sustained by both reason and truth scriptural truth. The mere expression of revulsion on the magnitude of evil does warrant the rejection of God’s word for it truly exists. This position while it should be lauded for truly expressing the revulsion of evil but it attempts not to give any plausible explanation and hence escapicism is not the magic bullet that deals with evil for both natural and moral evil do exist.

On the other extreme is a position that has been defined anti theodicy. The position lambastes severely theodicy for being oxymoron, ambivalent and bordering on blasphemy Zachary Braiterman contends that anti theodicy is refusing to justify, explain justify or accept the relationship between God on one hand and evil and suffering on the other.⁴¹The further asserarates that, “Although it often borders on blasphemy, anti theodicy does not constitute atheism; it might even express stubborn love that human. Persons have for God. After all, the author of a genuine anti theodicy statement must believe than an actual relationship subsists between God and evil in order to reject it; and must love God in order to be offended by the relationship.”⁴²

After examining from a bird’s eye view the various theodicies that I have meticulously endeavored to expound critic and vet in this paper of theodicies and the contemporary view of God. I have deduced that any wrong misconception on the problem of evil will definitely lead to a wrong conception of God and the vice versa. The theodicy that present God as finite does not give the right conception of God that is Biblical or reasonable. We cannot have a finite uncaused cause, who cannot create the world ex-nihilo hence he is no God at all. The free will theodicies seeks to absolve God by blaming free will while this explanation is not fool proof but it also cannot explain the natural evil. This theodicy makes God to be completely depended on the whims of man. It is from such theodicy that we have such variations of open theism theodicy where God is never

³⁹ *Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov translated by David Magarshack, (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin press, 1958), P 10-23*

⁴⁰ *Albert Camos, The Rebel: An Essay on man in Revolt, (New York; Knopf press, 1956), P 25-27.*

⁴¹ *Zachary Braiterman, (God) After Auschwitz: Tradition and change in post-Holocaust Jewish Thought, (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1998), P 12-32.*

⁴² *Ibid*

³⁸ *Dean Stratton*

omniscient and he cannot predict the future. He is surprised and astounded. The presupposition is contrary to Biblical witness and logic. The Bible is categorical that God knew everything before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:1-20). It is also abundantly clear that God does not only foreknows he also predestines according to his purpose (Romans 8:28, Acts 4:35 ff). Hence the theodicy of open theism is unsustainable but the only thing that the second person of trinity allowed himself to be stripped off his glory but none of his attributes of free knowledge or predestination. A God who is not omniscient, omnipotent or Omni benevolent is not a God at all. Hence this theodicy cannot adequately give solution to the problem of evil that is prevalent. It is logical to disrobe God of his attributes and think that it is a solution to the problem of evil for it only exacerbate and aggravate the situation without mitigating it. The theodicy of deistic polytheists and Henotheists are not sustainable for they do not realistically deal with evil and the theodicies do not present the true conception of God that is depicted in the Bible as omniscient, omnipresent and Omni benevolent. There is only one true God in the Bible who created heaven and earth. (Gen 1:1-). God is sovereign in control of those affairs of men and is indeed in control of both nature and humanity.

The panaronic view of the theodicies is that there is an inherent challenge on all presentation in that they either denigrated on reality or embellished the other. The theodicies that have presented all have fundamental disconnect with both the reality of evil and the sovereignty of God. Hence the perception that there is a theodicy that truly presents the true image of God and the reality of evil and how to mitigate the problem of evil, In light of the inherent weakness and inconsistency. The problem that is crystal clear is that all the theodicies that have been presented do not conclusively present the true image of God.

The Bible theodicy that is an integrated theodicy acknowledges the complexity and multilayered origin or source of evil for any position that does not acknowledge this overarching reality will be prone to misconceptions fallacious suppositions and irredeemable flaws. The natural evil comes from natural causes not influenced by human motives, decisions and action suffering that result from what Karl Barth has called the “dark” or “shadow” side of God’s good creation.”⁴³ This part of creation was necessitated by the fall that had ramifications on creation, no wonder in Roman 8:21-24 that world is groaning under the bondage of decay hence this accounts for the reality of natural evil. However, this position may not account for all evil.

It must be noted that some evil are as result of us being finite human. As Shirley C Guthrie is categorical that,

“some hard and painful experience in our lives are simply the result of our being finite creatures.”⁴⁴ It is further amplified where we realize that:

It is part of our creatively existence that there is decay as well as Growth, age as well as youth, loss as well as gain, pain as well as pleasure sickness as well as health, death as well as birth. Creatively life is at best fragile, vulnerable and temporary. Scripture is quite honest about this. Human beings are like the flowers of the field that blossom, live for a while, then wither and die (PS 103:15, Isa 40:6-7).⁴⁵

As a result some of the evil, suffering and death is as a result of our own finite creatureliness that we cannot avoid nor circumvent despite the advance in technology and science. Humans are transient and mortal though with an immortal soul.

It must be noted that there are natural evil that are brought by natural law in the sense, “Mother Nature is neither our friend nor our enemy she operates by her own rules that are sometimes beneficial or sometimes harmful to us.”⁴⁶ This understanding should not make us think like the deists who believe that it is only nature that reign supreme for God is not a spectator. As it is noted in this question, “is God responsible for the suffering that results from natural causes? Yes and no in the sense that God wiled and created the orderly structure of the world, gave it a relatively independent existence of its own, and does not constantly interfere with it. No in the sense that God is not directly responsible when that structure works to our disadvantage.”⁴⁷ It goes without say that God is indeed the ultimate cause of everything though not the immediate cause of everything.

In this integrated we learn the mulfuscated source of evil in the sense that some natural evil are caused by human responsibility and negligence, for, “many natural evil are at least partially the result of our neglect or refusal to take advantage of the ability God has ‘provided’ us to take care our own safety and welfare.”⁴⁸ Hence some evil are caused by human error, neglect or diabolic action. As a result some evil arose from the free will of good creatures that God made.”⁴⁹ Hence, we cannot attribute or ascribe nature or human volition the reality of evil and its prevalence in the world. The must be a power that is far beyond the human being nature that can be made to be the source of evil though distinct from God, for “one of

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 169

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 170

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ *Morman Geisler, Systematic Theology in one Volume, (Minnea Apolis, Minnesota: Bethany House,2011),755*

⁴³ *Shirley C Guthrie, Christian Doctrine, (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1994), 168*

the most ancient explanations of the existence and power of evil is the say that beside the good God there is an evil God.”⁵⁰ This is not a kin to the contemporary views of polytheism, henotheism, animism and other perverted view of God. It must be clearly understood that there is, “a kind of relative dualism in scripture”⁵¹ in contrast with God, against God and an antithesis to God is Satan who is described in the Bible as the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) or the ruler of this world (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11).⁵² However, we acknowledge that, “God would not be God if there were another God who could finally thwart God’s will and work.”⁵³ God is alone God who reigns supreme and sovereign and truly the ultimate purpose that is good, “It is in all things, including evil that God uses in accomplishing his goof purpose in the world.”⁵⁴ Hence in my integrated theodicy there are multiple of origins of evil that includes from nature, human will, our finite nature (total depraved nature) an evil God and ultimately God allows everything. Hence to look at evil to emanate from one place as the free will theodicy’s, or to attribute if the nature alone or to the devil alone or to God in isolation with other realities is a theodicy that is untenable. Consequently an integrated theodicy is more tenable for it affirms the reality of the multifaceted origin of evil and the same can be supported and authenticated by scripture, reason and the reality that is prevalent in the contemporary world.

The third reality of integrated theodicy is that it has a Christological practical and non practical method of dealing with the reality of God thrust and focus. This is an inducement to the deistic and even pantheistic theodicies where God is either aloof or inextricably intertwined with evil. Nothing is further from the truth that these theodicies. The truth is that, “the problem of evil does not overcome the Gospel; rather the Gospel is God’s solution to the problem of evil. The work of the Gospel and in those following Christ in confronting and overcoming evil can be seen both in work of Christ and in his followers.”⁵⁵ In Christ we affirm the incarnation of God who is omnipotent and omniscient and who takes the initiative to deal with evil (1 John 3:8, Matt 20:28). It is in Christ redemption plan that evil has been given a decisive blow on the cross for the personal evil sin was defeated, and we received redemption from sin in Christ (1 Cor 1:18), through sanctification is the process of evil dying more and more through and at the coming of Christ

all evil will be destroyed in humanity (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Hence God is dealing with evil in the present world and will completely destroy evil in the eschatology hence a Biblical theodicy must of necessity have a Christological focus. The integration of Christ in his theanthropic nature in that he is both divine and human is the perfect remedy for the reality of evil. History has authenticated that most of the evil and unjust was dealt with the advent of missionaries and the gospel of Christ. The killing of twins, the burning of widows in India, unjust labor laws, and other evil practices were eliminated due to influence of the gospel of Christ. The reality is that evil will still persist and it is fully destroyed at the end of ages (Rev 20:1-10). It is from then that peace will reign supreme and there will be no evil, suffering and pain, (Rev 20-22).

This integrative theodicy is not only Christological but also practical in that it, “focus on what God is doing to combat evil (e.g; suffering with, sparking resistance and bringing resurrection out of death); what people should be doing to combat evil (e.g making the option for poor, struggling against structural injustice, eschewing masochism and being for those who suffer); and how humanity can relate to God in the meantime (e.g expressing anger at God, in the manner of the Hebrews, Psalms of lament, practicing contemplation and celebrating liturgy and sacraments with other communities).”⁵⁶ Hence integrated theodicy seeks both God’s sovereignty and human responsibility in dealing with evil since evil has multifaceted and multilayered origin. Hence it has a multifaceted and multilayered solution that compliment rather than compete with one another than supplement rather than supplant the other.

The integrated theodicies seeks synergy from the conventional theodicies that seeks accept, reject or modify the views of God’s omnipotence and Omni benevolence. There second position is to reject God’s omnipotence is limited either by God himself, to allow free will; there are those who think that God’s power is persuasive not cohesive because of human freedom. While the liberation Theologians understand God’s power as enabling, as empowering and as compassionate.⁵⁷ Thirdly there is an approach that has the audacity to question the complete goodness of God. These are the theodicies of protest and refuse to argue for God’s theodicies that are also called as anti theodicies.⁵⁸ They say to justify God, “would profane the memories of those who have endured radical suffering, paradigmatically represented by the theologaust.”⁵⁹ Some in this position justify that God’s goodness is compatible with God’s

⁵⁰ Guthrie

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 175

⁵² *Ibid*

⁵³ *Ibid*

⁵⁴ James Montgomery Boise, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, Vol (Downers Grove, Illinois Intervarsity Press, 1978), 325

⁵⁵ Murray Moermann, *God’s Solution to the problem of Evil*, www.murraymoermann.com Retrieved on 20th July 2018 at 20.30 GMT

⁵⁶ Patricia L Wismar “Evil” *New Hand Book of Christian Theology*, Donald W Musser and Joseph L Price, ed (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 175

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 174

⁵⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

allowing evil if evil is, “understood as a punishment for sin or a trial necessary for growth.”⁶⁰ Some have argued that God suffers with us in this tragically marred world. The other shade of this position is that, “evil can be seen to contribute to a more extensive, more harmonious whole.”⁶¹ Some view that evil is necessary for “growth”. While others appeal to “heavenly” reward as a recompense for any necessary sufferings undergone on earth, sufferings in the light of heavenly glory will appear to have been insignificant.⁶² All these theodicies express some biblical truth however they adequately fail to capture the whole truth of the whole truth. Hence the integrated theodicies seek to deal with the problem by understanding that even theology that is orthodox is imperfect and hence not infallible. Hence the integrated seeks to harness the truth of divine attributes that are contained in each position without denying the God that is presented in the Bible. God’s Aseity must be understood as true as God’s suffering hence the doctrine of God impassibility ought to be both accepted as lambasted and rejected as unorthodox and untenable. As Jurgen Molten has affirmed that, “Christian theology must think of God’s being in suffering and dying and finally in death of Jesus, if it is not surrender or loose identity.”⁶³ Hence God impassibility is both true in relation to God and also not true in relation to God. In his aseity his cannot suffer while in his relation to man he can suffer to redeem. God’s attributes are not competing but complementing one another for none is greater or bigger than one in that God is both omnipotent and yet he limits himself that does not mean that he is finite. God is good and yet evil persist in his divine plan. The integrated theodicies seek to harmonize and synergize the attributes of God understanding that we cannot balance these attributes and accept even the seemingly contradictory ones. It is because of the poverty of human speech and dullness of our human finite comprehension for God is infinite.

It is abundantly clear that theodicies that are formulated are deeply influenced by the conception of God. As a result it is imperative that we need to have the correct conception of God in order to have the right comprehension of God. It is evident that the contemporary view of God has influenced the formulation of theodicies. It is undisputed that both God’s transcendency and immanence must be incorporated to the theodicies that imply that God is both involved through distinct in the same that breathe to the affairs that are prevalent on the earth. Hence we should have a balanced view of God that is both involved through distinct from deism or pantheism and pantheism.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*

⁶¹ *Ibid*

⁶² *Ibid*

⁶³ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, (New York: Harper Press, 1974), 273-280.

It is only in the belief of a personal God who is transcendent and immanent that the problem of evil can be mitigated. This God is high and exalted yet he can partake of human suffering and evil. He was counted among sinners in Christ baptism at River Jordan. God’s aseity should be expounded in the correct view of theodicy without denying God’s impassibility that was evident in Christ and his vicarious death on the cross, the God who identifies with human suffering and offers the solution in the cross while some solutions of the problem of evil will be in this transient world. However, some of the problems will be solved in eternity for that is the rational of eternity. The integrated theology of necessity affirms God indeed offers solutions to the problem, the challenge of the problem of the problem of evil some of the solution in the transient world and some in eternity where we will decisively defeat Satan and evil will be destroyed forever, (Rev 20-22).

The integrated theodicy acknowledges that in the causes of evil there is an element of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility consequently in defining the solution to the problem of evil there will be an element of the solution that must of necessity depend on God’s sovereignty while there is some of the solution that will be depended on human responsibility. As the eloquent erudite Bishop Augustine of Hippo is attributed with astute aphorism that, “pray as though everything depended on God, work as though everything depended on you.” However, the source of this quotation is spurious and unverifiable in Augustine writings. However, the great preacher Spurgeon made almost a similar quotation, “in fact the Christian should work as if all depended upon him and pray as if all depended on God.”⁶⁴

Integrated theodicy as intensely pragmatic in its look to the problem of evil as it is viewed in the juxtaposition with God who is imminent, transcendent, God who is with both aseity and impassibility, and a God who is sovereign and yet gives room to human responsibility. As result we approach the problem of evil with a presupposition that God is in ultimate control of the universe and His eternal plan will never fail. It is imperative that we should know that God made everything (Psalms 33:90 He calls into existence the things that do not exist (Rom 4:17). All things were created by God (Col 1:16). As a result God is absolutely omnipotent, “God is absolutely transcendent and wholly other” and yet as C Lewis Crisply remarks that, the World is crowded with Him, He walks everywhere incognito”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Charles H Surgeons Sermon: Vol 17, (Albany; Oregon” Ages Software (electronic ed,2008), 263

⁶⁵ Joe Ridney, *Confronting the Problem (s) of Evil; Biblical Philosophical and Emotional Reflection on Perpetual Evil*, www.des.org, retrieved on 27th of July 2018 at 20:13 GMT.

As a result “All things good, bad, ugly and horrific are ordained, guided and governed by the creator and sustainer of the universe.”⁶⁶ We find that the proper theodicy that is integrated deals with the Biblical-theological problem, the philosophical problem and the emotional problem of evil. The theological problem is dealt with by affirm the antimony both truths of, “God’s total and exhaustive sovereignty over all things” and in the same breath, “Refusing to minimize the moral significance of our decisions.” It is irrefutable and irrevocable that, “Christians who submit to the scripture will receive both strands of Biblical teaching regardless of whether the details and mechanics can be fully worked out and comprehended.”⁶⁷ We might not fully comprehend but the true truths of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are the core of the solution to the challenge of the problem of evil. The philosophical problem of evil can be answered with the same assertion of God’s sovereignty in juxtaposition to human responsibility. Also God’s reasoning in permitting and ordaining that evil exists God ordains evil for the same that Lewis creates the white witch so that Anselm will have someone to conquer. Evil exist so that God can triumph, death exist so that it can be thrown to hell (Rev 20:14) and this does not in any way minimize the wickedness or horror of evil God is sovereign and evil is real.”⁶⁸ Hence we should not minimize evil or blow it out of proportion for it is subservient to God’s sovereignty. As Proverbs 16: 4 is categorical, “The Lord works out everything to its proper end-even the wicked for a day of disaster.” The emotional problem of evil in the integrated theodicy which is the greater good theodicy deals more cogently with the issues of, “Gods power and goodness and human freedom and accountability sinuously, offering nuanced perceptively on causality and moral responsibility.” And it offers us hope and stability in the midst of suffering and chaos, freeing us to rest the goodness and wisdom of the divine author.”⁶⁹ This is analogized by Christ incarnation in which God is not aloof to evil and suffering that he partakes, but “In the story God is telling, evil does not have the last word. Good Friday is not the end (which is why it is so good) He burst from the spiced tomb in Resurrection Sunday, commissioned his disciples and ascended the throne, where now he sits until all his enemies are subdued under his feet, including and especially evil.”⁷⁰ The integrated theodicy answers the theological, philosophical and emotional dimension of the problem of evil when it affirms God’s sovereignty verse human responsibility in this intractable problem of evil. There is God’s omnipotence in that he is the author of all but he does not

nullify human freedom. This integrated theodicy acknowledges that there is God’s plan in everything and that evil will not triumph this is prophylactic against polytheism, Monotheism, Monaltry, Kathenotheism these are shades of believers in more than one God. However, in reality there is but only one God who is the unmoved mover and the uncaused cause the wholly other God. He is with aseity though he is impassible in his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection.

The integrated theodicy is grounded on complete trust in God for human being who are finite cannot completely understand the infinite God and his infinite plan, (Deu 29:29). We are supposed to approach evil, suffering and pain with ultimate trust in God. As Job put this reality in perspective in John 13: 15a, “Though he slays me, yet I will hope in him” Sometimes the question of the problem of evil is a matter of faith and perspective in God for all human enquiry cannot sufficiently and satisfactorily answer the question. Consequently, we must have a practical faith like Job that we trust and hope in God and that in all things God works together for good (Rom 8:28). As a result the problem of evil and the conception has not only to be approached by our mental faculties, emotional faculties only but also with faith and trust in God. It must be noted that faith is critical in understanding as Anselm stated that, “For I do not seek to understand. For this also I believe that unless I believe I shall not understand.”⁷¹

Hence I find that the problem of evil is truly resolved by integrated theodicies that acknowledges both reality of God and the true Biblical image of God. It ascribes the God’s goodness and omnipotence as well as human responsibility. It underscores goods overall plan that will triumph partly in this transient world and wholly in eschatos.

II. PERSONAL APPLICATION

This intense, elaborate and cryptical study has made me to affirm that there are paradoxical truth in theodicy like that of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility, and as a theologian I should strive to maintain the balance in the sense of looking at things from a panaromic view and not to be bogged down with one side and being oblivious of the other. Secondly, I have learned that there is no human conception or formulation that is infallible and theology is a human enterprise hence it should not be static but should be innovative and integrate old positions and new insight hence I formulated an integrated theodicy. Thirdly, I have come to a logical conclusion that not all the theological questions will be solved by thinking and philosophizing there should always be an

⁶⁶*Ibid*

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸*Ibid*

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷¹Thomas Williams, “Saint Anselm,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [https:// Plato. Stanford ed/archives/ Spr2016/entries/anslem/](https://Plato.Stanford.edu/archives/Spr2016/entries/anslem/) retrieved on 27th July 2018 at 20:16 GMT.

element of faith and trust in God as well as embrace all the questions in regard to God and evil. Lastly, the Bible is the absolute authority in matters of orthodoxy and praxis, hence we should look for solutions from it and complement and rationalize it with reason for our Christian faith should be grounded in scriptures and fortified with reason I am very humbled by the study to know that the more I learn the more I know how little I know. Hence I will always approach my studies with humility, dependency on scripture and from then seek a rational defense.

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