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A Study of Warfare Theodicy in the Writings of Ellen G. White and Gregory A. Boyd

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF WARFARE THEODICY IN THE WRITINGS OF

ELLEN G. WHITE AND GREGORY A. BOYD

by

Martha O. Duah

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Title: A STUDY OF WARFARE THEODICY IN THE WRITINGS OF
         ELLEN G. WHITE AND GREGORY A. BOYD

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The problem of evil has been an issue for all religions over the centuries. But it is a crucial issue for theism because of its affirmation of the co-existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God and evil. Theologians and philosophical theologians have developed a plethora of materials in response to the problem. However, according to critics, none of the responses in and of themselves adequately deals with theism's problem of suffering and evil. As a result, this study explores the warfare theodicy, a Christian response to the problem of sin, suffering, and evil, which seems to have been neglected by scholars for a long time. The study focuses on the writings of Ellen G. White and Gregory A. Boyd, the two foremost detailed and exhaustive presenters of the warfare theodicy in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries respectively. The goal is to assess the relationship between the two models of warfare

theodicy and the plausibility of the warfare theodicy as a Christian response to the problem of suffering and evil.

The approach to this study is descriptive, analytical, comparative, and evaluative. Chapter 1 provides a survey of the historical background for the problem of evil and introduces the problem, the purpose, and the methodology of the study. Chapter 2 describes three major Christian approaches to the problem of evil and scholarly critiques of these approaches, while chapters 3 and 4 analytically describe Boyd's and White's models of warfare theodicy, respectively. The first section of chapter 5 compares and contrasts the two models of warfare theodicy and the second section evaluates them. Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the study and then answers the questions concerning the relationship between the two models of the warfare theodicy and their plausibility as a Christian response to the problem of evil.

The study shows that the differing outlook of the authors' use of science in theology leads to divergence in the two models of warfare theodicy. Therefore, to the question of the relationship between the two models, the study concludes that they may be related, but given the degree of their differences they are two distinctive warfare theodicies. Concerning the question of the viability of the warfare theodicy, the study concludes that although both models of the warfare theodicy leave some philosophical questions unanswered, the Great Controversy Theodicy is a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of suffering and evil, and, the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is a less satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil.

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A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM WITH THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

WITHIN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Introduction

Evil and suffering have long been a puzzle to humanity and, as a consequence, there have been numerous myths and theories attempting to explain its existence.[1] The major world religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism,[2] and Christianity, have offered different explanations for it. However, the Christian theistic response to evil has been subject to criticism due to the theistic belief in a God who is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and infinite, and who eschews all evil. This study continues the exploration of the theistic debate on the problem of evil.

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[1]Paul Ricoeur groups myths concerning the origin of evil into four categories: the drama of creation, tragic hero, Adamic myth, and exiled soul. For detailed discussions of these myths see Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*: *Religious Perspective*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 161-346.

[2]For detailed information on how Buddhism and Hinduism explain evil, see Wendy Doniger O'Flahaerty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976); David Parkin, ed., *The Anthropology of Evil* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985); John Westerdale Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Bruce R. Reichenbach, *The Law of Karma*: *A Philosophical Study* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990); Barry L. Whitney, *Theodicy*: *An Annotated Bibliography on the Problem of Evil 1960-1991* (Bowling Green, OH: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1998), 378-383.

Historical Background

The conceptual questions raised by evil and suffering are discussed under the subject theodicy.[3] The earliest theodicial question is attributed to the Greek philosopher Epicurus by Lactantius. Epicurus's question of the problem of evil is articulated in triad propositions:

> 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

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[3]The term "theodicy" was coined by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. He coined the term from two Greek words: θεός (God) and δίκη (justice). Leibniz used the word in the title of a book. He used the word in two senses: defend the justice of God in the face of the evil in the world and as an inquiry into how the existence of a good God is compatible with the existence of evil in the world. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* [1710] (Paris: Eerdmanns, 1946); idem, "Correspondance with Des Bosses, 1709-15," in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd ed., trans. and ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1989), 596-617.

Scholars argue that a change occurred in the reflections on the problem of evil with Leibniz; therefore, the term theodicy must be used in reference to post-Enlightenment discourse on the problem of evil. They argue that while, prior to the Enlightenment, reflections on the problem of evil focused on practical concerns, the post-Enlightenment strategies for encountering the problem of evil are discourses focused on theoretical issues. See also Mark Larrimore, ed., *The Problem of Evil*: *A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), x-xxix; Kenneth Surin, *Theology and the Problem of Evil* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 2004); Terrence W. Tilley, "The Use and Abuse of Theodicy," *Horizons* 11 (1984): 304-319; idem, *The Evils of Theodicy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 221-255; idem, "The Problems of Theodicy: A Background Essay," in *Physics and Cosmology*: *Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Natural Evil*, vol. 1, ed. Nancey Murphy, Robert John Russell, and William R. Stoeger, S. J. (Vatican City State and Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2007).

I agree with these scholars that the reflections on the problem of evil shifted from practical to theoretical strategies with the Enlightenment. However, it is evident that, while evil plagues all of God's creation, evil is a problem for monotheistic religions with their core beliefs in an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God. In other words, though theistic strategies for encountering the problem of evil may have changed before and after the Enlightenment, discussions on the problem of evil are attempts to make sense out of theists' core beliefs and the existence of evil. Therefore, this study uses the term theodicy for any reflection on the theistic problem of evil irrespective of the strategy adopted.

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?[4]

Christianity in its early stages did not see this theodicial question as a challenge to the belief in God, but as a problem within Christian faith and therefore did not formulate a systematic response to the question.[5] Christians ascribed the cause of evil to fallen angels. The Apostolic Fathers, such as Clement of Rome and Ignatius, argued that these angels misused their free will, which resulted in alienating themselves from God and His government. The alienation led to a war between God and Satan. Satan, the chief prince of the fallen angels, influenced humans to misuse their free will, which led to human sin as a cause of evil; however, the ultimate cause of evil is Satan and his angels. The war which began in heaven between Christ and Satan resulted in a contest between the church and Satan.[6] A well-defined approach to the theodicy began with Augustine in the fourth

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[4]Epicurus, quoted in Lactantius, "On the Anger of God" (ANF, 7:271). According to Mark Larrimore, Epicurus's use of the trilemma is not to deny the existence of gods or a God who is omnipotent and benevolent. "It is a lesson about how to respond to evil." Mark Larrimore argues that Lactantius wrongly attributed the triad proposition of the problem of evil to Epicurus. According to him, "The form of the trilemma makes it more likely that the question was of ancient skeptic provenance, perhaps the work of Carneades (214-129 BCE)" (Larrimore, *The Problem of Evil*, xx).

[5]Stanley Hauerwas, *Naming the Silences*: *God, Medicine, and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 49-53.

[6]The Apostolic Fathers decisively based their writings on the teachings of the Scriptures. Scripture's personification of diseases, famine, pestilence, and death (Pss 91:5-6; 18:4-5; 1 Sam 2:12; Hos 4:12), its concept of monsters (Isa 7:1; Ps 73:13-14), fallen angels (Isa 14:12; 2 Pet 1:19; Rev 22: 16; Matt 25:41), and its distinction between good and evil or light and darkness (Isa 5:20; 1 John 1:5; 2:8; 1 Pet 2:9; 2 Pet 2:4; Acts 26:18) influenced their understanding of the origin of evil. See Clement *Epistle to the Corinthians* 51 (ANF, 1:19); Ignatius *Epistle to the Ephesians* 13 (ANF, 1:55); idem, *Epistle to the Trallians* 8 (ANF, 1:69); idem, *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 2 (ANF, 1:80-

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century A.D. While he was aware of the conceptual difficulties of the triad propositions

of the problem of evil, his approach to the problem was to wrestle with Manichean

dualism.[7]

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81); Barnabas *Epistle* 2, 4, 15, 18, 21 (ANF, 1:137-139, 146-147, 148); Polycarp *Epistle to the Philippians* 7 (ANF, 1:34); Shepherd of Hermas *Similitude* 1, 6, 9 (ANF, 2:9-11,36-38,43-54); idem, *Visions* 2-4 (ANF, 2:10).

By mid-second century, Christianity was faced with heretics. The Apologetic Fathers such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus spoke up for Christianity. They defended the Christian faith against Gnostic dualism, which taught that evil and God are two independent principles. They argued that "the spirit of evil was no way equivalent in power or eternity to the good Lord, nor did his evil derive from imperfection introduced by emanations. Rather, he was a creature of God, and as such he had a nature that was created good, a nature that he deformed through his own free will" (Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan*: *The Early Christian Tradition* [London: Cornell University Press, 1981], 60). In effect the Apologists affirmed the apostolic teachings on the problem of evil. See Justin Martyr *Second Apology* 5-13 (ANF, 1:190-191); idem, *First Apology* 5, 14, 28, 54-58 (ANF, 1:164,167,172, 181-182); Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.5; 3.8, 17-18, 20; 4.33-41 (ANF, 1:326-327, 421-422, 444-451, 506-524); Tertullian *On the Apparel of Women* 1.2 (ANF, 4:14-15); idem, *Apology* 22-23 (ANF, 3:36-38); idem, *Against Marcion* 1; 2.10; 5.19 (ANF, 3:300-301, 470-472).

However, the efforts of these Fathers explained only the origin of evil. Clement of Alexandria was the first church father who attempted to explain the problem of evil in terms of ontological and theological privation. Clement believed the devil exists metaphysically and objectively; on the other hand, the devil is a metaphor for evil activity in the human soul. According to him, God is the only perfect, absolute, and good being. Out of love God created the world, but because He alone is perfect, His creation is necessarily imperfect. Clement asserted that there is a hierarchy of beings. God is at the top, followed by angels, then humans, animals, plants, stones, and at the bottom of the hierarchy is unformed matter. Beings lower on the scale are less real, they lack reality and goodness, they are more deprived and consequently more evil. See William E. G. Floyd, *Clement of Alexandria's Treatment of the Problem of Evil* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

By the third and fourth centuries, evil was seen as necessary. It was also perceived in platonic terms as privation. Besides this, dualism was kept alive in various forms by Manicheism, Donatism, and some church fathers such as Lactantius. Origen *Against Celsus* 4.65-66, 42-44, 92 (ANF, 4:516-517, 526-527, 538). For details of the early development of the explanation for the problem of evil see John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958); Russell, *Satan*, 107-230; Sigve Tonstad, "Theodicy and the Theme of Cosmic Conflict in the Early Church," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42 (2004): 169-202.

[7]Larrimore, *The Problem of Evil*, xxvii.

Augustine adopted Neo-Platonic ideas in his definition and explanation of evil.[8]

He proposed that God is eternal, immutable, infinite, and a perfect Being. He created *ex nihilo* and "the things that He made He empowered to be, but not to be supremely like

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[8]As a young man, Augustine was interested in discovering the truth. Besides this burning desire, he was eager to find the solution to the problem of evil in the world. Although he was brought up by a Christian mother, his classical education caused him to look down on Christianity as philosophically and culturally inferior, while believing that spiritual things can be accessed through the means of philosophy.

In his pursuit, he found Manicheism to be effective in fulfilling his passion and solving the problem of evil. However, after his conversion to Christianity, he recognized that Manichean dualism is not the answer to the problem of evil. A principle of evil, an absolute being in itself or a lord independent of God, cannot exist to resist the plans of God. Consequently, he turned his back on Manicheism and composed works to expose the falsehood of Manicheism.

As he turned away from Manicheism, he found the Neo-Platonic approach to the problem of evil very promising, specifically the concepts of Plotinus (A.D. 204-270). Plotinus turned away from the dualism of middle Platonism toward monism. Plotinus posited that there is only One principle of the universe, and it is the only thing perfect and good. The One is prior to all existents, transcends the world, simple, and absolute. He explained the plurality of things by the principle of hierarchy of emanation; each emanation is the cause of the next-lower emanation. The first emanation from the One is *nous*, mind, the universal intelligence that signifies the underlying rationality of the world. The *nous* emanated the world-soul, the world-soul emanated the human soul, and finally, the human soul emanated the physical universe in which sense objects exist as a combination of forms with prime matter. Emanation from the One represents a decline in the degrees of perfection; as a result, the last emanation, matter, is the farthest and least like the One. It is opposite of the One, it is nonbeing, a privation of good. It is evil.

This leads to two main sources of evil: One is matter itself; its evil lies in the privation of good and it is responsible for natural evil. The second source of evil is the wrong choice of the human soul tempted and corrupted by its union with the body; this is the cause of moral evil. Augustine adopted the conception that matter is a privation of good. Neo-Platonism provided Augustine the bases for his explanation to the problem of evil. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*: *A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 1.136; Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre*: *A History of Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 124-150; Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil*: *Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (London: Cornell University Press, 1977), 161-167; idem, *Satan*, 195-202; Gillian R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Bertrand A. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy, and Its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946), 284-297.

Himself. To some He communicated a more ample, to others a more limited existence, and thus arranged the natures of beings in ranks."[9] For these reasons, Augustine argued, evil is only a privation of good, which does not exist in itself but only as an aspect of an actual entity, a malfunctioning of good. According to Augustine, the cause of evil, both moral and natural,[10] is the misuse of the will of a being who is changeable, which began first with the highest creature and then man. That is, free will is the cause of pain and suffering, but since all things occur in accordance with God's will, pain and suffering ultimately play a good role in God's plan.[11]

Augustine's approach to the problem of evil was very influential for centuries. Medieval theologians[12] adopted Augustine's approach in advancing theistic discussion on

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[9]Augustine, *City of God* 12.2 (NPNF, 2:227).

[10]Moral evil is that which human beings originate, such as hatred, stealing, and murder. Natural evil is that which originates naturally independent of human actions, such as tornadoes, droughts, and earthquakes. Augustine believed that all evil is moral evil or a consequence of moral evil.

[11]Augustine *Enchiridon* 4.12-15; 9; 8.23 (LCC, 7:343-346, 353-359); idem, *City of God* 10.6 (NPNF, 1: 183-184); idem, *On Free Will* (LCC, 6:102-217).

[12]At the advent of scholasticism, scholars like Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas argued intensely that "evil is a privation of good" in their attempt to rebut dualism. Among them, Aquinas was most influential. He asserted that the very nature of evil is against the idea of a first principle because every evil is caused by good. He claimed evil has neither formal nor final cause, but has an efficient cause that acts indirectly. According to Aquinas, there are two ways by which evil is caused indirectly. First is when, out of necessity, a form or an agent producing its effect deprives another form or agent from producing its full effect. The second is when an agent or a form is not able to perform its full effect because of deficiency in material or active principle. He contended that deficient cause of evil in voluntary actions proceeds from deficient will, but deficient cause of evil in natural actions happens when a form is blocked by something outside of itself. On the other hand, evil that involves decay of something both in natural and voluntary things is caused by God. "God's principal purpose in created things is clearly that form or good which consists in the order of the universe. This requires . . . that there should be something that can, and sometimes does

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the problem of evil as did the Protestant Reformers.[13] The Continental rationalists René

Descartes and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz also adopted Augustine's approach in their

explanation of the problem of evil.[14]

Although, the influence of Augustine's theodicy can be traced beyond Leibniz,

with the Enlightenment the strategies adopted for the reflections on the problem of evil

became anthropocentric and "detached from any system of conviction based on divine

revelation." The existence of evil was raised as counter-evidence against the belief in the

fall away. So then, in causing the common good of the ordered universe, he causes loss
in particular things as a consequence and, as it were, indirectly" (Thomas Aquinas,
Summa Theologica, vol. 8, *Creation, Variety and Evil*, trans. Thomas Gilby O. P. [New
York: Macmillan, 1965], 1a. 48-49); see also Whitney, *Theodicy*, 14.

[13]The Protestant Reformers believed evil is the result of sin. However, since God
is omnipotent and sovereign, He is responsible for evil. They claimed everything happens
according to God's sovereign will. Thus, He wills both good and evil, but ultimately all
evils are good because whatever God does is good. John Calvin strongly suggested that
God carries out "his judgments through Satan as the minister of his wrath, God destines
men's purposes as he pleases, arouses wills and strengthens their endeavors" (John
Calvin, *Calvin Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of
Christian Education, 1936], 1.14.1-9, 2.4.3).

[14]Descartes stated that any real cosmos is not identical to God. Since God is the
perfect being, the cosmos is not identical to Him. The cosmos is full of things different
from God in different degrees. Hence, metaphysical imperfections are necessary. By
analogy, error and evil are necessary. Leibniz argued that God is an absolute being and
nothing exists that limits Him. As a result, there cannot be a real cosmos without
imperfection. Evil and disorder are compatible with a benevolent God. God created the
best of all possible worlds that is in accordance with moral requirements; furthermore, it
contains the greatest possible amount of good. Evil is necessary, but the source is not
God; it is the nature of things that God has created. Evil, then, is a mere privation,
absence of perfection. He stressed that God wills antecedently the good and,
consequently, the best. Some things in themselves seem evil, but they turn out to be
prerequisites for good. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles*: *The Devil in the Modern
World* (London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 85-86; Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre*, 257-
258.

existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent God.[15] Therefore, theistic

formulations of theodicies focus on addressing questions about Christian faith. In

addition, a sharp turn in the influence of Augustine's tradition in formulating theodicy

occurred with the repercussions of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment denied

Christian theology its epistemological independence based upon the principle of the

competence of human reason.

The Enlightenment, to a large extent, created a secular society in which natural

reason and social experience disposed of the authority of Scripture. Religious beliefs,

like any other theories, were evaluated by rational and scientific evidences. Specifically,

discoveries of astronomers and geologists discredited the classical theistic interpretation

of Gen 1.[16] Theology, faced with the above-mentioned critical challenges, adjusted itself

to keep abreast with the philosophical and scientific developments. Consequently, the

existing Augustinian theodicial paradigm[17] and warfare theory were seen as insufficient

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[15]Niels Christian Hvidt, "Historical Development of the Problem of Evil," in *Physics and Cosmology*: *Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Natural Evil*, ed. Nancey Murphy, Robert John Russell, and William R. Stoeger, S. J. (Vatican City State and Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2007), 1:26-27.

[16]James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*: *The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988), 6, 17; Neil B. MacDonald, "Enlightenment," *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 175-183; Gysbert Van Den Brink, "Rationalism," *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 456-458.

[17]Augustianian theodicy is a technical term for theodicies that follow Augustine's tradition.

concepts, leading to the development of alternative theodicies, such as that of John Hick[18] and Process theodicies.

After a careful study of all types of theodicies from the time of Augustine up to the eighteenth century, Hick sums them up as Augustinian tradition. He argues that Augustinian theodicy is "so familiar that it is commonly thought of as *the* Christian view of man and his plight. Nevertheless it is only *a* Christian view."[19] He claims the Augustinian theodicy is based on Christian mythology, a pre-scientific view, that the modern world considers as incredible. It is without "grounds in scripture or science" and it is self-contradictory.[20] According to him, defenders of the Augustinian theodicy "have become involved in ever more desperate and implausible epicycles of theory to save it."[21] Therefore, he suggests the need for an alternative theodicy that will be without contradiction and scientifically credible to the modern mind.

Hick finds in the writings of Irenaeus an outline of an approach to the problem of evil that will serve as an appropriate alternative to the Augustinian type of theodicy. On the basis of Irenaeus's concept of the image and the likeness of God, Hick argues that God's aim for humankind is to create, through evolutionary process, personal beings in relationship with their Maker. For God's intention to be realized without coercing or infringing on genuine human freedom, He created humans with epistemic distance from

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[18]John Hick developed this theodicy in his classic volume, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). The first section deconstructs Augustinian theodicy and the second section is restricted to the development of his theodicy. For a list of Hick's publications on theodicy, see Whitney, *Theodicy*, 119-124.

[19]Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 207-208.

[20]Ibid., 287.

Him. His creation is not perfect, but it is a world that functions as an autonomous system

and from within which God is not overwhelmingly evident. Human beings were created

spiritually and morally imperfect, but as intelligent social beings capable of awareness of

the divine within a dangerous and challenging environment. The imperfections in the

environment are necessary aspects of the process through which God's goal for human

beings is achieved. God intended evil to draw humans close to Him as they tussle

through the challenges of the evils of the world. In this sense, argued Hick, moral and

natural evils are compatible with the existence of a creator who is both unlimited in

goodness and power.[22]

Barry Whitney indicates that Hick's theodicy has "awakened many of us from our

Augustinian slumber."[23] However, critics claim it is a hybrid of Augustinian theodicy. It

shares the Augustinian affirmation that suffering is planned by an omnipotent God who

could, but will not take away the evils of the world. Furthermore, it denies the reality of

genuine evil.[24]

Hick's theodicy did not meet the expectations of the modern mind. Charles E.

Hartshorne calls for a "New Look at the Problem of Evil" and describes the traditional

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[21]Ibid., 286.

[22]John Hick, "An Ireanaean Theodicy," in *Encountering Evil*: *Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2001), 38-52.

[23]Whitney, *Theodicy*, 115.

[24]Roland Puccetti, "Loving God: Some Observation on John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*," *Religious Studies* 2 (1967): 255-268; Keith Ward, "Freedom and the Irenaean Theodicy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969): 249-254; Stanley G. Kane, "The Failure of Soul-Making Theodicy," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6 (1975): 1-22; C. Robert Mesle, *John Hick's Theodicy*: *A Process Humanist Critique* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

theodicy discussion as "pseudoproblem."[25] In his view, the difficulties in the theodicies

of Augustine and Hick arise because they distinguish God from everything else by

putting God on one side of a list of contraries: finite-infinite, temporal-eternal, relative-

absolute, contingent-necessary and physical-spiritual. The only solution to the problem

of evil, according to Hartshorne, is that which uses the idea of freedom, but generalizes

it.[26]

Process theodicy was developed on the basis of Hartshorne's passionate call for a

new look at the problem of evil and the metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead.

Although they did not develop a systematic theodicy, many theologians and philosophers

have worked out theodicies from their works. Specifically, David Ray Griffin is the first

to develop a systematic theodicy from the writings of Whitehead and Hartshorne.

Process theologians reject traditional theodicy, Hick's theodicy included, by arguing that

such theodicy holds a misconception of the nature of God. They explain the existence of

evil by advocating that God did not create *ex nihilo*, but created the universe from pre-

existent entities. These entities, both human and non-human, possess a degree of

creativity necessarily and independently of God without whom nothing could exist. The

interaction of this creativity results in both moral and physical evil. God's function is

"not to enforce a maximal ratio of good to evil, but a maximal ratio of chances of good to

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[25]Charles Hartshorne, "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," in *Current Philosophical Issues*: *Essays in Honor of Curt John Ducasse*, ed. F. C. Dommeyer (Springfield, IL: C. C. Thomas, 1966), 201-212.

[26]Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (New York: State University Press, 1984), 1-27.

chances of evil."[27] His purpose is only to lure us towards experiences that avoid the

extremes of absolute order. In this way, they argue, while evil is real and devastating,

there is some minimal value in every experience, a value we can appropriate if we follow

God's lure towards its actualization.[28] Opponents have argued that this kind of theodicy

portrays a God whose power is limited and does not deserve worship.[29]

The search of Hick and Process theologians to develop a theodicy informed by

modern philosophy with the intention to satisfy the curiosity of the modern mind did not

yield an acceptable result. If these theodicies could not satisfactorily deal with the issues

associated with the problem of evil, is there an alternative theodicy that does better?

Statement of Problem

The three main Christian responses to the problem of evil—Augustine's approach

and the alternative theodicies proposed by Hick and Process theology—have not proven

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[27]Charles Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1953; reprint, New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971), 107.

[28]David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976; reprint, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991); idem, *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsideration* (New York: State University Press, 1991); Barry L. Whitney, *What Are They Saying about God and Evil?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989); idem, *Evil and the Process God* (Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985).

[29]David Basinger, "Divine Persuasion: Could the Process God Do More?" *Journal of Religion* 64 (1984): 332-347; Stephen L. Ely, "The Religious Availability of Whitehead's God: A Critical Analysis," in *Explorations in Whitehead's Philosophy*, ed. Lewis Ford and George L. Kline (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 170-211; Richard Creel, *Divine Impassibility: An Essay in Philosophical Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Ronald O. Durham, "Evil and God: Has Process Made Good Its Promise?" *Christianity Today*, June 2, 1978, 10-14.

to be satisfactory responses to the logical and evidential arguments from evil[30] or address

specific evils from within a Christian perspective. Ellen G. White[31] and Gregory A.

Boyd[32] come to the problem of evil by employing a warfare concept. They propose that

no approach will satisfactorily clarify the problem of evil without appealing to the

concept of a war between God and Satan. However, there are irreconcilable differences

in their warfare models. The basic question that needs to be explored is whether their

warfare models are able to deal with the logical and evidential arguments from evil and

address specific evils from within the Christian perspective.

Purpose of Study

In the context of the rigorous search for an understanding of the idea of a good

God who co-exists with evil, the purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the works of

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[30]The logical argument from evil is an argument whose premise says that God and some known fact about evil are incompatible. The evidential argument from evil is an argument that asserts that the evil in the world is evidence against the existence of God. Thus, according Feinberg, the "issue with either the logical or evidential problem is whether that theological position is logically coherent and/or probable" (John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*: *Theological Systems and the Problem of Evil*, rev. and exp. ed. [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004], 75, 21, 297). See also Michael L. Peterson, *Evil and the Christian God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1982), 35-78; Stephen T. Davis, ed., *Encountering Evil*: *Live Options in Theodicy*, rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2001), x-xi.

[31]Ellen G. White was one of the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the late 19th century. She authored many books including a five-volume work on theodicy, called the Conflict of the Ages Series. These are *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*.

[32]Gregory A. Boyd is a contemporary Evangelical theologian, professor of theology at Bethel College and a pastor at Woodland Hills Church, both in St. Paul, Minnesota. He has written many books, two of which are on the subject of theodicy: *God*

Ellen G. White and Gregory A. Boyd in order to ascertain the viability of their warfare theodicies. How does the warfare approach deal with the tensions associated with Augustinian, Hick, and Process theodicies? Is Boyd's Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy synonymous with White's Great Controversy Theodicy? Are they contradictory, unrelated, or complementary? In a nutshell, this study is an enquiry into whether the warfare approach to the problem of evil has an advantage over the Augustinian, Hick, and Process theodicies and, if so, in what way.

Significance of the Study

The various manifestations of evil in the world sufficiently justify the study of theodicy. A significant amount of work has been done on the subject, but the problem of evil is still a challenge to human thinking. Some sufferers are unable to reconcile the experience of suffering to the view of a loving God. Evil is often seen as incongruous with all the doctrines of Christian theism. Not only is the atheist disturbed about the perplexing challenges of evil, but also the theist wonders at the rate at which evil gallops in the contemporary world and often questions the reality of the existence of God. None of the major responses to the problem of evil seem to be completely satisfying.[33] Hence the study of this problem is an issue that, by itself, pleads for attention. Therefore, this study focuses on warfare theodicy, a long neglected approach to the problem of evil.

The reasons for the choice of White as one of the authors on warfare theodicy are self-evident in her books. She "integrated a warfare perspective into the problem of evil

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at War: *The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* and *Satan and the Problem of Evil*: *Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy*.

and the doctrine of God perhaps more thoroughly than anyone else in church history." [34]

In her five-volume work on the Conflict of the Ages Series, she emphasizes that many have struggled in vain to find a solution to the problem of evil, and others have failed to understand the problem of evil satisfactorily because tradition and misinterpretation have obscured the biblical teachings on the character of God. She argues that the problem "is the outworking of the principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government."[35]

In the same manner, Boyd argues for the war between Satan and God as the only sufficient explanation to the problem of evil. He develops his views in two volumes: *God at War*[36] and *Satan and the Problem of Evil.*[37] Although Boyd recognizes that the modern perspective on Satan, angels, and demons has drifted away from the perspective of the Apostolic Fathers, he insists that "the warfare thesis requires, as a central component, a belief in angels, Satan and demons as real, autonomous, free agents, as well as a belief that the activity of these beings intersects with human affairs, for better or for worse."[38]

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[33]Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evil and the Goodness of God* (London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3.

[34]Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 307, endnote 44.

[35]Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911; reprint, 1950), 493.

[36]See footnote 34.

[37]Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 22n19.

[38]Boyd, *God at War*, 32.

After White and before Boyd, some scholars had constructed an explanation of the problem of evil alluding to the concept of superhuman activities in the world. However, the comprehensiveness of such explanations seems incomparable with White's and Boyd's.[39] Several works have been done on the problem of evil, but none has been devoted to the most comprehensive warfare models of White and Boyd. Although White was not a theologian in a conventional sense and White's and Boyd's warfare models are a century apart, the depth of White's presentation makes her model comparable with Boyd's.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

Some limits have been set to this study to keep it within reasonable scope. A discussion of three universal theodicies, namely those of Augustine, Hick, and Process

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[39]For instance, C. S. Lewis presupposed that the origin of evil "demands that good should be original and evil a mere perversion." Evil is a parasite, not an original thing. An angel abused his free will and influenced humans to abuse their free will. Evil in the human world can sometimes be attributed to the devil. On the other hand, the freedom of humanity really would not be freedom without the choice between evil and good. Thus, evil is necessary. Good and evil work together to provide opportunities for human choice. For him, pain and suffering are God's megaphone. God uses pain and suffering to arouse the bad man to acknowledge that all is not well, but he suggested that animal suffering is either an illusion or perhaps caused by the fallen angels. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962); idem, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 46-50, 174; idem, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 91; idem, *God in the Dock*: *Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 23.

Edwin Lewis affirmed the contradictions in all aspects of creation: "*Creation is creativity in strife with discreativity.*" He indicated that the only meaningful explanation for the contradictions is eternal dualism. Edwin Lewis, *The Creator and the Adversary* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1948). See the works of William Robinson, *The Devil and God* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945), 7, 110-111; Terrence Penelhum, *Religion and Rationality*: *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1971); and Wallace A. Murphree, "Can Theism Survive without the Devil?" *Religious Studies* 21 (1985): 231-244.

theology, serves as a background to this study.

The problem of evil has aroused the interest of theologians, as well as philosophers, and has produced abundant literature. However, this study focuses on warfare theodicy in the writings of White with particular attention directed to her Conflict of the Ages Series and the writings of Boyd from 1992-2009 (because he is professionally active), especially his 2-volume work on trinitarian warfare. Secondary literature on both authors was also used.

Methodology

The methodology that this dissertation adopted is a descriptive analysis. The process has been instrumental in facilitating the evaluation of the logical coherence and probability of the warfare models of White and Boyd.

To avoid misrepresentation and/or distortion of their views, the authors are allowed to speak for themselves. Their arguments are presented in their own terms, however, in a shortened form. The structure of the descriptive analysis is tailored toward the outline of the trinitarian warfare model. This means the analysis of both warfare models begins with free will, divine foreknowledge and sovereignty, and then evil. Any discussion of these elements—free will, divine foreknowledge, and sovereignty—is not an attempt to get involved with the ongoing philosophical and theological discussion on these issues. My sole intention is to use these elements to establish the structure of the authors' theological thought.

A careful comparison of the two models of the warfare theodicy is conducted on the basis of the analyses done in chapters 3 and 4. Next, an evaluation is attempted to

focus on the internal consistency and coherence of each model and the contribution each has made to theology.

Applying the method in achieving the purpose of this study demands the following course of action. Chapter 1 gives the historical background of theodicy and states the problem that the study addresses. It also describes the purpose and scope of study and the research methodology that the dissertation adopts.

Assessment of the credibility of the warfare models of theodicy of White and Boyd cannot be done in a vacuum. Consequently, the three main theodicies that have influenced theological and philosophical thought for decades serve as the basis of my evaluation of the Trinitarian Warfare and the Great Controversy theodicies. Therefore, chapter 2 focuses on Augustinian, Hick, and Process theodicies. The first step is to focus on primary sources to describe the theodicies and then mention the problems that, according to scholars, are associated with each of the three theodicies.

The Great Controversy model of the warfare theodicy precedes the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy. However, due to the theological categorization of the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy, which aids in forming the analytical structure of the Great Controversy Theodicy, the analysis of the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy precedes the Great Controversy Theodicy.

As a result, chapter 3 seeks to describe and analyze Boyd's Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy. The description and analysis of Boyd's model primarily focuses on his two major books devoted to the warfare explanation of the problem of evil. Also, consideration is given to elements of his trinitarian warfare explanation found on his website and in other books he has authored from 1992-2009, since he is professionally

active. The systematic analysis of the nature of evil in Boyd's model is undertaken by inquiring into the way he explains free will, divine foreknowledge, the sovereignty of God in relation to evil, the origin of sin and evil, natural evil, and eradication of sin and evil from the universe.

Chapter 4 attempts to describe and analyze White's Great Controversy model of the warfare explanation of the problem of evil. The descriptive analysis is based on her Conflict of the Ages Series and elements of her concept scattered elsewhere in her writings. The systematic analysis of her model looks carefully at her explanation of free will, divine foreknowledge, the sovereignty of God in relation to evil, origin of sin and evil, natural evil, and eradication of sin and evil from the universe.

Chapter 5 takes up the task of comparing and evaluating warfare theodicy on the basis of the result of the preceding chapters. The chapter investigates whether the warfare theodicy avoids the tensions of the three main theodicies as described in chapter 2. This evaluation makes it possible to extrapolate the meaning and purpose of the warfare concept. Furthermore, it makes possible the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the warfare theodicy and its contributions to theology. Finally, chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the study of the warfare theodicy as presented by Boyd and White. In addition, it states the conclusion to the study and makes some recommendations.

This chapter has identified the problem and purpose of this dissertation: A Study of Warfare Theodicy in the Writings of Ellen G. White and Gregory A. Boyd. It has also justified the problem in terms of the amount of work that has been done to establish the coherency of the existence of God and evil and the significance of the writings of White

and Boyd on the problem of evil. It has also described the scope, delimitation, and the methodology of the study. Having done these, the study proceeds by first surveying the three main Christian responses to the problem of evil.

CHAPTER 2

THREE MAIN THEISTIC THEODICIES

Introduction

As noted in the historical background to the problem of the study (chapter 1),

explanation of the problem of evil has been a perennial challenge in Christian theology

and philosophy. The increased intensity of natural and moral evils through the centuries

exacerbated the problem. It is, therefore, the purpose of this chapter to clarify and

understand the debate among three main Christian approaches (Augustine, John Hick,

and Process theology) to the problem of evil that have emerged in Christian theology

since the time of Augustine.

I propose to focus on the principles upon which these theodicies are developed.

Nonetheless, the aim is not only to describe, but also to explore the arguments raised

against them. The critical discussion focuses on issues such as the nature of evil, free

will of human beings, sovereignty and foreknowledge of God in relation to evil, and

God's victory over evil. These issues are of much concern, for they are pertinent to the

subject of this dissertation, as we shall see later in my discussion on the theodicies of

Boyd and White.

Augustine's Theodicy

Augustine, the bishop of Hippo (A.D. 354-430), was the greatest of the Latin

fathers. After espousing Manichaean philosophy for about ten years, Augustine became a

Christian. He recognized that the Manichaean solution to the problem of evil,

specifically the concept of the nature of God, is "shocking and detestable profanity, that

the wedge of darkness sunders not a region distinct and separate from God but the very

nature of God."[1] Against Manichaeism, Augustine affirmed the goodness of God and His

sovereignty over the universe. In reality, the God who is self-sufficient, infinite in

goodness and beauty, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, and a supreme being

became the core of his explanation to the problem of evil.[2] Augustine's theodicy is the

first fully developed Christian response to the problem of evil.

On the basis of his understanding of the nature of God, he argued that God created

the universe out of nothing.[3] The omnipotent and the only perfect God created all things

that need to be. Out of divine love and goodness, He deliberately called into existence

every conceivable kind of being.[4] He put all creation in rank according to their utility or

order of nature. On the order of nature, Augustine stated that

those beings which exist, and which are not of God the Creator's essence, those which
have life are ranked above those which have none; those that have the power of

[1]Augustine *Against the Epistle of Manichaeans Called Fundamental* 24.26 (NPNF First Series, 4:140).

[2]Augustine *City of God* 11:10; 22:1 (NPNF First Series, 2:210-211; 479-410); idem, *Concerning Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* (NPNF First Series, 4:351-365). See Whitney, *What Are They Saying About God and Evil?* 29-37; idem, *Theodicy*, 282-284; Dietmar Wyrwa, "Augustine and Luther on Evil," in *The Problem of Evil and Its Symbols in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 126-130; Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 53, 76-95.

[3]Augustine *Concerning Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 1 (NPNF First Series, 4: 351).

[4]Augustine *City of God* 12.5 (NPNF First Series, 2: 228-229).

generation, or even of desiring, above those which want this faculty. And, among things that have life, the sentient are higher than those which have no sensation, as animals are ranked above trees. And, among the sentient, the intelligent are above those that have no intelligence, . . . above cattle. And among the intelligent, the immortal, such as angels, above the mortal, such as men.[5]

When it comes to the ranking according to utility, he indicated that there are varieties of standards of values so that at a given point individuals prefer some things that have no sensation to some sentient beings. Such preference is so strong that sometimes we wish to eradicate some things in the scale of being.[6] Thus, each form of existence has its own place in the hierarchy of being.[7] There is no level of the scale of being that is evil. All creation, from the highest to the lowest on the scale, is good. Therefore, he stated, "No nature, therefore, as far as it is nature, is evil; but to each nature there is no evil except to be diminished in respect of good."[8] While the lower forms of existence, perceived in isolation, appear to be evil, they are necessary links in the scale of being. The fragments perceived as a whole are harmonious, well-ordered, beautiful, and a perfect creation of God. They adequately and perfectly express the goodness of God's creation.[9] However, all creatures are capable of being corrupted because they lack the immutability of the Creator.[10]

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[5]Augustine *City of God* 11.16 (NPNF First Series, 2:214).

[6]Ibid.

[7]This idea of creation, the diversity of creation is ordered in rank, is called the principle of plenitude. See Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 76.

[8]Augustine *Concerning Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 17 (NPNF First Series, 4:354).

[9]Augustine *City of God* 12.2, 4, 11.16-22 (NPNF First Series, 2:227-228; 214-217); idem, *Enchiridion* 3:9-11 (LCC 7:341-343); idem, *Soliloquies* 1.1, 2 (NPNF First

Augustine noted that the harmonious and perfect world is infested with pain and suffering as a result of sin. Among all the conceivable creatures of God, he remarked, there are living beings endowed with the gift of free will. The world would not have been perfect without free will. Unfortunately, some of the free creatures went wrong in exercising their free will. The first misuse of the will is turning to the will itself instead of God; turning away from the mode of being that is proper to a creature in God's creative intention is sin. Sin is the origin of evil that began with angels and continued afterwards with human beings.[11]

The will is one of the good creations of God, but became evil only as it desired something inferior, contended Augustine. That is, evil originated from a good substance, the act of turning away from something incorruptible to that which is mutable is the issue of sin.[12] On the other hand, there is a motive which leads the rational being away from the Creator, and that is pride—"craving for undue exaltation."[13] This act of rational beings affected the entire creation. In addition, he indicated that "nature could not have been depraved by vice had it not been made out of nothing. Consequently, that it is a nature, this is because it is made by God, but that it falls away from Him, this is because

Series, 7:537); idem, *Concerning Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 3, 8, 16 (NPNF First Series, 4:352-354).

[10]Augustine *Concerning Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 10 (NPNF First Series, 4:353).

[11]Augustine *City of God* 11:11, 13, 15, 20, 32-33; 12:1, 9; 14:11; 19:4 (NPNF First Series, 2: 211-216, 223-224; 226-231; 271-272; 401-403); idem, *On Free Will* 1 (LCC, 1:113-134).

[12]Augustine *City of God* 12:6 (NPNF First Series, 2: 229).

[13]Ibid., 14.13 (NPNF First Series, 2: 273).

it is made out of nothing."[14] Hence, God is not the originator of evil.[15] From his analysis

of the misuse of the free will, Augustine attributed evils to sin and its consequences, both

moral and natural, to the wrong choice of free rational beings, with the exception of evils

that are considered as punishment for sin. "Free will is the cause of our doing evil and

that is why just judgment is the cause of our having to suffer from its consequence."[16] In

his view, God punishes sin in order to bring moral balance to the universe;[17] death, which

was the punishment for the first humans—Adam and Eve who first sinned—is now the

natural consequence for their progeny.[18]

Therefore, evil is not a substance.[19] It "has no positive nature," but is a defect of

created good; "the loss of good has received the name 'evil.'"[20] It is, therefore, a

privation of good, a parasitic non essential, the absence of good from a thing which can

and ought naturally to possess it.[21] "It is an evil, solely because it corrupts the good. It is

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[14]Augustine *City of God* 14.13 (NPNF First Series, 2:273); idem, *Concerning Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans*, 10 (NPNF First Series, 4:353); idem, *Enchiridion* 4:12 (LCC, 7: 343-344).

[15]Augustine *Concerning Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 33 (NPNF First Series, 4:358); idem, *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental* 38 (NPNF First Series, 4:148-149).

[16]Augustine *Confessions* 7.3,4,5 (LCC, 7:134-156); idem, *0n Free Will* 3.17.48 (LCC, 7:200).

[17]Augustine *Concerning Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 9 (NPNF First Series, 4: 353).

[18]Augustine *City of God* 13.3 (NPNF First Series, 2: 246).

[19]Augustine *Confessions* 12.18 (LCC, 7:148).

[20]Augustine *City of God* 11.9 (NPNF First Series, 2: 210).

[21]Augustine *Enchiridion* 4 (LCC, 7: 343-346); idem, *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental* 35 (NPNF First Series, 4:147).

not nature, therefore, but vice, which is contrary to God. For that which is evil is contrary to the good."[22] Hence, evil and good are antithetic, but they co-exist. Good can exist without evil, but evil cannot exist without good.[23]   Evil is connected with the created nature of the subject who has become evil—so that it would annihilate itself if it exterminates this nature. It arises from the fact that it does not derive its existence from itself or from the essence of God, but it is nothing.[24] As a result, argued Augustine, evil has no efficient cause but only deficient cause as the will itself is defection from the Supreme Being.[25]

Augustine mentioned that God was not ignorant about what rational beings will do with their will. God foresaw that they will abandon Him for inferior substance, yet He did not deny them freedom, for He foreknew the good He can bring out of evil.[26] "God would never have created any, I do not say angel, but even man, whose future wickedness He foreknew, unless He had equally known to what uses in behalf of the good He could turn him, thus embellishing the course of the ages, as it were an exquisite poem set off with antitheses."[27] God allows all these evils in the world to demonstrate how He can

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[22]Augustine *City of God* 12.3 (NPNF First Series, 2:227-228).

[23]Ibid.

[24]Augustine *Enchiridion* 4.12-13 (LCC, 7:343-344).

[25]Augustine *City of God* 12.7 (NPNF First Series, 2:230).

[26]Ibid., 12.22; 22.1 (NPNF First Series, 2:241; 480).

[27]Ibid., 11.18 (NPNF First Series, 2:214-215).

make good use of them. In this context, many good will disappear without evil.[28] Thus,

he mentioned, "What is evil, when it is rightly ordered and kept in its place, commends

the good more eminently, since good things yield greater pleasure and praise when

compared to the bad things."[29]

Augustine argued that God's purpose for permitting evil is to bring good out of it

only by saving the justly condemned race according to His grace. Yet, he remarked that

God overcomes sin and evil by predestining some to eternal life and condemning others

to eternal destruction.[30] "Therefore they were elected before the foundation of the world

with that predestination in which God foreknew what He Himself would do; but they

were elected out of the world with that calling whereby God fulfilled that which He

predestinated. . . . Those whom He predestinated, called and justified, them He also

glorified; assuredly to that end which has no end."[31]

Critical Discussion on Augustine's Theodicy

Augustine's theodicy served as the Christian explanation of the problem of evil

for several centuries and generated impressive theological and philosophical literature.

Notwithstanding its exceptional influence, scholars from both within and without

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[28]Augustine *Enchiridion* 4.11 (LCC, 7: 342-343); idem, *City of God* 12.22, 14.11, 22.22 (NPNF First Series, 2:241, 271-272, 499-500).

[29]Augustine *Enchiridion* 4.11 (LCC, 7:342). This idea, evil complements the good of creation, is known as the aesthetic principle. See Hick, *Evil and the Love of God*, 88.

[30]Augustine *City of God* 22: 1, 2, 22; 21:12 (NPNF First Series, 2: 480, 499-501; 463).

[31]Augustine *On the Predestination of the Saints* 34 (NPNF First Series, 5:515).

theological circles have deliberated on its credibility, especially looking at the logical

consistency, the nature of evil, and free will and its relation to evil.

<center>Logical Consistency in Augustine's
Theodicy</center>

Philosophers such as David Hume, John L. Mackie, Anthony Flew, and H. J.

McCloskey, just to mention a few, have reiterated Epicurus's formulation[32] of the

problem of evil in many ways, claiming the theist explanation of the problem of evil is

incongruous. They maintain that the existence of evil in this world suggests that an

omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good God does not exist.[33] From Mackie's

viewpoint, free will theodicy "strongly suggests that there is no valid solution of the

problem which does not modify at least one of the constituent propositions in a way

which would seriously affect the essential core of the theistic position."[34] The problem of

evil arises when God is conceived as all-good and all-powerful.[35]

Alvin Plantinga replies to the atheological criticisms, specifically the criticism of

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[32]As stated above in the introductory chapter.

[33]David Hume, *Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Hafner, 1948); John. L Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64 (1955): 200-212; Anthony Flew, "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom," in *New Essay in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM, 1955), 141-169; H. J. McClosky, "God and Evil," *Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (1960): 97-114; Curt J. Ducasse, *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion* (New York: Roland Press, 1953), chap. 16.

[34]Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 212.

[35]Edward H. Madden, "The Riddle of God and Evil," in *Current Philosophical Issues: Essays in Honor of Curt John Ducasse*, ed. F. C. Dommeyer (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1966), 185-200.

John L. Mackie and Anthony Flew,[36] which holds that there is logical inconsistency in the free will theodicy propositions that God is omnipotent and wholly good and that evil exists.[37] According to Plantinga, all that is needed in responding to this criticism is a proposition that is consistent with an omnipotent, omniscient God who co-exists with evil; and the proposition needs not to be true.[38]

Hence, Plantinga argues that every possible free person contains the property "free to perform at least one morally wrong action." Therefore, for God to create a world containing moral good, He must create significantly free persons, and He can do that only by instantiating free possible persons. Every free possible person performs at least one moral wrong action. Thus, no matter what free possible person God actualizes, the resulting persons, if free with respect to morally significant actions, would always perform at least some wrong actions. That is, it is not within God's power to create a world containing moral good without evil. Consequently, an omnipotent, omniscient, and all-good God's existence is consistent with the reality of evil.[39]

Nelson Pike contends that Plantinga's argument does not do justice to the issue: How can an omnipotent, omniscient, and all-good God create possible persons as subsets of a set including the property "freely-performs-at least-one morally-wrong-action" rather

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[36]Alvin C. Plantinga, "Self-Profile," in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. James E. Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing, 1985), 41.

[37]Alvin C. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 165-168; idem, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), 16-28.

[38]Alvin C. Plantinga, *God and Other Minds* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), 151.

[39]Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 49-53; idem, *The Nature of Necessity*, 184-188; idem, *God and Other Minds*, 131-155.

than subsets of the sets including the property "freely-performs-only-right-actions"? Plantinga fails, argues Pike, to see the distinction between making someone do something and creating someone who God knows in advance will do something.[40] From William Rowe's point of view, Plantinga's shift from free will to unfettered will refutes Flew's critique. But he does so only to weaken his argument because his defense is based on the claim that human freedom and some evil are better than no moral evil and no human freedom.[41] Rowe claims, furthermore, that Plantinga's reply to Mackie's squabble is valid, but the argument raised does not require the premises he used. In his view, there is a need for a clearer definition of the proposition that God is omnipotent before free will defense can controvert the criticism of Mackie and others.[42]

Plantinga, in responding to the criticisms, specifically to Pike, argues that his proposition is not necessary but contingent. It is logically possible that God can instantiate free persons who perform only morally right actions, but it is contingent upon free choices that these possible persons would make.[43]

In his article "Compatibilism, Free Will and God," Flew again analyzes Plantinga's refutation and poses the question: "If [theodicy] is to be developed in incompatibilism terms, then the first problem is to show how these are to be squared with

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[40]Nelson Pike, "Plantinga on the Free Will Defense: A Reply," *Journal of Philosophy* 63 (1966): 93-104; idem, "Plantinga on Free Will and Evil," *Religious Studies* 15 (1979): 449-473.

[41]William L. Rowe, "God and Other Minds," *Nous* 3 (1969): 273-274.

[42]Ibid., 276-284.

[43]Alvin C. Plantinga, "Pike and Possible Persons," *Journal of Philosophy* 63 (1966): 104-108.

what so many classical theologians have taken to be essentials of theism."[44] Plantinga's

proposition, argues Stephen T. Davis, successfully rebuts the logical inconsistency

problem in the free will theodicy. He confidently affirms that God cannot create a world

with moral good without possible evil. However, the cost-effectiveness of the evil

allowed in the world cannot be met with a philosophical solution.[45]

<p style="text-align:center">Nature of Evil in Augustine's Theodicy</p>

I examined Augustine's understanding of the nature of evil by investigating

scholars' arguments on the privation, aesthetic, and plenitude principles found in

Augustine's theodicy.

Privation

The concept of privation in free will theodicy claims that evil is the absence of a

good or a quality that normally would be present in a thing. Nonetheless, some leading

scholars reject the theory on the basis that it is a denial of the reality of evil or an attempt

to circumvent the problem of evil.[46]

Stanley G. Kane, in his analysis of the theory, affirms that the rejection of the

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[44]Anthony Flew, "Compatibilism, Free Will and God," *Philosophy* 48 (1973):
244.

[45]Stephen T. Davis, "Free Will and Evil," in *Encountering Evil*: *Live Options in
Theodicy*, rev. ed., ed. Stephen T. Davis (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press,
2001), 73-79.

[46]Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy*, 69, 71, 84-86, 94; Charles
Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books,
1964), 196; McClosky, "God and Evil," 10; Ducasse*, A Philosophical Scrutiny of
Religion*, 362-363; Anthony Flew, *God and Philosophy* (London: Hutchinson, 1966), 50.

concept of privation arises from misunderstanding.[47] The basis of this confusion, Kane

asserts, is the failure to see the function of the theory in the free will theodicy. The

concept is not intended to explain away evil or alleviate pain or deny the assertion that

evil is caused by some active agent. A superficial reading of the statements on the theory

is the cause of the misunderstanding. On the contrary, the idea of privation advocates a

vivid sense of sin. No doubt, he declares, it does not portray any intention of explaining

away evil. As defined by Augustine and Aquinas, Kane concedes, the theory recognizes

evil as negative but not as non-existent. It is negative in a sense that its existence

depends on the nature of another thing. The theory only describes the nature of evil.[48]

On the other hand, affirms Kane, even with a correct understanding, the theory of

privation has a deficient elucidation of the problem of evil. He claims the concept fails to

answer the problem of evil, for not all evils are privation. Some evils are positive in

nature and others are real but are privative. First, its account for pain is not plausible. A

paralyzed leg can be considered a privation, but a leg aching with pain as suffering

cannot be privation of good health. It is an experience different from a paralyzed leg. It

is not a lack of feeling or function.[49] Secondly, the concept does not recognize the

distinction between a sin of omission and a sin of commission. According to him, "On

the privation theory we would have to say that both sorts of sin are equally evil, and that

as evil there is really nothing in the hateful or murderous acts beyond the lack or

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[47]Stanley G. Kane, "Evil and Privation," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11 (1980): 44. See Paul Thelakat, "Process and Privation: Aquinas and Whitehead on Evil," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1986): 296.

[48]Kane, "Evil and Privation," 52.

privation of love and right action. This . . . is a *reduction ad absurdum of* the theory."

Privation does not explain all the gradations of evil in the world.[50]

Bill Angling and Stewart Goetz, in their article "Evil is Privation," argue that Kane's rebuttal does not negate the efficiency of the privation theory. They assert that pain is a privation in the sense that it entails some absence in a normal state of consciousness and an indicator of an absence of physical well-being. In the same manner, privation handles a sin of commission adequately. A Sin of commission embraces the lack of executing some duties, just like a sin of omission. However, a sin of commission is a greater evil than a sin of omission inasmuch as it involves greater privation, "a greater deviation of the will from the dictates of conscience and thus a greater lack of psychic harmony."[51]

According to John Hick, from the point of view of the modern logical theory,[52] "there is no basis for the hypostatization of non-being. The situation is simply that we have the generally useful habit of presuming an entity of some kind corresponding to a noun; but sometimes the language generates words that have no denotation—and non-

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[49]Ibid., 49-51.

[50]Ibid., 52. See also Wallace I. Matson, *The Existence of God* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), 142-143; John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 462; M. B. Ahern, *The Problem of Evil* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 18-17.

[51]Bill Anglin and Stewart Goetz, "Evil Is Privation," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 13 (1982): 5-8.

[52]He is referring to Bertrand Russell's discussion on "The Philosophy of Logical Atonism," in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. Robert Charles Marsh (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), 175-282; idem, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1919), chap. 16; idem, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 856-860.

being is a case in point."[53] Thus Hick condemns the use of privation of God in

Augustine's theodicy. The crucial issue with the problem of evil, Kane and Hopers

argue, is not whether evil is positive or negative, but if there is enough reason for God to

allow the occurrence of evil in the world. According to them, evil as a positive reality is

not incompatible with God's omnipotence; if God, according to free will theodicy, uses

evil to accomplish His purpose, then the positive or the negative reality of evil does not

matter; for God has control over evil. Rendering evil as negative does not give sufficient

moral reason for the permission of evil in our world.[54]

P. M. Farrell argues that the idea of privation is like "the passing of colour from

the decaying rose," hence, in free will agents privation becomes a necessary by-product,

"a very nature of a contingent being."[55] Wallace I. Matson also suggests that the theory

of privation points to metaphysical evil. "Evil . . . considered in itself, is mere non-being,

the deprivation of reality, whereas being and perfection are synonymous. Insofar as

anything is real, it is perfect and good. But everything, except God, is and must be finite,

hence everything, except God must be evil to some extent."[56] Quoting from Augusinus

Magister, Hick explains that the principle of privation does not only make evil

metaphysical but also makes grace a metaphysical force.[57]

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[53]Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 193.

[54]Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, 211; Kane, "Evil and Privation," 54-55.

[55]P. M. Farrell, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 67 (1958): 400-401.

[56]Matson, *The Existence of God*, 142.

[57]Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 199-201.

By this definition of evil as non-being St. Augustine threw into the process of theological reflection a principle which was to lead to a particular conception of grace, salvation, the Christian life, and the Church. In effect, if sin is a privation, the sinner is *un deficient.* Consequently the grace which saves him will fill up this deficiency, and will be an irresistible grace [*un don de force*]. The instrument of this infusion of supernatural life will be the sacrament. The Church will have the treasury of these sanctifying graces at its disposal and will distribute it by means of its priests.[58]

Kane proposes that the idea of relating the inevitability of some physical evil to the concept of privation is not accurate; it is rather the principle of plenitude that makes evil a necessary consequence of contingency. The privation theory of the nature of evil, he contends, is not true experientially and does not safeguard any of the beliefs of theism. There are no "extra-theistic" or "intra-theistic" grounds for accepting the theory.[59]

Plenitude

As mentioned earlier on, the principle of plenitude in the free will theodicy assumes a world that includes all forms of life in a hierarchy that descends from the highest form of life down to the lowest. This principle has not gone without being challenged.

According to Mackie, the theory of plenitude as a solution to the problem of evil makes good and evil necessary counterparts. They exist in the same way as "quality and its logical opposite."[60] In addition, Hick asserts that the idea of plenitude leads to a despairing view. The understanding that is derived from the principle is that God cannot

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[58]Augusinus Magister, *Communications Du Congres International Augustinien*, vol. 2 (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1954), 1055, quoted in John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 201.

[59]Kane, "Evil and Privation," 47.

[60]Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 204.

create good without evil, which is not in accordance with an orthodox understanding of God.[61]

If the principle of plenitude is accepted, grant Edward H. Madden and Peter H. Hare, then any possible universe entails both good and evil; God, as an omnipotent being, should be able to impose a just distribution of evil no matter what possible system He chose to create. In addition, any solution to the problem of evil that relies on the principle of plenitude has shortcomings. The principle leads to a paradoxical result, they claim. On the one hand, God's creation in rank, which includes all kinds of things, is good. On the other hand, the mutual interference of the creatures in rank causes most physical evil.[62] In his article "The Defense from Plenitude against the Problem of Evil," Robert F. Burch argues that the principle solves the problem of evil. According to him, the concept of plenitude is plausible in itself. For a world with free agents that do go wrong is better than a world without free agents.[63] According to Madden and Hare, the absurd result of the principle of plentitude is solved with the aesthetic theory.[64]

Aesthetic

In the free will theodicy, the aesthetic concept maintains that God has created a good world. Individual parts of the world may appear evil to the human mind, but, from the standpoint of God, those evils are ugly patches that make the whole picture beautiful.

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[61]Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 195.

[62]Edward H. Madden and Peter H. Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1968), 68.

[63]Robert F. Burch, "The Defense from Plenitude against the Problem of Evil," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 12 (1981): 29-37.

In Mackie's opinion, the aesthetic principle in free will theodicy presupposes a causal law. Therefore, if God needs evil as a means to a good end, then He is subject to causal laws. Unfortunately, he stresses, this is incongruent with what theists mean by omnipotent.[65]

Furthermore, the principle implies, explain critics, that as evil contributes to the ultimate good, so does good equally augment the ultimate evil, but this is not always the case. Some evil may turn to a good result, but the price is still high, critics explain. A natural catastrophe such as an earthquake, flood, and hurricane may kill thousands of people, destroy properties, but also provide opportunities for service. However, the opportunities are not worth the price. Evil does not always serve as a means to good ends. Therefore, it is absurd to assume that the suffering of creatures is a necessary side-effect of a world which is good as a whole.[66]

In the view of John Hospers, if the best universe that the designer, God, could bring about is one where pain and suffering lead to good ends, "perhaps he should have refrained from universe designing and chosen instead some activity in which he had greater competence."[67] He continues: If evils such as are experienced in the world are good in God's perspective, then such a moral being does not deserve worship. God is not like a physician who introduces pain in order to help a patient. He is a God who does not

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[64]Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God*, 68.

[65]Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 205.

[66]Flew, *God and Philosophy*, 55; Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, 313; Ducasse, *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion*, 364.

[67]Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, 312.

need means such as agonizing pain to achieve a purpose. Such procedure is needed by creatures.[68]

<center>Free Will and God in Relation to Evil in
Augustine's Theodicy</center>

The free will theodicy contends that evil is to be ascribed to the independent free will actions. On the other hand, contends Mackie, the notion of freedom in free will theodicy makes the solution inadequate.[69] Free will theodicy upholds a compatibilistic view of free will. In this context, compatibility means that free will is coherent with causal determinism—everything has a causal antecedent. Hence, theological compatibility or determinism holds that an "action is free, whether or not it was causally determined, provided only that it was done by an agent whose faculties were operating normal, and was done because the agent chose it."[70]

According to Robert F. Brown, the compatibilistic view gives credit to God for the good of creation; however, it attributes the fall to inherent weakness which creatures possess by virtue of being created out of nothing. The cause of evil, he claims, is shifted to something that fallen humanity cannot ascertain.[71] In the free will theodicy, state critics, decisions are predicted from other factors and actions are predetermined by a God

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[68]Ibid., 311, 314.

[69]Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 208.

[70]Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams, "Introduction," to *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 12. See Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, 29-30.

[71]Robert F. Brown, "The First Evil Will Must Be Incomprehensible: A Critique of Augustine," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46 (1978): 320-323.

who knew all causes; this makes free will an illusion.[72] Hartshorne stresses that the

explanation that "God permits us to make our own decisions but, . . . He so influences us

that we make exact decisions He decides upon for us, and so He is responsible for our

acts, even though they are truly ours, . . . is a mere verbiage, and that no one knows what

it means."[73] David Basinger joins the discussion by arguing that, for the compatibilism

view to preserve the goodness of God, the free will theodicy must conceive all evil to be

non-gratuitous. However, this assumption cannot hold because the proponents of the

theodicy affirm that moral agents commit some action, sin, that God does not desire; this

is to say, the theodicy exhibits a dilemma which cannot be escaped.[74]

Augustine's affirmation of free will is not compatible with an immutable

omniscient and omnipotent God, argues David R. Griffin. Immutable omniscience in

Augustine means God's knowledge does not increase or decrease in content and it also

implies God foreknew the order of causation including the human will being the cause of

human actions. But this nature of God, which belongs to His essence, does not make

humans responsible as free will theodicy requires.[75] Therefore, an "immutable

omnipotent God . . . would be unjustified in condemning any one to punishment for

sinning, for . . . a person's life could not have been one iota different from its actual

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[72]John Randolph Lucas, *The Freedom of the Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 27-29; Walter T. Stace, "The Problems of Morals," in *The Problem of Free Will*, ed. Willard F. Enteman (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 77-78; Hartshorne, "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," 202-203.

[73]Hartshorne, "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," 203.

[74]David Basinger, "Human Freedom and Divine Omnipotence: Some New Thoughts on an Old Problem," *Religious Studies* 15 (1979): 492-493.

[75]Griffin, *God, Power and Evil*, 60.

cause."[76] According to Hick, even if Augustine's theodicy is granted, God cannot be

defended from being responsible for evil, since He chose to create beings whom He

foreknew would actualize sin and evil, when created.[77]

The exposition on free will, continues Griffin, allows autonomy, but it is

illusionary, for omnipotence in Augustine suggests that "the Almighty sets in motion

even in the innermost hearts of men the movement of their will, so that He does through

their agency whatsoever He wishes to perform through them."[78] This, Griffin contends,

negates creatures' freedom and responsibility, making God's justice for punishing sinners

questionable.[79] Free will theodicy is self-contradictory[80] and makes all evils

instrumentally good. Thus, there is no genuine evil; even evil will which is considered

intrinsically evil is not genuine evil but apparent, for, according to Augustine, the

universe is better with sin than without sin.[81]

The discussion on Augustine's theodicy explicitly shows the inadequacy of the

solution. Critics are not satisfied with Plantinga's response to the logical challenge, and

the evidential problems, such as the amount of evil and its cost-effectiveness, involved in

the problem of evil are inefficiently explained. These irreconcilable difficulties led

scholars to search for a more reliable explanation to the problem of evil. We shall now

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[76]Ibid., 61.

[77]Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 75.

[78]Griffin, *God, Power and Evil*, 64, quoted in Augustine *Grace and Free Will* 42 (NPNF 5:462).

[79]Ibid., 65.

[80]Ibid., 66.

turn our attention to Hick's theodicy.

Hick's Theodicy

Hick notes that Fredrick Schleiermacher, in the nineteenth century, was the first to depart from Augustine's theodicy. But Hick's theodicy is the first defined alternative to Augustine's theodicy.[82]

Hick argues that Augustine's theodicy is based on a myth.[83] The concept of a perfect free creature introducing evil into the world by perverse misuse of the free will has fulfilled its function as a myth in the minds of countless people, but it is preposterous when taken as authentic history and used in solving problems. The use of this myth has created nothing but inadequacies in Augustine's theodicy.[84] Upon this self-awakening from Augustine's theodicy, Hick sets off to develop a theodicy that is internally coherent with religious tradition and consistent with scientific enquiry.[85]

As he searched for a better explanation to the problem of evil, he was led to the themes in Irenaeus's theology, specifically creation. Hick develops a hypothesis from

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[81]Ibid., 70-71.

[82]Whitney, *Theodicy*, 115.

[83]He defines Christian mythology as "great persisting imaginative pictures by means of which the corporate mind of the Church has expressed to itself the significance of the historical events upon which its faith is based, above all the life, death and resurrection of Jesus who was the Christ. The function of these myths is to convey in universally understandable ways the special importance and meaning of certain items of mundane experience" (Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 281-282).

[84]Ibid., 283-286.

[85]Hick, "An Ireanaean Theodicy," 38.

Irenaeus's theology upon which he explains moral and natural evils.[86] He proposes that

God's purpose for creating the world is "soul-making"[87] for rational moral agents. For

this reason, God could not have created finite beings directly in the divine presence, so

that in being conscious of that which is other than oneself, the creature is automatically

conscious of God, the limitless reality and power, goodness and love, knowledge and

wisdom, towering above oneself. In such a situation, the disproportion between Creator

and creatures would be so great that the latter would have no freedom in relation to God;

they would indeed not exist as independent autonomous persons.[88]

The soul-making process requires "epistemic distance," an environment in which

the soul-making process is an autonomous system and God is not overwhelmingly

evident. In this situation, finite beings exercise some measure of genuine freedom.[89]

"One has space to exist as a finite being, a space created by this epistemic distance from

God and protected by one's basic cognitive freedom, one's freedom to open or close

oneself to the dawning awareness of God that is experienced naturally by a religious

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[86]Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 202), Bishop of Lyons, alleged that there is a distinction between the likeness of God and the image of God. The image of God is man's bodily form, which represents his nature as an intelligent being endowed with freedom and responsibility to search. The likeness of God represents man's final perfecting by the Holy Spirit with His Maker (*Against Heresies* 4.38.2,3; 4.39.1; 5.4.1 [ANF 1:521-522, 531-532]).

[87]"Soul-Making" is a process by which agents freely come to develop and perfect certain valuable traits of character and know and love their Maker. The term is borrowed from John Keats. In a letter to his brother and sister, Keats asked them to call the world "the vale of Soul-making." He saw that the world of pain and suffering "is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul" (Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 295n1). The following usage of the term will not be in quotations marks.

[88]Hick, "An Irenaean Theodicy," 41-42.

[89]Ibid., 42.

animal."[90] Virtues, according to Hick, attained through an autonomous soul-making

system are of more value than ready-made virtues created within a moral agent without

any effort of the agent.[91]

Thus, God's creation is not perfect. The human being is created as personal being

in the image of God, and were "only the raw material for a further and more difficult

stage of God's creative work."[92] Human beings are spiritually and morally immature, but

intelligent social beings capable of awareness of the divine, and placed in an imperfect

environment.[93]

With this hypothesis in place, Hick explains divine permission of pain and

suffering in the world by discussing sin, pain, suffering, and the kingdom of God. In the

context of God's purpose for human agents, the ideal relationship with God implies

accepting our status as insignificant creatures and yet loved and valued by God in a

universe that is dependent upon His activity.[94] Hence, becoming aware of God and being

obedient servants to His purpose is the duty of humanity.[95] However, rational agents did

not follow the ideal relationship, but rather treated self as the center of the world. This is

sin; it belongs to nature and is the source of many forms of evil. Following Augustine, he

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[90]Ibid.

[91]Ibid., 43; Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 291-292.

[92]Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 290.

[93]Ibid., 290-297.

[94]Ibid., 298.

[95]Ibid.

claims sin constitutes the heart of the problem of evil.[96] God has permitted this because

He has endowed His creatures with cognitive freedom that proceeds from the nature of

the agent.[97] The epistemic distance makes sin unavoidable. He writes, "Man's spiritual

location at an epistemic distance from God makes it virtually inevitable that man will

organize his life apart from God and in self-centered competitiveness with his fellows."[98]

Pain gives rise to suffering, but suffering is not the reaction to only physical pain

but also a reaction to emotional pain. The ability to cope with pain depends upon the

inward attitude of the suffering individuals.[99] According to Hick, pain-receptors are

sensitive to any kind of stimulus that impinges upon the organism that is violent enough

to damage it. As a result, physical pain serves as a warning signal to living creatures, a

biological function that relates to a normal state of health rather than a state of disease.[100]

Every mobile mammal has become skilled at basic procedures of self-preservation

through pain. Living creatures have gained knowledge of how to guide their movements

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[96]Sin is "disorientation at the very center of man's being where he stands in relationship with the Source and Lord of his life and the Determiner of his destiny. That vertical relationship affects all our horizontal relationships within the created realm, so that our sinfulness expresses itself in various kinds of broken, distorted, perverted, or destructive relationships to our fellows and to the natural world, and in correspondingly wrong attitudes to ourselves as beings organic both to nature and to human society" (ibid., 300).

[97]Cognitive freedom is the willingness or unwillingness to become aware of God. According to him "it must be thought of as involving an element of unpredictability. . . . Whilst a free action arises out of the agents character it does not arise in a full determined and predictable way" (ibid., 312-313).

[98]Ibid., 322.

[99]Ibid., 328-329, 331-332.

[100]Ibid., 334.

successfully within their material environment.[101] He argues that God could have created

a utopian world, but the goodness God desires for humanity cannot be achieved except

"through a long process of creaturely experience in response to challenges and disciplines

of various kind."[102] Therefore, he writes, "Under the existing dispensation, each of life's

evils may perhaps be necessary to ward off some greater evil, or attain a good which is

not" attainable in a painless world.[103] Animals are liable to pain because it follows from

their nature as living creatures. However, since animal life forms part of the independent

natural order in which humanity is related and by which humankind is "enabled to exist

as a free and responsible creature in the presence of his infinite Creator,"[104] the animal

kingdom plays an indirect but significant role in forming rational agents into the likeness

of God. Thus, animal pain is subordinate to human sin and suffering.[105]

Suffering, "a state of mind in which we wish violently that our situation were

otherwise," is a function of sin.[106] Human life can be full of suffering because of self-

centeredness; sin causes suffering. Considering God's purpose, he argues, sinfulness is

the price we paid for our cognitive freedom. Thus, sin and suffering are something that

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[101]Ibid., 336.

[102]Ibid., 334.

[103]Ibid., 343.

[104]According to Hick, the question for theodicy is not why animals are liable to pain as well as pleasure—for they are living creatures—but why these forms of life should exist at all (ibid., 352).

[105]Ibid., 352.

[106]For Hick, the greater part of human suffering is not physical pain, but emotions: regret and remorse, anxiety and despair, guilt, shame, and embarrassment, loss of loved ones, failure and sense of rejection (ibid., 354-355).

ought to exist for God to achieve His purpose, but to be abolished after He had reached His aim. Their contribution, however, has no intrinsic value in themselves but the activities whereby they are overcome: redemption from sin and human beings' service in the midst of suffering. This means moral qualities would have no value without suffering.[107]

However, the amount of suffering in the world is left to mystery. According to Hick, "The solution to this baffling problem of excessive and undeserved suffering is a frank appeal to the positive value of mystery. Such suffering remains unjust and inexplicable, haphazard and cruelly excessive. The mystery of excessive suffering is a real mystery, impenetrable to the rationalizing human mind."[108] On the one hand, the excessive undeserved and ethically meaningless suffering challenges Christian faith. On the other hand, theological reflections on the amount of suffering show that it contributes to the world as a place in which "true human goodness can occur and in which loving sympathy and compassionate self-sacrifice takes place."[109]

Hick indicates that the present epoch of human history is only at the beginning stages of God's purpose for rational beings. In most cases, evil events breed strength of character, courage, unselfishness, patience, and moral steadfastness. Nonetheless, he recognizes that too often the opposite is true: Wickedness multiplies, personalities disintegrate under suffering and pain, good events turn into evil, kindness into bitterness, and hope to despair. He remarks that, looking back in historical records, we can conclude

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[107]Ibid., 359-360.

[108]Ibid., 371.

that not "all sin leads to redemption" and not "all suffering leads to a good end."[110] The

mingling of good and evil in human experience continues throughout life. A decisive

victory over evil must include life after death.[111]

He notes that, since God's soul-making purpose is not realized in the present

personal life of most beings at the time of death to inherit the Kingdom of God, there is

an intermediate state, a state where the scenes of soul-making are completed:

"Progressive sanctification after death." Its extent and duration depends on the degree of

unsanctification remaining to be overcome at the time of death. "It is quite evident that

the creating of human beings into children of God is not usually completed by the

moment of bodily death and that if it is ever to be completed it must continue beyond this

life."[112] Hick asserted that God reconstitutes an individual who dies in this world without

reaching the likeness to Him, in the soul-making process, in another world.[113] In the

post-mortem world, the reconstituted individual is a replica of him or her as he or she was

the moment before his or her death in this world. The "replica"[114] is the same person in

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[109]Ibid., 372.

[110]Ibid., 375.

[111]Ibid., 375-376.

[112]John Hick, "Remarks," in *Reason and Religion*, ed. Stuart C. Brown (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 127.

[113]John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 279.

[114]Hick puts "replica" in quotation marks to distinguish his idea of replica from the normal concept of replica. The normal theory of replica implies that the original object and the replica exist simultaneously and there can be any number of replicas of the same object. In his concept of "replica," the original object and replica cannot exist simultaneously and there can be only one "replica" (ibid., 283).

all respects with the exception of "continuous occupancy of space."[115] He contends that

operations of divine grace are directed to the replica in order that the inherent need of

human nature may eventually lead him freely to respond to his or her God.[116]

The ultimate justification of evil is rooted in God's purpose for humans and in the

final comprehensive fulfillment of that purpose. It is the infinite good of the end state of

human persons, pre-envisioned in God's soul-making purpose for them, that ultimately

justifies the existence of any and all evil in the world. "For the justification of evil,

according to this Irenaean type of theodicy, is that it is a necessary part of a process

whose end product is to be an infinite good—namely, the perfection and endless joy of all

finite personal life."[117] In this way, none perish. God's purpose for humankind will at

last be fulfilled in every rational being.[118] It can be predicted that "sooner or later, in our

own time and in our own way, we shall all freely come to God; and universal salvation

can be affirmed, not as a logical necessity but as the contingent, but predictable outcome

of the process of the universe interpreted theistically."[119]

Critical Discussion on Hick's Theodicy

In the foregoing discussion, I have outlined Hick's soul-making theodicy.

Presently, one needs to ask questions regarding the evaluation of this theodicy. This

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[115]Ibid., 280.

[116]Ibid., 253.

[117]Ibid., 128.

[118]Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 373-400; idem, "An Irenaean Theodicy," 52, 66-67.

[119]Hick, "An Irenaean Theodicy," 52.

section summarizes scholars' assessment of this theodicy.

Hick's theodicy has received a number of acknowledgments from scholars. In his book *Why Me? Why Mine? Clear Thinking about Suffering,* Paul F. Andrus undoubtedly expands on Hick's soul-making theodicy and provides a defense for the theodicy. He writes, "We have reason to thank Irenaeus for this part of his theology. . . . It provides us a point from which to develop our new concept of the role of suffering."[120] Robert C. Mesle also points out the significance of Hick's theodicy. In his view, the theodicy portrays a God with personal love qualities that classical theodicy lacks.[121] Hick has brought to the history of theodicy, contends Gilbert Fulmer, an "analytic talent, historical scholarship and a degree of fair mindedness that is, sadly, not always evident on either side of the ongoing controversy over theism."[122] However, the theodicy is not without obvious challenges.

Opponents and critics have pointed out that the theodicy has not responded to all the crucial issues involved with the problem of evil.[123] We now turn to a brief discussion of the issues raised against this theodicy. These are discussed under excessive suffering

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[120]Paul F. Andrus, *Why Me? Why Mine? Clear Thinking about Suffering* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), 46.

[121]C. Robert Mesle, "The Problem of Genuine Evil: A Critique of John Hick's Theodicy," *Journal of Religion* 66 (1986): 429.

[122]Gilbert Fulmer, "John Hick's Soul-Making Theodicy," *Southwest Philosophical Studies* 7 (1982): 170.

[123]Ibid., 176-179; William Hasker, "Suffering, Soul-Making and Salvation," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1988): 18-19.

and genuine evil and eschatology and free will.

<center>Excessive Suffering and Genuine Evil
in Hick's Theodicy</center>

William Rowe concurs with Hick on the idea that, if the soul-making hypothesis is true, it is rational for us to believe that there is excessive evil in the world. However, the cost-benefit analysis shows that excessive evil defaces the image of Christ and destroys growth into His likeness, maintains Rowe. The evil that falls on humans is destructive to the soul-making concept. The excessive evil in the world is more than what an omnipotent God would have to permit for soul-making. If there is such a powerful God, He could have prevented a good deal of evil without altering the soul-making process.[124]

Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, in harmony with Hick, replies that Rowe's criticism does not disapprove the soul-making hypothesis. Both contend that the assertion "it is rational to assume excessive amount of evil is needed for soul-making" entails "it is rational to assume that the evil in the world exceeds what is needed for soul-making."[125] Conversely, asserts Zagzebski, Hick's theodicy has to appeal to divine love rather than the goodness of soul-making. Defending the hypothesis on the grounds of the goodness of soul-making attracts a comparison of the soul-making with other alternatives. In

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[124]William L. Rowe, "Paradox and Promise: Hick's Solution to the Problem of Evil," in *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion*: *Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 118-120. See Fulmer, "John Hick's Soul-Making Theodicy," 176-179.

[125]John Hick, "Reply," in *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion*: *Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 135; Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, "Critical Response," in *Problems in the Philosophy of*

addition, "It seems . . . that soul-making is something a good being would be motivated to produce, not for the sake of any good, but simply because a good being is loving and a loving being acts in that way."[126] Hick, in response to Zagzebski, claims her proposal handles only moral evil but not suffering and pain caused by natural disasters. On the other hand, love and goodness are connected. God loves us means God cares for us and seeks the highest good for us. In this sense, the theodicy appeals to divine love for establishing a world with epistemic distance in order that we may come to the actualization of the good He intends for us.[127]

Critics insist that souls that progress morally and spiritually in the face of excessive evil do not reach perfection. According to M. B. Ahern, even if granted that evil is logically necessary for moral growth, there was a great deal of evil, such as physical and psychological evil among animals, before humans inhabited this world; those have nothing to do with the moral development of humans.[128] In response, Fulmer contends that Hick does not claim that every individual evil is logically necessary, but that the world in this condition, in which goods and evils are created and distributed according to natural laws, requires humans to make a moral choice.[129] Critics assert that, if, according to Hick, soul-making continues beyond the grave and better progress is made in post-mortem environments, then why did God not place us in such an

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Religion: *Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 125-126.

[126]Zagzebski, "Critical Response," 127-128.

[127]Hick, "Reply," 136.

[128]Ahern, *The Problem of Evil*, 65.

[129]Fulmer, "John Hick's Soul-Making Theodicy," 174-175.

environment from the beginning?[130] Hick deals with some of the difficult issues involved

in the question of the amount of suffering in the world. He claims God cannot eliminate

some evils without removing all evils, but excessive undeserved suffering is a mystery.[131]

Fulmer argues that Hick's treatment of the issues involved with excessive evil is

unsuccessful and inconsistent with Hick's own beliefs. Hick adopts the Kantian

deontological ethical framework to deal with excessive evil, claims Fulmer. However,

his theodicy does not meet the Kantian ethical requirement that human beings should

always be treated as valuable ends, never as means to an end. Even, Fulmer insists, the

appeal to mystery is not good enough to handle the question: "Why do the innocent suffer

in order to build the souls of others?"[132] Mystery may be a necessary condition for an

adequate response to God, granted Ahern. "Worship, for example, supposes inequality of

a radical kind which excludes the making of demands even for clarity. It supposes total

submission and trust. A response of this kind might not be possible without mystery.

However, as it stands, Hick's theory cannot be explained in this way."[133]

Furthermore, Edward H. Madden and Peter H. Hare maintain that Hick's "all or

nothing" and "slippery slope"[134] concepts that he uses to explain excessive evil are not

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[130]See Adams and Adams, "Introduction," to *The Problem of Evil*, 20.

[131]Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 369-372.

[132]Fulmer, "John Hick's Soul-Making Theodicy," 176-177.

[133]Ahern, *The Problem of Evil*, 65.

[134]"All or nothing" is the claim that something is desirable because its complete loss would be far worse than the evil its presence now causes. "Slippery slope" is the idea that once God started eliminating evils, He would have no place to stop short of a perfect world in which only robots and men were possible (Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God*, 85-87).

sufficient. The argument is based on a wrong notion that, if God starts eliminating some

evils, He would not be able to stop at the exact point at which "soul-making" was most

efficiently achieved.[135] There are many ways of guiding one's moral growth without

undermining freedom. Puccetti argues that

> there is no need to choose between a completely painless world and the actual world.
> Just as there could be a far more painful scheme of things without changing the stable
> environment of natural laws, so could there be a far less painful one. It is not at all
> clear . . . that God would be obliged to create the organic world as we now know it
> through evolution.[136]

For there is neither a contradiction in God for starting off a world with no past

history nor an incongruity in a world in which all creatures live on plants. It would be

our world with the exception that nature would not be "red in tooth and claw."[137]

After analyzing three imaginary worlds with less or no useless suffering, Clement

Dore concludes that there is no other world better for soul-making than our present

world. He states that a world with stringent obligations is more enviable than a world

without any stringent obligations. For "it is a general rule that the greater the failure

which would have resulted had one not triumphed, the more splendid is the victory, and

this rule applies to resisting the temptation to do what is morally wrong."[138] William

Hasker also claims it is scientifically known that any change to our world might result in

a universe in which intelligent life is not possible. Therefore, the argument that God

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[135]Ibid.

[136]Puccetti, "Loving God: Some Observation on John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*," 261.

[137]Ibid.

[138]Clement Dore, "An Examination of the 'Soul-Making' Theodicy," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1970): 124-126.

could have created a different world is intelligibly impossible.[139]

In his reaction to Puccetti, Hick contends that a world in which suffering occurs justly or a world in which suffering works for good of the sufferer, suffering would not evoke sympathy for neighbors, hence such worlds are inconsistent with soul-making. He claims that in a world that is to be the scene of compassionate love and self-giving for others, suffering must fall upon mankind with something of the haphazardness and equity that we now experience.[140]

Critics insist that Hick's theodicy is insufficient and it does not recognize genuine evil. Every evil is considered apparent evil. It may be true that some virtues are developed in the face of evil, but pain and suffering frustrate human endeavor. Most of the time, there is no point in evil; it is not essential as a catalyst in the life of humanity. Goodness does not triumph in the face of adversity.[141]

<center>Eschatology and Free Will in
Hick's Theodicy</center>

As it is postulated in Hick's theodicy, the fulfillment of divine purpose, growing into the likeness of God, presupposes life after death in some form. It is said that any coherent theodicy cannot do without dependence upon eschatology.[142] However, the type

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[139]Hasker, "Suffering, Soul-Making and Salvation," 16-17.

[140]John Hick, "God, Evil and Mystery," *Religious Studies* 3 (1968): 544-546.

[141]Stanley G. Kane, "The Failure of Soul-Making Theodicy," 2; Mesle, "The Problem of Genuine Evil: A Critique of John Hick's Theodicy," 413-426; Tilley, "The Use and Abuse of Theodicy," 312-313.

[142]Mesle, *John Hick's Theodicy: A Process Humanist Critique*, xxxi; R. Douglas Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 224.

of eschatology embedded in Hick's theodicy has not escaped criticism.

There seems to be no rational grounds for the final state in this theodicy, suggested Stanley G. Kane. After one has gone through horrendous evils, sometimes debilitating, demoralizing, and defeating struggles with situations, to possess values which cannot be attained under any other circumstances, according to Hick, the individual is accepted into a state where all these values are not needed, nor are there opportunities to put them to use. This is, asserts Kane, a ridicule on humankind.[143]

Hasker comes to the defense of Hick's theodicy by expounding on the importance of virtues in Hick's theodicy. In his view, virtues cultivated in this life are relevant in this life and the next. He claims Kane's argument has no force and it is inconsistent with Christianity as well as common morality. Heroes who have gone before us no longer need their achievements, but throughout history they are prized, esteemed, and honored. Hasker continues, saying that Christianity does not claim to have much knowledge about the future life but it is clear that virtues achieved here enable one to respond appropriately to dangers and suffering of others, but it is not to be taken that virtue has no effect on personality apart from these particular sorts of situations.[144] Hick defends his theodicy by claiming that Kane's argument focuses on a narrow view of soul-making; however, soul-making is not about acquiring specific virtues but is about building a relationship with God.[145]

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[143] Stanley G. Kane, "The Failure of Soul-Making Theodicy," 8-13.

[144] Hasker, "Suffering, Soul-Making and Salvation," 11-12.

[145] See chapter 17 of the second edition of *Evil and the God of Love* for Hick's response to Stanley G. Kane's criticism.

Douglas Geivett declares that the idea of multiple future opportunities to reconcile with God is ridiculous. The prophets' plea is in the sense of urgency and finality, never in multiple after-death opportunities. Granted that, Geivett claims, life history is divided into a number of states, if the first state is completed in this life, no infinite rewards in the final state can compensate for the difficulties in this life.[146] Paul Edwards asserts that God cannot be exonerated for permitting evil irrespective of after-death benefits the sufferer might accrue. The infinite future good will not eradicate what, for example, "Hitler and Stalin and their predecessors and associates did to countless human beings."[147]

Dan R. Stiver in his article, "Hick against Himself," contends that the reconstitution view of the resurrection associated with this after-death state undermines the entire theodicy. For the replica is not the same as the actual person who lived an earthly life. The theodicy, with its reconstitution view, puts forward the likelihood of God creating beings who meet the criteria of the Irenaean intuition, but who had never experienced actual evils of the world. If God can do this, then He could hardly be justified for permitting the evils in question.[148] Hick replies that, according to the Irenaean principle, it is logically impossible for God to create morally mature beings

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[146]Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God*, 222.

[147]Paul Edwards, "Difficulties in the Idea of God," in *The Idea of God*: *Philosophical Perspective*s, ed. Edward H. Madden, Rollo Handy, and Marvin Farber (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1968), 59-62.

[148]Dan R. Stiver, "Hick Against Himself: His Theodicy Versus His Replica Theory," in *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion*: *Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 166-169.

whose spiritual maturity is the result of exercising genuine free will.[149]

Stephen Davis simply indicates that Hick's universalism[150] conflicts with the data

of Christian tradition to which he subscribes. Only a personal God would have an

unlimited time and arguments to win people over, but Hick's God is not a personal God

since creation is in epistemic distance.[151] It places a heavy price tag on Hick's theodicy.

The theodicy denies any kind of action by divine fiat. Therefore, if universalism is

affirmed, human freedom is ultimately denied and genuine freedom, which the theodicy

is committed to, is rendered illusive. God cannot truly love if He compels His creatures

to love Him in return by manipulating them or making heaven compulsory.[152] Logically,

asserts Geivett, it is impossible for God to bring all free creatures to eventual moral and

spiritual perfection. It is the contingent state of affairs that will finally determine those

free creatures that remain morally and spiritually recalcitrant or morally and spiritually

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[149]John Hick, "Reply to Stiver," in *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion: Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 176-177. See Harold Hewitt for the same argument in defense of Hick's soul-making theodicy. Harold Hewitt, "In Defense of Hick's Theodicy," in *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion: Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 173-175.

[150]Universalism is a belief that everyone eventually will be saved. See Hick, *Evil and the Love of God*, 373-400.

[151]Stephen T. Davis, "Critique," in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 60-62; Stephen T. Davis, "Critical Response," in *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion*: *Critical Studies of the Work of John Hick*, ed. Harold Hewitt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 158-159.

[152]Mesle, *John Hick's Theodicy*, 75-77; Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God*, 222-223; Ahern, *The Problem of Evil*, 64; John M. Rist, "Coherence and the God of Love," *Journal of Theological Studies* 23 (1972): 102.

matured. As a result, universalism makes free will shallow and arbitrary.[153] In addition, the act of choosing demands that every conscious being exercising free will must have adequate knowledge of the things from which they make their choice. However, in Hick's theodicy, epistemic distance implies that choosing to have a relationship with God is done in ignorance, Geivette argues. This is inconsistent with genuine free will.[154]

In reply to this critique, Hick maintains that critics base their contention on a notion that claims God can ensure the salvation of all men only by coercion. However, this is a wrong notion. The truth, he writes, is that "to be created at all is to be subject to an ultimate arbitrariness and determination." Human nature has an innate quest that is basically oriented towards God. Therefore, there can be no final opposition between God's creative will and human freedom, claims Hick.[155]

According to critics, Hick does not recognize that his usage of free will together with epistemic distance makes God ontologically responsible for evil. God holds people responsible when ignorance is one's own fault. However, in his system, individuals are responsible for their actions even when their original ignorance is God's doing. This makes his free will and epistemic distance concepts unconvincing and inconsistent.[156]

Edwards avers that, in light of Hick's understanding, eschatological elements are inseparable from any conception of God and the universe; therefore, any objections to his

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[153]Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God*, 216.

[154]Ibid., 192.

[155]John Hick, "Coherence and the God of Love Again," *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1973): 525-527.

concept of immortality inevitably are the objections to his system in its entirety, particularly his doctrine of God.[157]

The discussion shows that, although Hick's theodicy is an attempt at a breakthrough in the history of theodicy, it not only gives insufficient solutions to some theodical problems, but also adds some new problems. We now turn our attention to Process theodicy.

Process Theodicy

Process theology is a rethinking of traditional dogmatic structure.[158] Process theists believe the process movement fills a vacuum created as a result of a shift from a worldview that affirms determinism, objective knowledge, and materialism, to a world view that considers things as dynamic, relative, and relational.[159] Accordingly, it has liberated Christianity from "Greek and Hellenistic notions that have distorted the essence of Christianity." It has offered an "intellectually and emotionally satisfying reinterpretation of Christianity that is compatible with late-twentieth century ways of thinking."[160] David Griffin argues that traditional theism has an insoluble problem of evil

[156]Fulmer, "John Hick's Soul-Making Theodicy," 175-176; see Edwards, "Difficulties in the Idea of God," 59; Stanley G. Kane, "The Failure of Soul-Making Theodicy," 8; Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God*, 166-167.

[157]Edwards, "Difficulties in the Idea of God," 62.

[158]Whitney, *Theodicy*, 135.

[159]John B. Cobb Jr. and Clark H. Pinnock, "Introduction," in *Searching for an Adequate God*: *A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists*, ed. John B. Cobb Jr. and Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), ix-xiv.

[160]Ronald Nash, ed., *Process Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), ix. See Hartshorne, "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," 520.

because of its acceptance of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.[161] In his view, process

theodicy is developed upon the teachings of process philosophy and theology with Alfred

North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne as its two major originators. It shares much in

common with traditional theism, affirming the existence of a God who is both perfect in

power and goodness, but it is nontraditional in the affirmation of creation out of chaos, as

well as its interpretation of divine power and many other divine attributes.[162]

Process theodicy is rooted in a metaphysic that claims that "to be an actuality is to

exercise creativity and that there is necessarily a realm of finite actualities with creativity

of their own."[163] This means, according to Griffin, every actuality has twofold power:

the power of self-creation on the basis of creative influences received from other

actualities, and the power to influence the self-determination of subsequent individuals.[164]

Accordingly, the dual power is a continuous twofold process. All reality, including God,

is a process. Each actuality is a momentary event of a multiplicity of data with the

potentiality of becoming another object. However, the multiple data do not determine the

event, but how the data are synthesized with every other event that has ever contributed

toward the making of a particular event. The actual entities become subjects

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[161]David Ray Griffin, "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," in *Encountering Evil*: *Live Options in Theodicy*, rev. ed., ed. Stephen T. Davis (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 114-119.

[162]Although both theologies affirm the power of God, the process thinkers' argument is that the traditional idea of God has been that God controls every detail of the events of the world, whether He directs, causes, or permits them, all events happen according to His will (ibid.).

[163]Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 276-277.

[164]Griffin, "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," 120.

and immediately become objects available to be experienced by subsequent events. Everything is necessarily dipolar. God has two natures: the primordial, which includes the unchanging, unlimited, unconscious side of God's nature, and the consequent, which is the limited, changing, conscious, and temporal aspect of God.[165]

That is, according to process writers, the necessary existence of God implies the necessary existence of a world of finite actualities. Thus, God did not create the world *ex nihilo,* but created the known universe out of some pre-existent actualities, co-eternal with God.[166] He created finite events out of chaos; they were not enduring things, not even primitive enduring things such as electrons and quarks. The chaos from which our world began is a final state of another world. [167] Before God initiated the creation of our world, the two-fold process of actualities' creativity produces trivial results, which do not belong to enduring objects, due to the fact that they constituted chaos. Their creativity is the "most fundamental type of power or energy, having the potential to be transmuted into the contingent forms of energy constituting our universe."[168] Creation is God

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[165]Ibid., 120; Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 22-23; John B. Cobb Jr. and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 14. Hartshorne classified these same natures as "abstract" and "concrete." See David Ray Griffin, "Process Theology and the Christian Good News," in *Searching for an Adequate God*: *A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists*, ed. John B. Cobb Jr. and Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 6. This view is known as panentheism. See Whitney, *Theodicy*, 136; Fernando L. Canale, "Doctrine of God," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 147.

[166]Griffin, *God*, *Power*, *and Evil*, 285-287. See Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948).

[167]Griffin, "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," 121.

[168]Ibid., 121; Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 23.

bringing order out of chaos for the purpose of increased intensity, which will result in greater intrinsic good. His creation is rescuing the finite realm from triviality.[169]

The power embodied in finite creatures is inherent rather than a gift bestowed by God. It is part of their being, metaphysical, and God can neither control nor evoke it. The power of the creatures is independent from God.[170] Self-creation and causality are not exerted only by humans but by all individuals; however, creativity is in degree. There is a degree of quality between a living organism and an inorganic environment. The creativity of actualities, through long years of incessant oscillation between the one and the many, has evolved into freedom and even greater freedom in humans. It is a metaphysical necessity that all creatures have some degree of freedom, depending upon their self-determinative response to received data.[171] However, God possesses the greatest power—the power that yields worthwhile results.[172] Hypothetically, God cannot rule the world by coercion in any form but by persuasion. He only persuades creatures toward the things which, when actualized, will result in the most possible aesthetic value in every situation. He only provides every creature with "initial subjective aim"—ideal

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[169]Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 286.

[170]Ibid., 276.

[171]Griffin "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," 120; idem, *God, Power, and Evil*, 288-291; Whitney, *Evil and the Process God*, 43, 116.

[172]Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 118-120; Lewis S. Ford, "Divine Persuasion and Coercion," *Encounter* 47 (1986): 267-273; Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 268; Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 138, 154; Griffin, "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," 123-124; Schubert Ogden, *Faith and Freedom* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 77.

and creative possibilities.[173] Process thinkers claim the process which God initiated for

the purpose of the greatest aesthetic value is a progressive one. Each step brings a greater

actuality of the present and also provides a more complex form of actuality in the future,

capable of greater intrinsic good.[174]

It is on this basis that process theologians respond to the problem of evil. The

reality of evil, argue process thinkers, does not contradict the existence of God. An

event, in process system, is intrinsically good when there is harmony and intensity. It is

good to the degree that it is both harmonious and intense. Intensity requires complex

experience, and complexity presupposes order. In other words, before an experience can

lead to moral goodness, there must first be complex data and the ability to simplify the

data in an orderly manner. Evil is the opposite of intensity and harmony. An experience

is intrinsically evil when there is a clash or disharmony between two elements of an

experience so that there is a feeling of mutual destructiveness. Triviality is the opposite

of intensity, but triviality is evil only in comparison to what should have been obtained.

Intensity, as well as harmony, is essential in order to attain moral goodness and overcome

unnecessary triviality and discord. Thus, the response of an actuality to the data received

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[173]Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 118-120; Lewis S. Ford, "Divine Persuasion and the Triumph of the Good," in *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought*: *The Major Implications of a Major Modern Movement*, ed. Delwin Brown et al. (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), 288-293; Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 268; Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 138, 154; Griffin, "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," 123-124; Ogden, *Faith and Freedom*,77.

[174]Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*: *An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 161, 169, 244, 381; Griffin, *God*, *Power*, *and Evil*, 286-287; idem, *Evil Revisited*, 23; Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 73.

determines the aesthetic value.[175]

In light of this, good and evil are two sides of the creativity of finite creatures. According to Hartshorne, the "risk of evil and opportunity for good are two aspects of just one thing: multiple freedom. . . . This is the sole, but sufficient, reason for evil as such and in general."[176] Griffin explains this by stating that there is correlation among metaphysical variables: the power of self-determination, the power to influence others either for good or evil, the ability to enjoy positive value, and the ability to suffer negative value. For a positive correlation to exist, there must be a proportional increase in all the variables.[177] Hence, "the possibility of evil is necessary if there was to be the possibility of all the good that has occurred and may occur in the future."[178]

In a discussion on the correlation of the principle of intrinsic goodness with that of freedom, Griffin writes:

> Why did God bring forth creatures with high degrees of freedom? The answer is not primarily that freedom is worth all the evils which it can produce simply because it is so overwhelmingly valuable in itself, or because only those moral and religious acts and/or virtues which are genuinely free are valuable in the sight of God. Rather, the answer is that no significant degree of intrinsic values would be possible without a significant degree of freedom. If there is trivial freedom, there is trivial value.[179]

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[175]Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 169, 244; Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 282-285; Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 73.

[176]Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1967), 81.

[177]Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 291.

[178]Ibid., 294.

[179]Ibid., 279, 292. See Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 30; Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 344.

Freedom and the correlation are metaphysical, hence God cannot exercise unilateral coercive power to compel creatures, even those with minimal freedom, to obey the divine will.[180] God could not have actualized any other world. Creatures' refusal to heed to God's purpose to lure them toward the actualization of potentials for the most aesthetic value has resulted in moral evil, sin: "the intention to actualize oneself in such a way as *not* to maximize the conditions for intrinsic good in the future."[181]

Therefore, good and evil are the direct result of God initiating chaos into the process of order. In His primordial nature, God constantly provides the world with possible ways in which the world can advance or increase in aesthetic value. On the other hand, He incessantly stores up the experiences, both good and evil, of the finite actualities in His consequent nature. In a sense, God experiences the evils and the good of creation; He is a fellow sufferer.[182]

Process writers hold a popular idea that good will overcome evil in the future. In their opinion, God is the source of novelty in the world; and the fact that His initiation of creation has brought our world halfway between chaos and perfection is an assurance that He will ultimately achieve aesthetic value and immortality in His eternity.[183]

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[180]Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 279.

[181]Ibid., 293.

[182]Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 521-525, 531-532; Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1962), 44; Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 309-310.

[183]There is a division among process theists. Some argue for objective immortality—live on in God as objective memory; and others for subjective immortality—live on as experiencing subjects. See John B. Cobb Jr., *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), chap. 16; Lewis S. Ford, *The Lure of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), chap. 8; David R. Griffin, "The

Critical Discussion on Process Theodicy

Process theodicy has obviated the insurmountable theodical problems involved in maintaining that it is due to divine free choice that there is an actual world with self-moving creatures. Scholars agree with process writers on the idea that there would be no significant degree of intrinsic value without a significant degree of freedom. Human activities spin between chaos and order, triviality and intensity of experience.[184] However, Ronald Nash claims process theology is a "capitulation to paganism." Process theologians supplant essential Christian beliefs with pagan beliefs.[185] Specifically, process theodicy, argues Hefner, is no "advance in its final outcome over traditional theodicies."[186] Upon closer study of process theodicy, critics uncover a number of difficulties. We shall now turn to a brief summary of scholars' discussions on some issues such as divine power and evil and divine goodness in relation to evil.

Possibility of Subjective Immortality in the Philosophy of Whitehead," *Modern Schoolman* 53 (1975): 342-360; idem, *God, Power, and Evil*, 311-312; Schubert Ogden, "The Meaning of Christian Hope," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 30 (1975): 153-164; Marjorie Suchocki, *The End of Evil*: *Process Eschatology in Historical Context* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1988); Marjorie Suchocki, "Evil, Eschatology, and God: Response to David Griffin," *Process Studies* 19 (1989): 63-69; Lewis S. Ford, "A Whiteheadian Reflection on Subjective Immortality," *Process Studies* 7 (1977): 1-13; Alfred North Whitehead, "Immortality," in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1941), 682-700.

[184]Nancy Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," *Religious Studies* 17 (1981): 195; Philip Hefner, "Is Theodicy a Question of Power?" *Journal of Religion* 59 (1979): 93.

[185]Nash, *Process Theology*, ix.

[186]Hefner, "Is Theodicy a Question of Power?" 93.

Divine Power and Evil in
Process Theodicy

Process theists firmly allege that persuasion is the greatest of all possible powers

and the only one that is morally capable of a worthwhile result. Coercion is not

compatible with metaphysics, hence God cannot use coercion in any form.[187] Opponents

of process theodicy indicate that process theists' arguments in favor of persuasive power

are inconsistent.[188] Process thinkers claim, David Basinger argues, that coercion is

metaphysically inappropriate, yet in criticizing the concept of God in Augustinian

theodicy, they argue that a being that could coerce should at times do so. This is,

contends Basinger, an explicit dilemma in the process theists' concept of persuasive

power. On the one hand, the use of coercive power is morally superior, justifiable, and

demanded in some human cases. On the other hand, coercion is metaphysically

impossible.[189] The question is, Why would God allow human coercion in some matters

but He would not coerce in any way? There is no reason for assuming that God consents

to human coercion in some cases and that He would not coerce in this manner even if this

were possible. One of the beliefs must be dropped or modified. After a long rebuttal of

process explanation of persuasive power, he concludes that the process idea that God

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[187]John B. Cobb Jr, *Process Theology as Political Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 107, 170; Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 154-156; idem, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism*, 171; Ogden, *Faith and Freedom*, 90, 93.

[188]Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 172-197; Peter H. Hare and Edward H. Madden, "Evil and Persuasive Power," *Process Studies* 2 (1972): 44-48; David Basinger, "Human Coercion: A Fly in the Process Ointment?" *Process Studies* 15 (1986): 161-171; idem, "Divine Persuasion: Could the Process God Do More?" 332-347.

[189]Basinger, "Human Coercion: A Fly in the Process Ointment?" 161-166.

cannot coerce in any way is doubtful and their perception on divine omnipotence is not more adequate than the view affirmed by classical theism.[190]

Lewis S. Ford and Griffin respond to Basinger's critique. Ford claims the criticism disappears when coercion and persuasion are examined in the context of process theists' worldview. In his view, the Whiteheadian theists' understanding of freedom is in the context of self-creation, not in the traditional worldview in which God unilaterally determines everything; hence it is impossible for process exponents to embrace the idea of a coercive God.[191] Griffin, on the other hand, argues that the denunciation of Basinger does not stand up to scrutiny because he neglected to see the distinction between the human body and soul. In process metaphysics, he continues, coercion can occur only by means of instrumentalities and by things with bodies. It can be exerted on the body but not on anything that initiates activity, such as the soul. God has no divine body which could be used to exert coercion.[192]

From the critics' point of view, the process thinkers' understanding of the traditional concept of the doctrine of divine omnipotence and Charles Hartshorne's argument that with respect to power ownership is exclusive, they have an either/or dichotomy between coercive and persuasive powers.[193] Nancy Frankenberry stipulates that process theologians ignore a range of power between the two extremes of power,

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[190]Ibid., 161-171.

[191]Ford, "Divine Persuasion and Coercion," 267-268.

[192]Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 25, 103-119.

[193]Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 180; Michael L. Peterson, "God and Evil in Process Theology," in *Process Theology*, ed. Ronald Nash (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 124-129.

coercion and persuasion. In addition, their understanding of persuasive power is limited. The process rendition of persuasive power puts emphasis only on one side of God's nature. He is always showing "mercy never wrath," "loving never judgment," "freeing never confining," and "blessing never cursing."[194] According to Peterson, their concept of persuasion lacks the mutual respect for the individual's rational dignity that accompanies morality of persuasion.[195] Griffin again points out that the either/or dichotomy between two powers is based on the psychological meaning of the terms instead of the metaphysical meaning. Metaphysically, he emphasizes, the distinction between the two powers is "none" and "some"; there is an absolute difference between the two terms. Coercion in a metaphysical sense occurs only if the efficient cause totally determines the effect, but if a causal relation is completed with the effect of making a self-determining response, no matter how trivial it may be, it is an example of persuasion.[196]

Peter Hare and Edward Madden agree with the process writers on the suggestion that coercion is morally repugnant and incoherent in the metaphysics of social process; however, permission of degrees of freedom in their theological framework makes degrees of coercion necessary. On empirical grounds, they argue, the process theists' notion of persuasive power fails. In some situations, persuasion alone is morally inappropriate. Any reasonable person requests of God whatever mixture of coercion and persuasion is

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[194]Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 180.

[195]Michael L. Peterson, "God and Evil in Process Theology," 129.

[196]Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 25, 103-119.

suitable in a situation.[197] Affirming this critique is Frankenberry, who sees creatures as

exercising the ontological power of self-determination. In everyday life, avers

Frankenberry, individuals pass on their pulsating creative energy without threatening

another's autonomy, but rather make achievements possible. That is, we energize each

other without impinging on self-determined freedom. Creative freedom is not transmitted

without form, yet there is a succinct distinction of the form it takes. Thus, declares

Frankenberry, there is a distinction between energizing another and inclining another in a

certain direction without infringing on genuine exercise of freedom. However, process

writers affirm a relational system, but emphasize persuasion at the expense of imparted

energy.[198]

Proponents of process theodicy have argued against this criticism, claiming that

persuasive power is the only means to resolve theodicy.[199] Dalton D. Baldwin and J. E.

Barnhart maintain that the criticism of Hare and Madden is based on a wrong concept of

persuasion. Baldwin argues that, in process metaphysics, actual entities possess freedom

of conceptual innovation. Therefore, God cannot coerce in a sense of encountering evil,

and the outcome of persuasion is based on finite entities' choice rather than the strength

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[197]Hare and Madden, "Evil and Persuasive Power," 45-48.

[198]Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 182-183.

[199]Dalton D. Baldwin, "Evil and Persuasive Power: A Response to Hare and Madden," *Process Studies* 3 (1973): 267-270; Joe E. Barnhart, "Persuasive and Coercive Power in Process Metaphysics," *Process Studies* 3 (1973): 153-157; Lewis S. Ford, "The Power of God and the Christ," in *Religious Experience and Process Theology*: *The Pastoral Implications of a Major Modern Movement*, ed. Harry James Cargas and Bernard Lee (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 79-92.

of persuasion.[200] Although their argument is invalid, attests Barnhart, yet they emphasize "quasi-coercive power which would not so much frustrate the desire of finite entities that already are in the scheme of things" but process writers pay no attention to it.[201]

Ford expresses that Whitney, a process theologian who bases his writings solely on the expositions of Hartshorne, embraces the concept of God exercising both coercive and persuasive powers. But his concept of coercion differs from the critics' notion of coercion, which thwarts our desires. According to Ford, Whitney speaks of coercive power only in the sense of God establishing the laws of nature or providing initial aims. This power is coercive because it is beyond our control and consent.[202] As Griffin buttresses his arguments against the mixture of coercion and persuasive powers in process theodicy, he makes a distinction between genuine individuals and mere aggregates. Genuine individuals are a unity of experience; they exercise only persuasion amongst them because they have the ability to respond to received data, but mere aggregates exercise coercion because they are unable to respond to their environment. However, genuine individuals may coerce by virtue of the body; in this indirect sense, some coercion may be regarded as divine activity.[203]

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[200]Baldwin, "Evil and Persuasive Power: A Response to Hare and Madden," 267-270.

[201]Barnhart, "Persuasive and Coercive Power in Process Metaphysics," 154-155.

[202]Ford, "Divine Persuasion and Coercion," 270.

[203]Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 25-26, 105-119, 215-221.

Divine Goodness and Evil in
Process Theodicy

Stephen Lee Ely, in his article "The Religious Availability of Whitehead's God,"

argued that the God of Whitehead's "metaphysical analysis is not the God of religions.

Whatever religious value Whitehead's God may have depends upon aspects of God that

lie beyond reason—aspects that Whitehead either intuits, guesses at or has faith in."[204]

Process theologians have refuted Ely's arguments, claiming he has not been sufficiently

just to the richness of Whitehead's thought.[205] However, Frankenberry argues that doubts

about the process theists' God have lingered. Process theodicy assumes divine

omnipotence as persuasive power for the sake of preserving God's goodness, but it fails

to make good on its claim to protect the moral character of deity.[206] If evil does not cut

deeply into the life of God as it lacerates human life, then God is not a fellow sufferer.

On the other hand, if it does, then God is not morally good.[207] In responding, Griffin

claims that God suffers sympathetically with His creatures, but the evil He suffers is not

intended, but undergone. Therefore, the evil God suffers is aesthetic not moral.[208]

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[204]Ely, "The Religious Availability of Whitehead's God: A Critical Analysis,"
207.

[205]Bernard M. Loomer, "Ely on Whitehead's God," *Journal of Religion* 24
(1944): 179; Maurice R. Barineau, "Whitehead and Genuine Evil," *Process Studies* 20
(1990): 181-188; David Platt, "Does Whitehead's God Possess a Moral Will?" *Process
Studies* 5 (1975): 114-122.

[206]Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 186.

[207]Ibid.

[208]Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 204.

The existence of primordial chaos, critics argue, allows process theologians to implicate God in the process of evil without indicting God's collaboration because the metaphysical principles which guard the interaction of beings are beyond divine decision.[209] Furthermore, the idea that God constantly works to overcome evil through evolutionary process is absurd. It is a process based on aesthetic principles rather than moral principles. In addition, the course of history demonstrates that His efforts have hardly made any difference. If God and evil, opponents claim, are part of reality and God has no upper hand over evil because of metaphysical principle, then God is neither perfect nor good, and nothing short of perfection is worthy of worship.[210] Carl Henry maintains that if a process God cannot create an ideal world in the first place, He could do little to overcome evil. He cannot remove the evils that we suffer in this world. The world will forever remain as it is. If God is an aspect of all that happens in the world, then it is not possible to make an absolute distinction between good and evil.[211] Hare and Madden claim that process theists limit God's goodness to unselfish sacrifice and make Him weak. He is very weak if He is unable to move the world and Himself toward novelty without enormous cost in pain. Considering God's affinity with creation from eternity, if He could not change or create it as He would like, He should have known the

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[209]Royce Gordon Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1983), 30-31; Michael L. Peterson, "God and Evil in Process Theology," 131.

[210]Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 187; Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God*, 30-31; Hefner, "Is Theodicy a Question of Power?" 87-93; Michael L. Peterson, "God and Evil in Process Theology," 131.

[211]Carl F. H. Henry, "The Stunted God of Process Theology," in *Process Theology*, ed. Ronald Nash (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1987), 373.

weakness of the mechanism of creation and crush it to prevent it from the situation in which we find ourselves. For, continues Hare and Madden, "it takes a skilled mechanic to assemble an automobile engine but only a small child to put it out of order."[212]

The assumption that God ideally perfects every event in His consequent nature, opponents argue, demonstrates that God has devised ways of enjoying what seems evil to us. Evil, in this sense, is apparent rather than genuine.[213] The salvaging of evil by transmuting its discordance into divine enjoyment does not benefit the sufferer; God's feelings alone are considered important. God conserves and produces values that He alone enjoys from the events of actualities, no matter how ugly they are. Suffering, pain, difficulties, and pleasures of finite beings are material for God's consequent nature. The maximization of intensity and the complexity of experience necessarily include an amount of discord and conflict only to obtain novelty.[214] This aesthetic explanation does not solve the problem of evil any more than the theodicies which process theologians have criticized. It is indifference toward human good; therefore, it is another model of the conception that evil is an illusion of our shortsightedness: What seems evil to us is really not evil in the sight of God.[215] Paradoxically, mentions Ronald O. Durham, even

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[212]Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God*, 123-125.

[213]Ibid., 123; Hefner, "Is Theodicy a Question of Power?" 92.

[214]Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God*, 123-124; Ely, "Religious Availability of Whitehead's God," 191, 196, 199-203; Hefner, "Is Theodicy a Question of Power?" 92; Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 131; Harold M. Schulweis, *Evil and Morality of God* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1983), 58-59.

[215]Madden and Hare, "Evil and the Concept of God," 123-124; Ely, "Religious Availability of Whitehead's God," 191, 196, 199-203; Hefner, "Is Theodicy a Question

the classical God was more 'available.'[216] As a matter of fact, it is another form of the

classical free-will solution to the problem of evil.[217]

Maurice R. Barineau defends process theodicy against criticism on the issue of

prehension of evil for aesthetic purposes. He concedes, with the critics, that a process

God prehends every evil as a means toward the perfection of the world and Godself. But

he argues that the fact that God uses every evil for the foundation through which He

perfects the world and himself does not make evil apparent.[218] Hence, the issue is

whether the Whiteheadian God prehends every evil as morally necessary and justified for

novelty.[219] Others reply to these issues by asserting that actual entities' inevitable failure

to conform to God's aim creates genuine evils; God prehends these evils negatively.

Although He extracts all the possible good from such evil, He preserves them as objects

of immediacy, not as future envisagement.[220] But Griffin affirms that process theodicy,

his in particular, rationalizes evil but not in the sense of traditional theodicy, according to

of Power?" 92; Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 131; Schulweis, *Evil and Morality of God*, 58-59.

[216]Durham, "Evil and God: Has Process Made Good Its Promise," 13.

[217] Madden and Hare, "Evil and the Concept of God," 122; Hefner, "Is Theodicy a Question of Power?" 90; Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God*, 37; Steve Siebert, "Why Is There Evil?" *Christianity Today*, August 1978, 28-31. Thelakat thinks that, as far as the conception of evil is concerned, there is a fundamental agreement and major difference between Whitehead and Aquinas. However, Whitehead cannot be quoted against Aquinas (Thelakat, "Process and Privation: Aquinas and Whitehead on Evil," 296).

[218]Barineau, "Whitehead and Genuine Evil," 183.

[219]Ibid., 182-185.

[220]Ibid., 186; William Norman Pittenger, "Process Theology Revisited," *Theology Today* 27 (1970): 212-220; idem, "Process Theology and the Fact of Evil," *Expository Times* 82 (1971): 73-77; Charles R. Blaisdell, "Griffin's Theodicy," *Encounter* 50 (1989): 367-378.

which all actual evil is said to be necessary for the greater good. It only rationalizes evil by claiming that some events classified by humans as evil must not be considered as genuine evil because they are necessary, and for those that are not necessary, their possibility is necessary.[221]

Frankenberry claims Griffin's conclusion in *God, Power and Evil* points out that process theodicy has not "succeeded in salvaging a valid meaning of the goodness of God in the face of genuine evil."[222] Process theology is evolutionary, expounds Griffin; it is nondualistic and nonanthropocentric. The divine persuasive purpose promotes harmonious intensity of experience in general. Hence, the designed creation is not for human beings in particular and the aesthetic purpose does not mean everything must work together for human good. The indifferent and malevolent characteristics of creaturely creativity do not cast doubt on God's creativity, remarks Griffin. His creativity is always accomplished in responsive love. More prominently, His consequent nature proves He is unambiguously good.[223] Durham and others mention that people suffer and die; there is no evidential power to redeem such loss of values. In the Whiteheadian system, they emphasize, all actualities perish; even God, an actual entity, is not exempted in the process system. What hope can suffering humanity gain from God-

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[221]Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 181.

[222]Frankenberry, "Some Problems in Process Theodicy," 186.

[223]Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 203-204.

in-process, critics question.[224]

According to Griffin, the doctrine of the consequent nature of God by itself is not adequate, in the light of manifold and demonic evils, to allow many to accept that the process God will ultimately bring good to victory. Even objective immortality in God alone is not sufficient to answer the question of the ultimate meaning of life. Only with life beyond the present is there a morally trustworthy ground for hope in the ultimate victory of good over evil.[225]

Basinger maintains that the addition of belief in an afterlife allows process theodicy to consider potential forms of victory over demonic evils. However, belief in an afterlife does not mean individuals turn their desires to fight evil. Furthermore, Basinger points out, the idea that "every increase in the capacity for good is also an increase in the possibility of evil" makes it likely that the amount of good and evil in the afterlife realm will be proportionate or evil will be greater than good. Therefore, there is no hope, concludes Basinger, that an afterlife realm would be a realm in which good abounds more than evil.[226]

Conclusion

It was already apparent that the problem of evil is not restricted to Christianity. However, Christianity is faced with the challenge of reconciling belief in one God with

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[224]Durham, "Evil and God: Has Process Made Good Its Promise," 12; Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God*, 120-122.

[225]Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 34-40.

[226]David Basinger, "Process Theism, Evil and Life after Death: Response to Griffin," *Encounter* 53 (1992): 353-363.

the reality of evil and suffering in the world.

This chapter began by offering a summary and scholarly critical analysis of the three major Christian attempts to reconcile the belief in one God and the reality of evil (theodicy). The purpose was to provide a necessary context to see whether warfare theodicy is necessary and if it is, its feasibility and contribution to theology. From the brief discourse of Augustine's, Hick's, and Process theodicies, it seems possible to draw the following conclusions:

The theodicies may be part of belief systems that serve to maintain religious meaning in spite of evil and suffering, yet according to the analysis, each fails to deal adequately with all the issues associated with theodicy. Feinberg seems to write in favor of these theodicies when he argues that there is not just one theological/philosophical problem of evil. Each theological system has its views of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence and may seek to address different issues of the problem of evil. Hence "it is wrongheaded at a very fundamental level to think that because a given defense or theodicy doesn't solve *every* problem of evil, it doesn't solve *any* problem of evil. . . . An acceptable solution to one problem of evil isn't nullified because it doesn't solve any or all other problems."[227] However, in Feinberg's opinion, every given defense or theodicy must be internally coherent and espouse plausible views.[228]

When the theodicies are considered, each of them is internally incoherent. First, it becomes apparent that they draw their contents from an integration of science,

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[227]Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 27.

[228]Ibid., 29.

philosophy, and tradition with biblical truth. The Augustinian theodicy incorporated Neo-Platonic principles of privation, plenitude, and aesthetic. Hick's theodicy is based on Irenaeus's tradition, and process theodicy is founded on a metaphysics that draws its contents from the discipline of physics. Theology employs human thought and speech in articulating the word of God. However, the presuppositions of these theodices employed have led to irreconcilable difficulties for the theodicies.

Second, all three theodicies suggest evil is an inevitable consequence of free will. In a way, it is necessary for some teleological purpose of God. Hick's theodicy claims evil exists because of the moral quality that God wants for His creatures, while Augustine's and Process theodicy affirm future harmony. However, why a good God demands gratuitous evil and so much innocent suffering for the achievement of His teleological purpose, whatever that may be, was insufficiently elaborated upon. Hick's theodicy claims it is a mystery, while process theodicy explains that the aesthetic purpose of God does not promise that everything will work out good for human beings, for humanity is not the focus of the aesthetic purpose.

Third, it is explicit that the three theodicies did not provide the groaning world with a clear ground of certainty for the assurance of victory of good over evil. From the scholars' discussion, it appears that the glimpses of hope that these theodicies provide is illusive. According to process theodicy, the evolution of the world will reach a point where the world will be a paradise. However, this looks unachievable because evil and good are two sides of the same coin, and in the language of process theodicy, two sides of creativity; therefore, there seems to be an equal amount of good and evil at any point in the evolutionary process. There is an ambiguity on this issue in Hick's theodicy as well.

On one hand, God does not know what human choices will be until after the decision has been made, and God does nothing in this world by divine fiat. On the other hand, Hick's theodicy affirms universalism. If free moral response to God is of supreme value, it is difficult to ascertain the salvation of all humans. Augustine's theodicy, in addition to predestination, affirms that by divine fiat God will bring future harmony; a kingdom of God will be realized and all evils will be seen as actually resulting in good.

Finally, the theodicies could not reconcile the nature of a good God with the reality of evil. All three theodicies portray a good God who uses evil to serve His purposes. Augustine's theodicy describes an incompetent God whose providential purpose is being served by certain horrifying experiences of His creatures. It finds it difficult to reconcile human free will and God's nature. It runs into a paradox in affirming the concepts of human free will—determinism and the nature of God. Hick's theodicy portrays an unwise God who makes evil necessary in order to get His peoples' attention and unable to make a decision on what evil to eliminate in the world. Process theodicy pictures a God who initiates a program and has no control over the creatures that He set in the process. He suffers finitude with His creatures and so has a council with them on how to straighten out the universe.

The three main theodicies, according to scholarly evaluation, were unable to deal with the issues: how the actual amount and distribution of evil can be reconciled with a God who is good, without making God the cause of evil; how to reconcile human free will and the nature of God; and the certainty of the victory of good over evil. This implies that, though Christianity has three main responses to theodicy, none of them displays total sufficiency for providing a viable explanation to the problem of evil.

Hence, one may conclude from the scholarly evaluation of the three main Christian responses to the problem of evil that an adequate Christian response to the problem of evil must of necessity bear three characteristics: (1) it must not explain evil away; (2) it must provide an eschatology that gives the assurance of a complete victory over evil; and (3) it must respond to the problem of evil without making God the cause of evil. These three characteristics will become significant in assessing the credibility of the warfare theodicy in chapters 5 and 6.

The foregoing observations, among other things, bring to bear the need to examine other theodicies for their feasibility. The warfare theodicy, which has existed for quite a long time, but has not been considered as one of the main Christian responses to the problem of evil, will be examined for its feasibility. The next two chapters analyze the warfare theodicy of Gregory A. Boyd and Ellen G. White, which serve as a challenge to the three main theodicies. How has the warfare theodicy reconciled the existence of a good God and the reality of evil without the difficulties that the three main theodicies have encountered?

CHAPTER 3

TRINITARIAN WARFARE THEODICY: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Introduction

Chapter 2 of this study clarified the views of the three main Christian approaches (Augustine, John Hick, and Process theology) to the problem of evil developed in Christian theology since the time of Augustine. It also explored various scholarly evaluations of each of them and discovered that numerous scholars consider each of these Christian approaches to the question of God and the existence of evil as an unsatisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil. Hence, there is the need to examine the warfare approach to the problem of evil for its plausibility. As already indicated in chapter 1, the Trinitarian Warfare and the Great Controversy theodicies are the most comprehensive representations of the warfare approach to the problem of evil. The object of this chapter, therefore, is to present a descriptive analysis of the warfare approach as expounded by Gregory A. Boyd. The paramount factor that has brought Boyd's works into the limelight in the twenty-first century is his effort to bring Christian doctrines into harmony with a modern scientific viewpoint. The chapter analyzes Boyd's theodicy and his efforts to deal with the problem of evil.

General Background

Gregory A. Boyd

Gregory A. Boyd, a pastor, theologian, and author, earned a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy from the University of Minnesota in 1979, a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School in 1982, and a Doctor of Philosophy from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1988.[1]

Boyd's religious and professional experiences have made interesting turns. Born in 1957,[2] he grew up as a Catholic[3] but became an atheist by the time he was a teenager. In 1974, he accepted Christ and joined the United Pentecostal Church.[4] At the University of Minnesota, Boyd went back to atheism after his first semester as a philosophy major student.[5] However, after reading Rom 8 in October 1976, Boyd became convinced that salvation is by grace rather than righteous deeds. This conviction initiated his quest to

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[1]Gregory Boyd, "Welcome," Christus Victor Ministries, www.christusvictorministries.org/main/ (accessed October 30, 2007).

[2]Gregory Boyd, "Random Reflections," Christus Victor Ministries, www.gregboyd.blogspot.com/2007_06_01_archive.html (accessed November 11, 2007).

[3]Carla Barnhill, "The Cross or the Sword," *Today's Christian*, September/October 2006, 50; Gregory A. Boyd, *Trinity and Process: A Critical Evaluation and Reconstruction of Hartshorne's Di-Polar Theism Towards a Trinitarian Metaphysics* (New York: P. Lang, 1992), preface.

[4]The United Pentecostal church is a community of faith that rejects the Trinity on the basis that the concept of Trinity is incompatible with faith in one God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit cannot be real, distinct and co-equal persons; they are but different roles performed by one divine being. In essence, it is a community of faith that affirms modalistic Monarchianism. For more information on the beliefs of this community of faith, see Gregory A. Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992).

[5]Barnhill, "The Cross or the Sword," 50.

examine his religious beliefs. In his first year at Yale Divinity School, he came under the

influence of Trinitarian Christians. This experience led to two major turns in his life.

First, he ended his relationship with his community of faith, Oneness Pentecostalism,[6]

and second, he acquired a strong desire to research and develop a clearer understanding

of the nature of God.

It was not until he arrived at Bethel University, where he taught theology for

sixteen years, and at Princeton Theological Seminary that he came to a realization that he

could salvage what is essentially correct in Charles Hartshorne's[7] process theology to

resolve the difficulties associated with the classical concept of God. That is, he

determined to provide a philosophical and theological concept of God that satisfies the

scriptural picture of trinity and render this intelligible to the modern generation that sees

the world as "dynamic, relative and relational."[8]

His worldview has been controversial in evangelical circles, and proponents of the

traditional view of God unsuccessfully sought to change the rules guiding the Baptist

General Conference to exclude him from the denomination.[9]

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[6]Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity*, 21-24.

[7]Boyd considers Hartshorne's philosophical and theological concept of God as essentially correct. Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 1-3.

[8]Ibid., 3.

[9]"Greg Boyd (theologian)," *Wikipedia*, www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Gregory_A._Boyd (accessed October 30, 2007). See the debate in the following articles: Bruce A. Ware, "Defining Evangelicalism's Boundaries Theologically: Is Open Theism Evangelical?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 193-212; Clark H. Pinnock, "There Is Room for Us: A Reply to Bruce Ware," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 213-219; John Sanders, "Be Wary of Ware: A Reply to Bruce Ware," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 221-231; Gregory A. Boyd, "Christian Love and Academic Dialogue: A Reply to Bruce Ware,"

Boyd founded the Christus Victor Ministries, a non-profit organization that promotes faith, in 2000. In 1992 he founded the Woodland Hills Church, an evangelical church in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is presently the senior pastor of the church.[10]

Background to Boyd's Theodicy

Gregory A. Boyd's key academic and practical concern was the dialogue between the contemporary understanding of reality and theology. His primary interest has been to maintain and vindicate essential Christian beliefs, but at the same time he is convinced that beliefs must be brought into harmony with the scientific mind-set of the twenty-first century.[11]

Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 45 (2002): 233-43; Bruce A. Ware, "Rejoinder to Replies by Clark H. Pinnock, John Sanders, and Gregory A. Boyd," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 245-256.

[10]Gregory A. Boyd, "Vita," Christus Victor Ministries, www .christusvictorministries.org/main/ (accessed October 30, 2007); idem, "Bio," Christus Victor Ministries, www.christusvictorministries.org/main/ (accessed June 26, 2007).

[11]"Locating . . . [any] element of truth in the culture and aligning it with theology based on the Word can be advantageous to communicating credibly the truth of the Word to our culture. It can also help us more effectively think through and apply our theology for our culture and for ourselves. This is why our theology should be developed in dialogue with every other branch of learning. Whatever truth is to be found in physics, cosmology, psychology, sociology, biology, anthropology, and so on is *God's* truth and can only help us credibly proclaim the truth of God's Word to the world."
"In this light, it is important to recognize that this century has witnessed a revolution in all of these fields of learning in terms of how we see the world. We have been shifting from a static to a thoroughly dynamic understanding of reality. . . . The most fundamental challenge this shift poses for Christian theology is this: The classical view of God and of creation was thoroughly influenced by, and is logically tied to, the old understanding of reality. Hence, the more influential the dynamic understanding of reality becomes in our culture, the more out of sync classical theology will be with our culture. . . . . Therefore, there is no reason for theology to resist the paradigmatic shift occurring in our culture. On the contrary, there are actually good grounds for embracing and celebrating much of it" (Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000], 107-109).

He develops a metaphysical concept on the basis of insights gained from classical and neoclassical traditions. Boyd believes that the classical and neoclassical concepts of God do not exhaust feasible options and is confident that between these concepts of God there is an essentially correct alternative. Therefore, Boyd inquires into both traditions to make use of their strengths to construct his metaphysics without, in his own words, "paying the price that these traditions pay to maintain their beliefs."[12]

From the classical tradition, he adopts the idea that God is triune and His abstract essence is His necessary concrete existence. That is to say, God does not possess abstract features such as love and goodness, but He is love and goodness. He is self-sufficient apart from the world.

However, for Boyd this definition of God does not imply that God is *actus purus*.[13] To affirm the classical conception of God without the idea of *actus purus* and its theological implications, he is convinced to rework the neoclassical tradition, specifically Hartshorne's six theistic arguments for the existence of God.[14] He acknowledges that the six arguments in and of themselves have some theological and philosophical difficulties, but that did not deter him from his endeavor.

Having made this assertion, Boyd sets himself to undertake the task of reworking Hartshorne's theistic arguments. Pivotal to this task is for him to arrive at a concept of

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[12]Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 208-209.

[13]Relying on Aquinas, Boyd takes *actus purus* to mean "there is no potentiality in God" (ibid., 196n55).

[14]The six arguments are ontological, cosmological, design, epistemic, moral, and aesthetic.

God which avoids insuperable theological and philosophical difficulties associated with classical and neoclassical concepts of God. His creativity led him to analyze, critique, and evaluate Hartshorne's concept of God as he constructed his own every step of the way.

Before exploring the outcome of Boyd's task, it is appropriate to give a short outline of Hartshorne's view of God. For Hartshorne, God's existence is necessary; He co-exists eternally with the world. He is dipolar, having abstract and concrete poles. The abstract pole is the element within God that never varies; it is His ability to experience the world, God as actual. The concrete pole is the ever-changing nature in God. It receives the experiences of the world process into His actuality, the world included in divine life. He acts only by persuasion. His persuasive power is infinitely superior to the power of non-divine beings; however, the difference is one of degree, not kind. God possesses perfect knowledge; He knows everything that is knowable—all that is actual and all that is possible. God is good to the world. He provides every actual occasion with a subjective aim and He supremely considers and responds to others. God's goodness to the world is His goodness to His concrete self. And He contains within Himself all possible aesthetic value.[15]

Evaluating the ontological and cosmological arguments,[16] Boyd points out that the arguments run into the difficulty of making the existence of God and the world

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[15]Charles Hartshorne, "The Dipolar Conception of Deity," *The Review of Metaphysics* 21 (1967): 273-289; idem, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism*.

[16]These two arguments "seek to establish on an a priori basis *that* God necessarily exists and *that* God is in different respects both necessary and contingent" (Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 235).

logically necessary and eternal.[17] He identifies the difficulty arising from Hartshorne's

conception of abstract and concrete poles of God.[18] Obviously, this leads him to argue

that no particular contingency is a constituent of God's necessary essential actuality.[19]

He agrees with Hartshorne that God is necessarily eternal and contingent, but Boyd is

convinced that God's contingent actuality does not define His essence.[20] In his opinion,

God is defined only by His necessary actuality. He understands God's actual

contingency as the self-expressiveness of God's essence, antecedent actuality.[21]

　　　Following his argument through, Boyd assesses the rest of Hartshorne's theistic

arguments. On the basis of the postulation that God is infinite and necessary while being

finite and contingent in different respects, independent of the world, he reconstructs the

design and epistemic arguments[22] to fill in the development of his theory of God. Boyd

suggests that "the supposed asymmetrical view of concrete relationality, the view of

experience as a creative synthesis, and the atomistic conception of actuality" must be

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[17]Ibid., 209.

[18]Boyd is of the view that the distinction Hartshorne makes between the abstract
and concrete characteristics of God renders the abstract characteristics unintelligible in
themselves. For, in Hartshorne's system, the abstract characteristics of God are contained
in the concrete nature, which is the past spontaneity of a nexus of actual occasions (ibid.,
208-224).

[19]Ibid., 216.

[20]Ibid., 225.

[21]Ibid., 224-226.

[22]The design argument claims that "there is cosmic order and divine power" and
"epistemic argument suggests reality is actual content of divine knowledge." (ibid., 236,
321).

"rejected as a priori truth."[23] He contends that the necessary relationality of God is not between God and the world but it is within the Godhead: "the Father and Son in the power of the Spirit."[24] God is the only necessary being and eternal self-differentiated relationality without any non-divine contingency. As a result, the object of God's knowledge is God-self and His activity is not dependent upon the world's creative synthesis of antecedent occasion.[25] He is "free to create or not to create; to determine or leave undetermined; to allow creation to freely run its course or to intervene and alter its course." [26] His power toward non-divine subjects, in Boyd's metaphysics, is free and gracious.[27]

Based on the preceding worked out definitions of the characteristics of God, he proceeds to reaffirm the already identified characteristics and further fill out his concept of God. In an attempt to achieve this goal, he examines Hartshorne's last two theistic arguments, moral and aesthetic.[28] Evaluating these two arguments, Boyd claims they necessitate the eternal existence of the world and make God's goodness and beauty dependent on the contingent world. Consequently, he contends that God has no abstract characteristic, but God is goodness itself, He experiences goodness within His God-self.

[23]Ibid., 343.

[24]Ibid., 330.

[25]Ibid., 328-330.

[26]Ibid., 332.

[27]Ibid., 331-332.

[28]The moral argument is that "there is a supreme aim, which is to enrich the divine life (by promoting the good life among creatures)" (ibid., 344) and the aesthetic

However, He enjoys the relative goodness of the world not as essential constituent of His

concrete goodness but as a genuine expression of His perfect goodness. Thus, according

to Boyd, God's benevolence "consists in the fact that God unnecessarily creates a world

to share in the aesthetic experience of existence. It consists in the further fact that God is

unsurpassably good to this One's creation, and ceaselessly works with the world to bring

about God's foreordained Kingdom in the world—the final execution of all evil from the

earth."[29] He contends that the aesthetic satisfaction of God is the same irrespective of the

non-divine world. According to him, the peak of God's aesthetic intensity is constituted

in God-self from eternity. God's openness to the world is an expression of the eternal

divine intensity of God's triune self-experience.[30]

Having made use of the positive ideas in classical and neoclassical traditions,

Boyd arrives at a God whose transcendent essence is His essential existence, eternal, self-

sufficient and self-differential, and does not need a non-divine world with which to co-

exist. He is infinite, the object of His knowledge is God-self, and He has the power to

freely create or not to create, determine or leave undetermined. God created the world

out of His goodness and free will but not out of necessity. He is free to respond to His

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argument is that "there is a beauty of the world as a whole and God alone adequately enjoys it" (ibid., 352).

[29]For Boyd, Hartshorne's system makes a fundamental *telos* of every actual occasional aesthetic satisfaction. Everything, including God, aims at creating itself as a synthesis of past objectified data. According to him, this has an advantage over the classical definition of the beauty of God; however, it has its own difficulties. Hartshorne's idea denies grace, God's final victory, and God's freedom. Thus, Boyd's objection to Hartshorne's concept of necessary eternal non-divine beings allowed him to successfully conclude that God experiences God's own triune sociality as unsurpassably good (ibid., 376).

[30]Ibid., 376-378.

creation in a way that expresses His infinite love, goodness, and aesthetic appreciation. Nonetheless, in a different respect He genuinely relates to the contingent non-divine world without compromising His self-sufficiency. God is supremely consistent in His character while also supremely changing in His responsiveness to creation[31] and His relationship to Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[32] What God is in any given moment, is contingent.[33] God is "an eternally on-going event, an event which is dynamic and open." Within Him, there is "eternally 'room for expansion.'"[34] This, remarks Boyd, is an "outline for trinitarian dispositional metaphysics, grounded on *a priori* truths, compatible with the dynamic, non-substantial, process categories of modernity as well as with scriptural and the Christian tradition."[35]

Boyd's Writings on Theodicy

Boyd has published several books and academic articles, made presentations, debated critics of Christianity, and participated in apologetic forums on doctrinal, theological, and social issues.[36] Among other things, theodicy figures prominently in his works.

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[31]Ibid., 230-231.

[32]Ibid., 392.

[33]Ibid., 232.

[34]Ibid., 386.

[35]Ibid., 404.

[36]Boyd, "Vita," www.Christusvictorministries.org/main/ (accessed June 26, 2007); idem, "Bio," www.Christusvictorministries.org/main/ (accessed June 26, 2007).

Boyd has made a contribution to the Christian explanation of the problem of evil. In his opinion the formulation of the problem of evil, on the basis of the classical-philosophical tradition, renders the problem unsolvable makes every evil serve a divine purpose, and fails to express the critically important role of Satan and evil angels in the world. These features of the problem, remarks Boyd, call into question the classical-philosophical assumptions that give rise to the problem.[37]

He claims that the Bible evidently shows that its central message is a warfare motif, God warring against angelic and human opponents who are capable of thwarting His will. Boyd is convinced that the early church fathers affirmed this teaching and that some aspects of it were lost in Augustinian theology.[38]

Consequently, Boyd's purpose in constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is to make "philosophical sense of the warfare world view of Scripture and to understand our own experience of evil." It is also to "reconcile the reality of spiritual war with the belief in an all-powerful and all-good God." His effort is to develop a theodicy that does not require "suffering to always serve a divine purpose," makes morally responsible agents the ultimate reason for their free activity, and shows that "the possibility of gratuitous suffering is necessarily built into the possibility of love for contingent creatures."[39]

He has introduced an alternative to the three main Christian responses to the

[37]Boyd, *God at War*, 43-56.

[38]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 15.

[39]Ibid., 19-20.

problem of evil. Evidence of his contribution is found in a few of his works devoted to the problem of evil. In 1994, a synopsis of his explanation of the problem of evil appeared in the first section of the *Letters From a Skeptic* as he answers questions his father, then a skeptic, asked him about God.[40]

On two different occasions in 1997 he made presentations on the problem of evil: one, "Trouble with Angels: The Warfare Theodicy of the Early Church," at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting and two, "Engaging in Spiritual Warfare," at a seminar for Christian military personnel at the Pentagon.[41] In the same year, he published the first volume, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*, of what he calls the Satan and Evil Series. The core issue of this volume is the extent to which biblical writers explain aspects of life as the result of good and evil spirits warring gainst each other and against us. Thus, biblical authors interpret all evil in the context of spiritual warfare. [42]

In 1998, he made another presentation, "Chaos Theory, Evil and the Book of Job," on the problem of evil at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting.[43] In 2001, the second volume of the Satan and Evil series, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*: *Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy*, was published. The central theme of this volume is "to demonstrate that the warfare worldview is the foundation for a theodicy

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[40]Boyd, "Vita" (accessed October 30, 2007).

[41]Ibid.

[42]Boyd, *God at War*, 22.

[43]Boyd, "Vita" (accessed October 30, 2007).

that is philosophically superior" to all other responses to the problem of evil.[44] Two

years later, he published another book, *Is God to Blame? Beyond Pat Answers to the*

Problem of Suffering. The ideas and arguments found in this volume are developed from

dialogues with colleagues. He reiterates his explanation to the problem of evil and also

looks at practical ways as to how we are to live in the midst of evil.[45]

Boyd titles his explanation of the problem of evil the "Trinitarian Warfare

Theodicy." According to him, it is warfare because it makes philosophical sense from

the warfare view in Scripture, and it is also "Trinitarian" in the sense that it is based on

the assumption that the world was brought into existence by a Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit God who created it out of an "expression of love" existing within them and as "an

invitation to love."[46]

In order to make a good descriptive analysis of Boyd's theodicy, I have to depend,

to a large extent, on his three published books: *God at War*, *Satan and the Problem of*

Evil, and *Is God to Blame?* I shall also note any observations and statements scattered in

other writings which contribute to a fuller understanding of his theodicy. The analysis of

the text follows the procedure that he logically uses to explain the problem of evil in his

book, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*. In the introductory chapter of this book, Boyd

enunciates six theses upon which he bases his arguments for the Trinitarian Warfare

Theodicy. It is, therefore, necessary to list his theses:

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[44]Boyd, *God at War*, 23.

[45]Gregory A. Boyd, *Is God to Blame? Moving Beyond Pat Answers to the Problem of Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

[46]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 18.

1. Love must be chosen.

2. Freedom implies risk.

3. Risk entails moral responsibility.

4. Moral responsibility is proportional to the potential to influence others.

5. Freedom is irrevocable.

6. Freedom is finite.[47]

Boyd considers these theses to be the ground by which the Trinitariain Warfare Theodicy deals with various important issues relating to any theodicy.[48] The meaning and implication of each of these theses become evident as we proceed with the analysis. For better clarity, the analysis of Boyd's theodicy begins with establishing his model of free will, divine foreknowledge, and sovereignty.

Analysis of Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy

Free Will

Boyd makes contingent free will one of the concepts that underlie his theodicy. What follows is a descriptive analysis of Boyd's concept of free will.[49]

The theological and philosophical debate on the problem of evil focuses on many issues, such as the concept of free will. The question of primary importance is whether or not humans are morally responsible for their actions. The answer to this issue has caused

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[47]Ibid., 23-24.

[48]Ibid., 24.

[49]The analysis of Boyd's concept of free will deals with five of Boyd's theses.

divisions among theologians as well as philosophers.[50] Boyd desires to articulate a free

will concept that is viable in explaining the problem of evil without encountering the

difficulties that the theodicies in the preceding chapter have encountered.

The questions that Boyd addresses in his free will concept in relation to theodicy

are whether God determines everything from eternity. If He does, is free will possible in

the context of God's determination? If He does not, what kind of free will do agents

possess? Boyd finds answers to these questions by explaining the relationship between

love and free will, self-determined freedom, the nature of self-determined freedom, and

the quality of self-determined freedom.

Love and Free Will

In Boyd's view, the nature of love is the basic element that provides a

philosophical *raison d'être* for a war-zone world. As noted above, he embraces the

concept of a God who alone is a necessary being, internally social; is love and enjoys

love within His God-self; God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and is self-

sufficient. Nonetheless, He is open to a contingent expression of His divine fullness to a

contingent non-divine world.[51]

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[50]See Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999); Robert Kane, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Gray Watson, ed., *Free Will*, 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Sidney Hook, ed., *Determinism and Freedom in Modern Science* (New York: State University Press, 1958); Gerald Dworkin, ed., *Determinism, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

[51]Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 330.

According to Boyd, the all-self-sufficient God created the world out of love for the purpose of acquiring a people who will participate in His triune love.[52] He stresses that "expressing and expanding the unfathomable triune love that God eternally is was the chief end for which God created the world."[53] And the primary condition for this goal is that "love must be freely chosen."[54] By establishing this kind of metaphysical relationship between love and freedom, God's freedom in terms of whether to determine or to leave undetermined His creatures diminishes, a view that Boyd holds dearly.[55] That is to say, God lost His freedom to create a determined or undetermined world to His decision to have a world with the potential to love.

This means, for God to achieve His purpose He has to bring into existence creatures with the ability to reject or accept the triune love. Boyd wants it to be distinctly understood that the capability to say no to God's triune love is metaphysically entailed in the possibility to say yes to God. Thus, no agent possesses the possibility to say yes without the possibility to say no.[56] The question at stake is whether the possibility of

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[52]Boyd mentions that the love that God intends to share with His creation is none other than Agape love—the unconditional love demonstrated in Christ on Calvary. God's goal was to fill humans with this love; and when filled they would "replicate on an individual level, and overflow with love back to God, to themselves, and their neighbors." Thus, the world would be a community of love. For this reason God created us with an inner vacuum which can only be filled by God with His unsurpassable love (Gregory A. Boyd, *Repenting of Religion*: *Turning from Judgment to the Love of God* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004], 23-32).

[53]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 51.

[54]Ibid. This is Boyd's first thesis.

[55]Ibid., 69, 71; Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 332.

[56]Boyd refers to these biblical passages for his arguments: Isa 63:10; Acts 7:51; Heb 3:8, 15; Eph 4:30; Exod 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27; Judg 2:19; 2 Kgs

agents saying no is part of God's plan. Relying on scriptural passages, he emphasizes that the possibility of contingent beings saying no to God is not part of God's design.[57] This brings into view Boyd's attempt to disassociate the possibility of saying no from God's plan, but this is effortless since saying no is metaphysically associated to saying yes to His love. Boyd appears to iron out this difficulty with this remark, "If God *could have* designed the world in such a way that all would say yes to him and no one would be lost, he *would have* done so. The fact that he did not do so suggests that he could not do so."[58] On this note, he disabuses his readers' minds from perceiving God as one who fails to love by turning to church fathers and Scripture to emphasize the unchangeable nature of God.[59] This is an expression of his conviction on the distinction between God and contingent beings. In contingent beings love is a mere potential, but God is love. Apparently, free will is a corollary of love. The question then is: What is free will? It is to this query that we now turn our attention.

Self-Determined Freedom

Throughout the history of theology the explanation of free will has followed two main paths: compatibilism and incompatibilism.[60] Classical Christian tradition has

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17:14; 2 Chr 30:8; 36:13; Neh 9:16; Isa 46:12; 48:4; Jer 7:26; Hos 4:16 (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 54).

[57]1 Tim 2:4; 4:10; 2 Pet 3:9 (ibid., 53).

[58]Ibid. (emphasis his).

[59]Ibid.

[60]The problem of free will is a voluminously debated issue in theology and philosophy of religion. This has been the case since Augustine's work, *On the Free Choice of the Will*. Moreover discoveries in the sciences, philosophy, and humanities have intensified the debate. The debate has always been the dilemma of reconciling free

will and divine foreknowledge and sovereignty. The compatibilists argue that free will is coherent with foreknowledge, and for that matter, determinism. Incompatibilists believe human freedom is not consistent with determinism; and if human actions are determined then no one has control over his or her actions and cannot be held responsible. Within these two main groups are varying explanations of free will.

Among the compatibilists there are determinists and self-determinists. Determinism is the idea that every event is wholly and unequivocally caused by prior causal factors. That is, given all the causal factors of an action, it could not have happened otherwise than it did. Theological determinism is that God has control over all the events and circumstances which precede any human choice and actions; thus, God determines every human action. Therefore, the compatibilists who are determinists deal with the dilemma by arguing that determined individuals are responsible for their actions as long as they are not forced to act against their will or desires. In other words, an action is free even if causally determined so long as the causes are non-constraining (John S. Feinberg, "God Ordains All Things," in *Predestination and Free Will*, ed. David Basinger and Randall Basinger [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986],19-43; Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994]; Donald A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1995]; Bruce Ware, *God's Greater Glory*: *The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004]). The compatibilists who affirm the self-determined view contend that God does not determine human actions or decisions but He is omniscient and He has always foreknown what humans will do with their free will. In this way, God has ordered His creation in a way that whatever humans do is always within His specific plan. This was first propounded by Boethius (480-524). "If human and divine present may be compared, just as you see certain things in this your present time, so God sees all things in His eternal present. So that this divine foreknowledge does not change the nature and property of things; it simply sees things present to it exactly as they will happen at some time as future events. . . . The divine gaze looks down on all things without disturbing their nature; to Him they are present things, but under the condition of time they are future things. And so it comes about that when God knows that something is going to occur . . . no necessity is imposed on it" Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 5.6, trans. V. E. Watts [New York: Penguin, 1969], 165-166). Some contemporary advocates of this view are Norman L. Geisler, "God Knows All Things," in *Predestination and Free Will*, ed. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 63-84; Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity, Awareness and Action, " *Faith and Philosophy* 9 (1992): 463-482. Others argue that God knows what any possible free creature would freely do in any possible circumstance. By knowing the circumstances in which future creatures will be placed, God knows what any possible free agent will do in every situation without determining agents' actions. Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina developed this approach in the sixteenth century. This is termed middle knowledge. Some advocates of this view are Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*; Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); William Lane Craig, *The Only Wise God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1987). There are those who assert that the Bible affirms both divine foreknowledge and sovereignty and genuine free will. That is, God is

generally followed the interpretation of compatibilism.[61] In assessing the traditional view

of contingent freedom, Boyd finds incompatibilism to be more appropriately called *self-*

determined freedom. My major concern is to find out what he means by self-determined

freedom.

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in total control but He does not determine human actions. Therefore, the relationship between determinism and free will is a mystery.

Among scholars who argue for an incompatible view of free will, there are those who are determinists. This group of determinists argues that all events are determined by natural causes. Free will that requires responsibility is not compatible with determinism and, as a result, free will does not exist in a sense that requires genuine responsibility. Paul Edwards, "Hard and Soft Determinism," in *Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science*, ed. Sidney Hook (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 104-113; Anthony Kenny, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom," in *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Anthony Kenny (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 63-81. There are others, hard compatibilists, who believe free will is necessary for genuine moral responsibility, but such freedom does not exist. Ted Honderich, *A Theory of Determinism,* 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); idem, *How Free Are You? The Determinism Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Derk Pereboom, *Living without Free Will* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). A majority of the incompabilists are those who hold that the classical Christian view—God knows contingent future decisions—is incompatible with human freedom. They claim God knows only past, present, and future possibilities. Hence, the future decisions of free agents are not known by God, thus humans are genuinely free and responsible for their actions. David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996); William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001); Bruce Reichenbach, "God Limits His Power," in *Predestination and Free Will*, eds. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 99-124; Richard Rice, *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1980); John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998). For a detailed elaboration of these views on free will, see Robert Kane, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*; Watson, *Free Will*; Hook, *Determinism and Freedom in Modern Science*; Dworkin, *Determinism, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility*.

[61]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 260-261, 237-238, 279-285, 454-455, 471.

Boyd has much to say about determinism; however, much of his argument is rather an attempt to answer compatibilist scientific,[62] philosophical,[63] and theological

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[62]The scientific objection to self-determinism is that self-determinism conflicts with the findings of modern science concerning the role of genes and environment in influencing our personality and behavior. He answers this objection by focusing on angelic freedom, inconclusive evidence, determinism and moral responsibility, self-refuting nature of physical determinism, the phenomenon of freedom and determinism, and the pragmatic criterion for truth. According to him, Scripture clearly points out that evil began as a result of misuse of angelic free will. Angels are neither tied to genes nor environment. In addition, experience proves that the influence of genes and environment contributes to the development of characteristics, but there is no evidence that they determine our behavior. If they are determinative, then we cannot in any way blame people for their actions. That is, the objection raised undermines moral responsibility. "While a great deal of the world in which we live and even a good deal of our own lives is determined by forces outside of our control," within the parameters set by these variables self-determination remains. Finally, the process of decision making is an evidence for self-determined freedom. For in decision making, choices are made between alternatives that are within one's own power to act upon (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 62-68).

[63]The philosophical objection to self-determinism is that a person's decision is caused or uncaused. If it is caused, then it is determined. If it is uncaused, it is still not free but is random or capricious. Boyd defends the self-determinism concept of free will with three major points: the freedom of God, the nature of causation, and indeterminism and the principle of sufficient reason. He argues that human self-determination is the only analogical ground by which Christianity can affirm God's self-determination. Therefore, if human self-determination is irrational, then God's self-determination is not coherent for "[a] concept devoid of all experiential content is vacuous" (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 70). The objection is valid if causation is inherently deterministic. Relying on Peter Van Inwagen, he argues that equating causality to determination is not intelligible. Again he argues that quantum physics proves that the relationship between cause and effect does not necessarily include determinism. Our actions have causal conditions but they only define parameters within which our freedom functions. As a result, free actions are not capricious. In his view a free action always has sufficient reason that renders it retroactively intelligible, but it does so without rendering it futuristically predictable. Before an event, even an exhaustive knowledge of the surrounding circumstances could not have given us a determinate knowledge of what shall certainly occur. But once the action happens, one can examine all the factors and at least hypothetically discover the sufficient reason behind the act (ibid., 71-72). "Free actions are not deterministically caused by the sum total of antecedent conditions, for they are free and not determined. Neither are they uncaused, for they are free and not

objections to self-determinism.[64] Depending on B. Reichenbach and Robert Kane, he

argues that the self-determinism concept of free will means that "while factors outside the

agent are *influential* in every decision an agent makes, such factors are never *coercive*

when the decision is in fact free. Thus, appealing to factors external to the agent can

never *exhaustively* explain the free choice of the agent. In the light of all influences and

circumstances, agents ultimately *determine themselves*."[65] For him, it is only in the

context of self-determinism that moral responsibility is made intelligible.[66] He

strengthens the positive implications of self-determinism[67] over and against determinism.

Self-determined freedom becomes all the more significant when he remarks that

such understanding of contingent freedom is coherent with experience, moral

responsibility, decision making, and personal dignity. According to Boyd, it is by this

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capricious. Rather, insofar as they are free, they are caused by *the agent* who initiates
them" (ibid., 77).

[64]The theological objection is that self-determinism makes salvation meritorious
and not by grace. In responding to this objection, he asserts that the doctrine of
unconditional election undermines Scripture's portrayal of God's love. According to
him, choosing to accept a gift does not change the nature of the offer. Therefore,
choosing to accept God's offer of salvation does not change the offer: it is still a gift of
salvation. Scripture affirms the idea of choosing between life and death and does not
consider choosing the offer of salvation as work, for choosing does not cause salvation
but it is a condition for salvation (ibid., 78-83).

[65]Ibid., 56 (emphasis his).

[66]In Boyd's opinion, morally responsible beings are those who are the ultimate
producers and explainers of their actions. Therefore, determinism which traces causal
chains beyond an agent's freedom undermines free will and moral responsibility. On the
other hand, self-determination renders moral responsibility feasible by affirming that no
external factors exhaustively determine an agent's decision or action (ibid., 56-60).

[67]Although "self-determination," "libertarianism," and "indeterminism" are
synonyms, Boyd refrains from the use of "indeterministic freedom" because, according
to him, the term connotes the idea of an uncaused or random free will choices (ibid.,
52n2).

conception of free will that we meaningfully affirm God's self-determinism and intelligibly explain the warfare concept in the Bible and Christ's sacrificial death for our salvation, which is free but only applicable when one chooses to accept Christ.[68] It must be remembered that we do not choose our parents, environment, personality traits, and many of our experiences; however, for Boyd, these external factors contribute to who we are at present. Within these parameters set forth we have the upper hand to determine what transpires in the next moment.[69] Those causal factors provide only a realm of possibilities, but actualization of the possibilities depends on the individuals.[70] He further mentions that those causal conditions[71] "do not meticulously *determine* our particular actions."[72] To make such an assumption is to object to the idea of equating self-determined freedom to self-existence.

Related to this understanding of freedom is the question of what becomes of individuals, such as babies who die or mentally retarded people, who were unable to resolve themselves for or against God in this lifetime. Boyd explains that the answer to this issue is based on whether or not one agrees that the first condition of love is that it must be freely chosen. If it is a metaphysical truth, "then people who have not chosen

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[68]Ibid., 68-84.

[69]Ibid., 65-66.

[70]Ibid., 66, 71-72.

[71]For Boyd, cause is not equal to determination. According to him, with causal conditions we can have possibilities of actions that will take place but cannot exhaustively predict actual actions (ibid., 70-73).

[72]Ibid., 72 (emphasis his).

must somehow be given the opportunity to do so."[73] It is obvious that this answer

expresses Boyd's belief in post-mortem opportunity for those who could not decide for or

against God in their present lives due to defectiveness or immaturity of their free will.

In surveying the background of Boyd's writings, I discovered that he developed

his metaphysics by drawing ideas from classical and process traditions. However, at this

point in the discussion one could remark that John Hick impacted Boyd's thoughts

significantly. Boyd's self-determined freedom is similar to Hick's cognitive freedom.

Like Hick, Boyd's concept of freedom implies that to be in existence is to be subjected to

arbitrariness and determination, and within these causal factors that contribute to our

existence, free will functions in a self-determined manner. Significant to Hick's

influence on Boyd is the doctrine of life after death. While Hick adopted the doctrine of

life after death to deal with issues that arose from his concepts of free will and universal

salvation, Boyd introduces life after death to iron out the tension between self-determined

freedom and individuals who did not get the opportunity to decide either for or against

God. Consequently, Boyd disavows the contemporary assumption that every individual

who dies goes immediately to heaven or hell.[74] It is important to note that Boyd's idea of

post-mortem does not include the theories of reconstitution and replica found in Hick.

It is sufficient to point out that Boyd does not take free will in a minimal sense—

the ability to select a desired option. For him, a free agent is one who possesses

deliberative and executive capabilities to choose on the basis of desires and values.

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[73]Boyd contends that there is no explicit Scripture teaching on post-mortem
opportunity but there are hints to it (ibid., 380-384).

[74]Ibid., 384.

Therefore, by self-determined free will, he means that with all the limitations that our genes and environment put on us as individuals, it is within our power to determine our actions. That is why Boyd could write that "we experience self-determining freedom in every act of deliberation and in every moral judgment we make."[75]

For him, each of us determines his or her fate. There may be various factors that sway our decision-making process, yet those factors are not determinative factors of our destiny. Created agents are ultimately responsible for their actions. In this way, Boyd refutes the classical view of free will and its associated concept of predestination. On the other hand, he refrains from humanism, but appeals to a concept of free will that is akin to the Ariminian view of human freedom.[76]

Nature of Self-Determined Freedom

Having defined contingent freedom as self-determination, Boyd attributes some qualities to it. According to him, self-determination involves moral responsibility and proportionality of moral responsibility, and it is irrevocable and finite.

Moral responsibility

His definition of self-determined freedom holds individual persons accountable for their decisions.[77] Boyd writes, the "capacity to freely love one another must imply that to some extent we have the capacity to freely harm one another."[78] As a result,

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[75]Ibid., 70. This is Boyd's third thesis.

[76]Ibid., 87.

[77]Ibid., 53.

[78]Ibid., 64.

God's decision to create self-determined agents entails a risk of moral responsibility to each other. In his view, God put us at risk to each other when He endowed us with the potential to freely love one another. In other words, He made us responsible for each other.[79] Consequently, contingent freedom is not only the potential to love or not to love God but it also includes the capacity to help or harm others.

Relying on the command in Gen 1:26-28, Boyd claims that we are placed in a covenant relationship with everyone and everything around us. The essence of this is that our moral responsibility extends further than our close relationships; it encompasses our entire environment. In his opinion, the tapestry of morally responsible interactions includes the spiritual realm. In effect, the spiritual beings who possess the ability to bless the human race also have the capacity to hurt it.[80]

This means, by reason of this interlocking tapestry, moral responsibility is broadly shared. However, according to Boyd, the self-determined free agents directly involved in a behavior or an action are more responsible than others.[81]

Proportionality of moral responsibility

Boyd's view of moral responsibility is closely correlated with the principle of proportionality. He deems it apposite to assume that the scope of the potential to freely love one another is proportional to the scope of the potential to freely harm each other.[82]

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[79]Ibid., 165.

[80]Ibid., 165-166. Boyd's view on the function of spirit beings is discussed later in this chapter.

[81]Ibid., 169.

[82]Ibid. This is the fourth of Boyd's six theses.

For direct proof of this assumption he identifies the principle of proportionality as an old concept found in the teachings of Jesus (Luke 12:48), Paul (1 Tim 3; Titus 1:6-8), Aristotle, and Shakespeare. He claims that the same principle is referred to with the phrase "*corruptio optimi pessima,* 'the corruption of the best is the worst,'"[83] in medieval theology. Accordingly, the greater a contingent's capacity to do good, the greater his or her potential to do evil. Hence, if individuals with the capacity to freely love fail to love, the same capacity and moral responsibility is turned to the capacity to harm. It is his conviction that, in view of the principle of proportionality, the good that God wants to attain can be determined by the intensity of the evil that is manifested in the cosmos. Not only does this assertion justify God for taking the risk that He took in creating the world,[84] but it also demonstrates Boyd's confidence in the idea that God cannot do what is logically impossible. He cannot create a world with the potential to love without a proportional potential to cause evil.

Irrevocability of self-determined freedom

Boyd is inclined to believe that "the *genuineness* of self-determination hinges . . . on its *irrevocability*."[85] Using a gift as an illustration he earmarks, the time period in which the receiver of a gift determines what to do with the gift is crucial.[86] Similarly, in his opinion, self-determined free will requires a time period for agents to use their free

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[83]Ibid., 170.

[84]Ibid., 172.

[85]Ibid., 182 (emphasis his).

[86]Ibid.

will either for good or evil. The duration of self-determined free will, according to Boyd, even though it is temporal, makes self-determined free will irrevocable.[87] This implies that the irrevocability of self-determined freedom is ingrained in the meaning of love and its corollary, freedom, and its necessitated moral responsibility.[88] That is to say, a period of time is a must for love, freedom, and moral responsibility to be a reality.

Contingent self-determined freedom seems to have noticeable effects on God's omnipotence, but Boyd rejects this appraisal. He conceives irrevocability of self-determined freedom to be an acknowledgment of divine power. He explains that God's inability to revoke contingent free will is an indispensable consequence of His power to create the world.[89] The irrevocability of self-determined free will is a metaphysical consequence of God's decision to create a contingent world that He must allow to take its natural course until a required time, which is known only to God.[90] He appears to demonstrate that the immediate termination of free will implies annihilation of the human race, which, from his assessment, does not typify the nature of a God who is love.

Finite self-determined freedom

Self-determined free will of agents, according to Boyd, is irrevocable, yet he suggests it is also finite.[91] Observing from his understanding of the wisdom of God,

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[87]Ibid., 181 (emphasis his). This is the fifth of Boyd's six theses.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Ibid.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Ibid., 186-190. This is the last of six theses.

experience, and the nature of contingent beings, he concludes that self-determined free will must be finite before God's victory over sin as described in the Bible can be intelligible.[92]

Boyd's discussion on the finitude of self-determined free will is relevant in the context of contingent beings. In his view, contingent being refers to a finite being, a being who is inherently restricted. The significance of this is that it necessarily makes the freedom of any contingent being finite, just as the being itself.[93]

Again from the analogy of a company selling shares, Boyd conceives of God as an owner of all power who gave out shares of power. Nevertheless, in His wisdom, according to him, God keeps a greater part of the shares in order that He can see to the total "flow of history and the attainment of his ultimate aim in creation would remain within his power." He continues, "God wisely restricts the extent of the risk he was willing to take."[94] While Boyd agrees with process theists that all agents possess power, he disavows the process thought that agents possess power from eternity. He asserts that God shares His power with contingent beings; however, God possesses the ultimate power.[95]

Similarly, he observes on an experiential level that our genetic makeup, environment, and natural laws limit us. In addition, the options available to us are also

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[92]Ibid.

[93]Ibid., 186.

[94]Ibid., 187.

[95]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 187.

limited by time. As a result, the irrevocable self-determination is finite.[96] Referring to

such authors as Augustine and C. S. Lewis, Boyd explains that the choices we make

within the options that are available to use become our habits and gradually become our

character.[97] Thus, he remarks, self-determined free will is the "probationary means by

which we acquire compatibilistic freedom either for or against God."[98] Boyd does not

indicate the point at which one's choice becomes a solidified character or when self-

determination becomes compatibilistic freedom. But, in the same context, he notes that

life gains momentum the further it flows. This projects an idea that if an individual's

decision leans toward one side of the will, it is not possible for that individual to turn to

the opposite side of the will. That is why he states that "like every other process we

observe in nature, the ever-quickening current of life flows in only one direction."[99] If

my analysis so far is correct, then there comes into view a tension between the

contingency of human nature and the idea of life's current flowing in one direction.

Quality of Self-determined Freedom

According to Boyd, different variables define the scope or quality of any moral

agents' freedom and at the same time condition God's interaction with the world. He

calls these variables "givens."[100] He defines the "givens" as a "complex constellation of

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[96]Ibid.

[97]Ibid., 188-189.

[98]Ibid., 189.

[99]Ibid., 198.

[100]Ibid., 192.

contingent variables that collectively constitute a particular situation."[101] The "givens"

are the ongoing influence of God, the original constitution of an agent, the agent's

previous decision, other agents' decision, and finally prayer. We shall now turn our

attention to a brief discussion of the individual "givens," however, the last variable,

prayer, is discussed under divine sovereignty.[102]

Ongoing influence of God

Boyd acknowledges that genuine personal relationship lies on two centers, the

center of influence and the center of non-coercion.[103] From this observation, he

concludes that "God leads personal beings with persuasive call, not a controlling

force."[104] Based on his understanding of the rudiments of personal relationship and the

apostolic church fathers, he emphatically stresses that there is no coercion with God.[105]

Boyd conceives that God influences His creatures and His creatures influence Him.[106]

However, God does not depend on His creatures for His sufficiency.[107] But what

happens to His creatures makes a real difference on Him; God can neither change nor

undo their actions and decisions for the sake of His fundamental nature, love. This

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[101]Ibid., 422.

[102]Boyd indicates that prayer conditions God's intervention more than it does with contingent free will, hence, it is appropriate to discuss prayer under divine sovereignty.

[103]Ibid., 193.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Ibid., 151,193.

[106]Ibid., 193, 233.

[107]Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 221.

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means, for Boyd, God's non-coercion covenant stems from a quality of relationships. He

deals with His creatures in ways that respect and preserve His and their integrity in the

relationship. Therefore, he writes, God honors the non-coercion center of the relationship

with a covenant of non-coercion.[108] According to Boyd, this freedom is the "core of what

it means to be made in the image of God," and it is "God's greatest achievement."[109]

Original constitution of an agent

Another metaphysical principle that conditions God's interaction with human

agents, according to Boyd, is the original constitution of human beings. By this he means

the individual's makeup from birth and the parameters of possible roles designed for an

individual by the Creator. In Boyd's view, these parameters originate from the Creator

and differ with every individual. This does not deny the Scripture's teaching on the

equality of humans in the sight of God. However, it causes unequal possibilities, inherent

potential, and degrees of freedom.[110] This implies that degrees of freedom result in

unequal degrees of the scope of freedom. Accordingly, this is the reason why God's

interaction with free agents appears arbitrary from a human perspective.[111] It appears that

self-determined will is personalized, therefore, for the sake of God's integrity, He does

not interfere with choices made within individuals' limit of freedom.[112]

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[108]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 193.

[109]Ibid.

[110]Ibid., 194.

[111]Ibid., 195.

[112]Ibid., 197.

In discussing the differences in individuals' natural endowments of which he cites examples,[113] he writes, "Insofar as these differences flow from the reproductive process working in congruity with the design of the Creator, they are natural and beautiful. Insofar as they flow from other variables in this war zone that are incongruous with the Creator's design, they are unnatural and hideous."[114] By the examples that Boyd alludes to, it becomes evident that God sometimes uses diseases and deformities to individualize contingent freedom.[115] We can infer from this that, for him, inherent in creation are some deformities even without the activities of Satan. However, this design of God which is short of perfection contributes to the beauty of creation. It is obvious that, although Boyd disavows Augustine's theodicy, some aspects of his explanation are indistinguishable from Augustine's. Considering the fact that his concept of God bears some characteristics of the classical traditional theory of God, it is not surprising that he reiterates the aesthetic principle in Augustine's theodicy. It should be emphasized that Boyd's understanding of the original constitution of an agent does not take into account the choices of our parents and their environment and/or the effects of sin on a being.

Previous decision of an agent

I have already noted that every individual possesses some degree of freedom conditioned by the nature and parameters of the possible role we receive from God. This initial free will may be the ability to say yes or no to God's love. Whatever this freedom

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[113]Physical, mental, and spiritual aptitudes (ibid., 194).

[114]Ibid., 194.

[115]Ibid., 195n22.

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is, saying yes or no to God redefines the individual's scope of freedom and opens new

opportunities to the extent that it shapes one's character. [116] Thus Boyd remarks that

> possibilities are open to us now that would have otherwise been irrevocably closed
> had we previously chosen differently, while other possibilities are irrevocably closed
> to us now that would have otherwise been open had we previously chosen differently.
> Like every other process we observe in nature, the ever-quickening current of life
> flows in only one direction.[117]

For Boyd, free will is unidirectional and dynamic.[118] One's quality of freedom is

defined by variables beyond human control; nonetheless within the initial freedom it is

still within one's ability to define their quality of freedom with the choices they make.[119]

Decisions of other agents

As noted above, self-determined freedom is genuine inasmuch as it influences

others.[120] Resulting from this nature of self-determination is that quality of freedom that

is conditioned by the free will of other agents.

For Boyd, not only are creatures of the world interconnected, but also the physical

world is related with the spiritual world. Thus, the quality of the individual's freedom is

defined by both factors and variables that flow from the physical world as well as the

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[116]Ibid., 198.

[117]Ibid.

[118]Ibid., 199.

[119]Ibid., 201.

[120]Ibid., 165-168.

spiritual realm.[121] Hence, he concludes that "*every single* event in the cosmos is to some extent a universally influenced, sociologically determined event."[122]

This means that in every event the decisions of other human beings and angelic beings influence it either for good or bad. The individual free will does not live in a vacuum. It is interconnected with all other free wills. Therefore, according to Boyd, it "is a dynamic reality largely defined by its relationship to everything else."[123]

In sum, Boyd's model of free will is self-determined or libertarian. It is a metaphysical requirement of divine decision to create the world with the potential to love. His free will model entails moral responsibility and proportional potential to influence others either for good or bad; it is irrevocable and finite. Five of the six theses upon which Boyd bases his arguments for Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy and the issues relating to theodicy are characteristics of his concept of free will. These theses are arrived at based on his re-working of Hartshorne's process philosophy. Thus, it could be said that his model of free will is the ground by which he establishes his Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy. The next section explores how Boyd establishes his model of divine foreknowledge on the basis of his concept of free will.

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[121]Boyd, *God at War*, 164-167.

[122]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 213.

[123]Ibid., 201.

Divine Foreknowledge

I noted in the previous section that the debate on free will has been a dilemma of the relationship between contingent freedom and divine foreknowledge; consequently, in seeking to analyze the theodicy of Boyd, it is important to examine his concept of divine foreknowledge. For, in Boyd's view, the correct understanding of scriptural teaching on divine foreknowledge is very critical in formulating an explanation of the problem of evil.

Boyd prefaces his discussion on the concept of divine knowledge of the future by pointing out the weakness in the classical view of divine foreknowledge. For him, all forms of exhaustive definite foreknowledge[124]—Calvinist view, simple foreknowledge, and middle knowledge—are inconsistent with the idea that God took a risk when He created a world with agents possessing self-determining free will and the idea that the world is a war zone.[125] Therefore, he objects to those views of divine foreknowledge and prefers an open view of the future. He explains that an open view of the future is "an in-house Arminian discussion on how to render the free will defense that is most coherent, biblical, and credible."[126] Elsewhere he claims that the open view "reconciles . . .

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[124]In his article, "Christian Love and Academic Dialogue: A Reply to Bruce Ware," Boyd explains the difference between exhaustive definite foreknowledge and divine foreknowledge. He contends that open theists do not deny exhaustive divine foreknowledge but affirm it in a sense that they hold that God knows exhaustively all future possibilities. What they argue against is the concept that God possesses exhaustive definite foreknowledge, the idea that God knows the future as certain (Boyd, "Christian Love and Academic Dialogue").

[125]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 85-87.

[126]Ibid., 87.

seemingly contradictory passages of the Word."[127]

According to Boyd, the open view of the future attributes risk to God and also affirms God's omniscience. He claims the view affirms that God knows the past, present, and the future perfectly. However, the future decisions of contingent beings are only possibilities until free agents actualize them. Thus, in his view, the future is partly open and partly closed, which means the partly closed future is determined and thus foreknown by God. On the other hand, the partly open future is undetermined and not known as certainty but as possibilities.[128] In the ensuing discussion I try to analytically describe his concept of divine foreknowledge under openness of the future and the content of divine foreknowledge.

Openness of the Future

In Boyd's opinion, the Bible portrays many aspects of the future as settled. However, in his opinion, this portrayal does not, in any way, support the exhaustive definite foreknowledge of God. God's knowledge is temporally conditioned. He investigates this by considering God who risks, God in time, His resourcefulness, and conditional prophecies.

God who risks

In Boyd, as we have seen, love implies choice. At best, the possibility of love in the universe requires that both angelic and human beings possess the power of choice and

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[127]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 92.

[128]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 190-191.

are the ultimate cause of their actions. Underlying this understanding of this free will is the conception that the choice of contingent beings cannot be known in advance.

Convinced of the accurateness of his concept of self-determined freedom, Boyd argues that in creating morally free beings with the potential to love, God undertook the risk that love will not be returned—disobedience.[129] In his opinion God willingly committed Himself to creating morally free agents in spite of an uncertain and indefinite outcome of the use of their freedom. He writes, God "deemed the risk worthwhile for the sake of what it can achieve"[130]—possibility of love. Thus for Boyd, "the destiny of individuals is open at the time they are created."[131] Consequently, God does not possess exhaustive definite foreknowledge of future choices of free moral agents. God left moral agents free to complete the open future with their choices.

God in time

Boyd elaborates on various biblical passages describing God's relationship with contingent beings. According to him, from eternity God considered probabilities of free agents' decisions and anticipated each situation as the only possibility that could be actualized. Therefore, God is not taken off guard at the decisions contingent beings actualize.[132]

This is, according to Boyd, manifested in the characteristic way in which

[129]Ibid., 88. Boyd's second thesis.

[130]Ibid., 144.

[131]Ibid., 88.

[132]Ibid., 101-102.

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scriptural passages depict God's definite response to decisions of contingent beings in time. God gets disappointed by the improbable decisions of free agents,[133] asks questions about the decisions of individuals,[134] regrets the results of His own decisions,[135] finds out or tests peoples' hearts to know their loyalty to Him,[136] and searches for an intercessor for people who have lost their connection with Him because of continuous involvement in sinful actions.[137] In his opinion, the picture that emerges from these passages is not a God who knows the future as certain but a God who responds to events as they are actualized. God is open to the world of creaturely experience and He is genuinely affected by creaturely experience.

Another intriguing evidence that God does not possess definite foreknowledge of free agents' future decisions is Christ's remarks concerning the time of His second coming, argues Boyd.[138] It is his contention that Christ's statement about the day and the hour of His return, when placed in the context of other eschatological statements,[139] is only "an idiomatic way of affirming that the decision about this matter is the Father's.

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[133]Jer 3: 6-7, 19-20; Isa 5:1-4 (ibid.).

[134]Num 14:11; 1 Kgs 22:20; Hos 8:5 (ibid., 102).

[135]Gen 6:6; 1 Sam 13:13; 15:11, 35 (ibid.).

[136]Gen 2:19; 22:1.12; Exod 16:4; 2 Chr 32:31; Deut 8:2; 13:1-3 (ibid., 105-107).

[137]Ezek 22 (ibid., 107-108).

[138]Mark 13:32 (ibid., 109).

[139]2 Pet 3:12; 1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20 (ibid.).

He alone will know when the time is right."[140] Boyd makes this conclusion because, for

him, decisions of contingent beings may delay or hasten the return of Christ. Boyd is

here proving that contents of divine foreknowledge of matters involving contingent

beings are only possibilities.

Omni-resourceful God

Boyd is inclined to attribute the extent to which the future is open to Scriptures'

use of "conditional and tentative terms about the future."[141] On the basis of several

scriptural texts that are structured in such terms,[142] he points out that God does not

infallibly predict the future, or project Himself as one who knows every detail;[143] rather

He demonstrates His knowledge of the only reality about the future, possibilities.[144] To

make this assumption is to maintain that God's uncertainty about the future is a defect of

His nature. On the contrary, Boyd rejects this assertion. He conceives of God's

knowledge of future possibilities as an evidence of a partly open future.[145] Therefore, he

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[140]Boyd believes Christ's remarks are in the same sense as Paul's expressions: "at the right time" in Rom 5:6 and "fullness of time was come" in Gal 4:4, which means when all the variables were in place (ibid.).

[141]Ibid.

[142]Exod 3:7-18, 4:1-10; 12:3; 13:17; Jer 22:4-5; 1 Kgs 9:4-7 (ibid., 109-112).

[143]Ibid., 110.

[144]Ibid.

[145]Ibid.,110-111.

writes, "the passages that suggest that God faces a partly open future do not conflict with those that depict God as the all-powerful, sovereign, majestic Lord of history."[146]

Using William James's analogy of God as a chess master, Boyd concludes that God, like a wise chess player, knows and anticipates all the possibilities of His moves and that of His opponent. He even places some pieces "at risk," nonetheless He is certain to be victorious. In other words, what Boyd is affirming here is that the future is not definite, therefore God knows only the possibilities of the future.[147] However, on the basis of God's infinite intelligence, He is able to attend to each and every possibility as though there are no other alternatives. For, according to Boyd, God's infinite intelligence is not divided up among possibilities; consequently, there is no distinction between God knowing future events as possibilities and knowing the future as settled.[148] Boyd argues

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[146]Ibid., 112.

[147]Ibid., 113.

[148]Elaborating on how God's knowledge of possibilities can be the same as His definite knowledge of the future, Boyd states, "Why are we humans less confident considering possibilities than we are with certainties? It is only because our intelligence is finite. If I have two possibilities I have to anticipate rather than one certainty, I have to divide my intelligence in half to cover both possibilities. If I have four possibilities to consider, my intelligence has to be divided into fourths, and so on. This is what makes us humans 'intrinsically fallible and faulty in making . . . future plans' which involve various possibilities."

"But now consider the implications of our shared faith that God possesses *infinite* wisdom. God's intelligence is not limited. This means that God does not have to 'spread out' his intelligence over possibilities. God can consider and anticipate each of trillion billion possibilities as though *each one* was the *only* possibility he had to consider. Since his intelligence does not have to be—*cannot be!*—'divided up' among items, we could say that *all* of God's intelligence is focused on each and every possibility, and each series of possibilities, *as though there were no alternative possibilities*. In other words, for a God of infinite intelligence, *there is virtually no distinction between knowing a certainty and knowing a possibility*. God gains no providential advantage by knowing future events

that there is no difference between the concepts of God's knowledge of the future as

possibilities and God's knowledge of the future as certain. But this by itself is no

sufficient reason to consider Boyd as affirming exhaustive definite foreknowledge.

Although his explanation is logical, it does not make the two concepts the same.

Conditional prophecies

The nature of prophecies involving free agents, Boyd claims, is conditional. He

cites the stories of Jonah and the repentant Ninevites,[149] Hezekiah's recovery,[150] and the

flexible potter[151] as examples of conditional prophecies, but in each case he appears to

place emphasis on the event as "God's *willingness to be flexible and change* according to

the situation."[152] In his opinion, these and other prophecies of the same nature imply that

God's declarations about the future are alterable; therefore, His statements about the

future are possibilities. God through Jeremiah reprimanded people who think otherwise,

he argues.[153] For Boyd, passages expressing God's emotions are a scriptural way of

getting its reader's attention on the fact that God's knowledge of the future decisions of

contingent beings is of possibilities that are neither exhaustively settled in reality nor in

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as certain as opposed to knowing them as possible. He anticipates both with equal
perfection" (Boyd, "Christian Love and Academic Dialogue," 235).

[149]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 94-95.

[150]2 Kgs 20:1-6; Isa 38:1-6 (ibid., 95).

[151]Jer 18: 1-12 (ibid., 95-96).

[152]Ibid., 96 (emphasis his). See Boyd, *God of the Possible,* 75.

[153]Jer 18:7-11 (Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 44).

the mind of God.[154] Not only is it obvious that Boyd's consideration of these passages

emphasizes his affirmation of God's activeness in human history, but it also constrains

him to object to exhaustive definite foreknowledge.

In effect, he objects to the traditional interpretation of scriptural passages

expressing God's emotions as anthropomorphic and phenomenological expressions.[155]

He argues that such understanding is based on a philosophical presupposition, God is

immutable, brought into the scriptural texts. In his view, the philosophical

presupposition creates a canon within a canon and denies the integrity of the texts and the

genuineness of who God really is.[156] In contrasting the traditional interpretation, he

makes a distinction between passages with body parts and those with emotional phrases.

While passages with phrases of body parts are treated as figurative and/or poetic in nature

to maintain the veracity of the Bible,[157] those with emotional phrases are taken literally.

It seems the distinction made between scriptural texts with anthropomorphic and

phenomenological expressions is significantly related to his acceptance of the

philosophical assumption that God has no body.[158]

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[154]Ibid., 61.

[155]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 97, 102; Gregory A. Boyd, "The Open Theism View," in *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 37.

[156]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 97, 100.

[157]Deut 4:34; Hos 2:2; Ps 17:8 (Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 54, 60, 71-72, 120).

[158]Millard J. Erickson, *What Does God Know and When Does He Know It? The Current Controversy over Divine Foreknowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 68.

Although Boyd states explicitly that the issue of divine foreknowledge is not about the nature of God but rather the nature of creation, yet it can be said categorically that Boyd affirms the A-theory of time[159] and totally rejects God being atemporal. This is culminated in his remarks, "When I speak of texts being 'literal' I am not thereby denying that there is a metaphorical element in them. I simply mean they have a similar meaning when applied to God as they have when applied to humans."[160] This emphasizes the point that, in Boyd, God's nature is at stake; He is limited by time the same way human beings are limited.

In the process of reconciling contemporary science with theology, he concludes that although it is not ideal to use scientific discoveries to establish biblical truth, "we cannot ignore the findings of contemporary science on this account [divine foreknowledge]."[161] As a result, he contends that the development of theology must be in dialogue with the truths found in all other disciplines such as physics, cosmology,

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[159]The nature of time is a debated issue in philosophy. There are two theories in the debate and each concept has its own implications. The A-theory of time, sometimes referred to as process or tensed theory, holds that time flows; however there is an ontological distinction between past—which is gone; the future—which is "not-yet"; and the present—which is now. If A-theory is true, God must be temporal. The B-theory of time, which is sometimes known as the stasis or tenseless theory, holds that now is simply the time of which we happen to be conscious. "Now" is a feature of our experience of the world. The relations between the past, present, and future can be explained in terms of relations *before*, *simultaneous with* and *after*. If the B-theory is true, God must be atemporal. Both concepts have implications in theology. See Gregory E. Ganssle, "Introduction: Thinking About God and Time," in *God and Time*, ed. Gregory E. Ganssle (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001),13-16; Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 127-28, 168-169.

[160]Boyd, "Love and Academic Dialogue," 240n5.

[161]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 139.

psychology, sociology, biology, and anthropology.[162] He also cautioned that "while the findings of science cannot be ignored, if a particular interpretation of a theory fundamentally conflicts with Scripture, Christians are obliged to stick with Scripture and judge that the interpretation of the theory is misguided."[163] With this emphasis, Boyd identifies quantum physics as providing evidence of the openness of the future.

> The most relevant feature of quantum physics for our purposes is the indeterminate behavior of quantum particles. In quantum mechanics we can predict on a bell curve an individual particle's probable behavior under given experimental conditions, but we cannot in principle predict it precisely. The leap from the probability wave pocket (the state of being "possibly this or possibly that," what is sometimes called the particle's "superposition") to the actual state at the end of the experiment (the state of being "definitely this and definitely not that") cannot be exhaustively accounted for.[164]

Boyd adds that the uncertainty of quantum mechanics is not found in the measurement device, but it lies in the metaphysics of things.[165] Furthermore, he declares that the science of deliberation provides stronger evidence that the future is partly opened. In his opinion, "our experience as free, moral agents who deliberate about decisions indicates that on a fundamental level we assume that reality is partly determined, partly undetermined."[166]

These prove to him that the Bible does not subscribe to exhaustive definite divine foreknowledge. At this point, it is important to recognize that Boyd's explanation is

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[162]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 107.

[163]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 140.

[164]Ibid., 136-137; idem, "The Open Theism View," 18.

[165]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 109.

[166]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 143. See also 67-68.

philosophically driven. He makes inference from presuppositions of the scientific mind-set of this present epoch of human history.

The point to be made from this analysis of definite open future is that God is not cut off from humans and the world. By virtue of a partly open future, God is able to relate with His creatures on a temporal level evident in His flexibility in responding to human actions by asking questions, changing His mind in response to situations, regretting the outcome of some decisions He makes, and finding out about His peoples' decisions; and for that matter He has not determined and does not possess exhaustive definite knowledge of the future decisions and actions of free agents, yet He is sovereign. We now turn to the analysis of Boyd's understanding of the content of divine foreknowledge.

Content of Divine Foreknowledge

In the preceding section we have seen, in Boyd's view, the extent to which the future is definitely opened, the aspects of the future that are undetermined and not definitely known by God. My concern in this section is to show, in Boyd's opinion, how much of the future is foreknown by God. The answer to this question seems to be provided by Boyd's discussion of biblical passages that he classifies as unconditional prophecies.

Unconditional prophecies

To present Boyd's view of the content of divine foreknowledge it is appropriate to analyze his understanding of unconditional prophecies under unilateral decisions and predictions of individual actions.

Unilateral decisions. Boyd agrees that Scripture portrays some things about the future as definite. However, for him, the fact that those aspects have been written in the language and style of definiteness does not mean everything about the future is settled. They are definite only because God designed them in that manner; that is, they are God's will or His own plan or by inevitable consequence of present actions.[167] Alluding to some specific scriptural texts in Isaiah,[168] Boyd explains how some aspects are settled by saying "Whatever the Lord is going to do he foreknows from the time he decides to do it. And so he declares this foreknowledge to prove that he, not some idol, is doing it."[169] Therefore, it would be correct to infer that the closed aspects of the future are that which are determined and thus foreknown.

His emphasis on the content of God's foreknowledge is culminated in his analysis of Rom 8:29-30 and the prophecies about the Messiah's death. In each case he seems to place emphasis on the idea that they do not involve free agents and so they are God's self-knowledge of His purpose.[170]

In his discussion on Rom 8:29-30, a scriptural passage that is considered as explicit evidence of divine foreknowledge, Boyd's view of the openness of some part of the future forces him to deny the cognitive use of the Greek word *proginōskō*.[171] According to him, *proginōskō*, which is translated *foreknowledge*, is not used in the

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[167]Ibid., 120; idem, *God of the Possible*, 30.

[168]He uses Isa 42:8-9; 44:7-8; 46:9-11 (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 92-93).

[169]Ibid., 93.

[170]Ibid., 117-120.

cognitive sense but in the "customary Semitic sense of affection," thus, the word means forelove.[172] Consequently, there is a definite emphasis on God loving a group from the foundation of the world.[173] I have noted under the discussion on free will that for Boyd, "God's goal from the dawn of history has been to have a church, a bride who would say yes to his love, who would fully receive this love, embody this love, and beautifully reflect this triune love back to himself."[174] Hence, he unambiguously points to the church as the object foreloved. What Boyd means is that the text is not dealing with God's foreknowledge of selected individual free agents but a corporate whole, the church, that God loved ahead of time. However, whatever applies to the group affects the individual who accepts God.[175]

Boyd does not come out to deny that the text does not speak about divine foreknowledge; neither does he confirm it. However, it is clear that he is emphasizing the content of what he considers as divine foreknowledge. Apparently, in this explanation he asserts God's foreknowledge of future behavior of a group of free agents. Unlike the social scientists, biologists, and anthropologists who predict the future behavior of a group by studying the group, God foreknows the future behavior of a group

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[171]Ibid., 117-118.

[172]Ibid., 118.

[173]Ibid.

[174]Ibid., 51.

[175]Ibid., 118.

not because the object caused His knowledge, but because God has willed or determined their behavior. [176]

Boyd's insistence on showing the content of divine foreknowledge is further disclosed in his discussion on the Messianic prophecies. He accentuates the prophecies about the Messiah's crucifixion as preordained and foreknown, but that the individuals involved were not known. He asserts that the roles played by individuals such as Peter and Judas were not known and, hence, not determined by God;[177] the individuals, says Boyd, "participated in Christ's death of their own free wills."[178]

Boyd believes in a metaphysics that has a "balance between determinism and freedom, stable laws and chance, regularity and spontaneity, general predictability and element of unpredictability about specifics," which makes it possible for an event to be "predestined while affirming that the individuals who carry it out are not."[179] Therefore, Boyd manages to explain how the individuals are intertwined in God's determined and foreknown plans by resorting to predictions of individual actions.

Predictions of individuals' actions. It appears that Boyd believes the plausibility of explaining the predictions involving free decisions of individuals without compromising any aspect of his view on partly opened future depends on details of what

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[176]Ibid., 156.

[177]Ibid., 121.

[178]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 45.

[179]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 121.

he means by future possibilities. He therefore modifies middle knowledge,[180] claiming

that from all eternity God knows the "might" and "would" counterfactuals of free agents

in any possible world.[181] In his view, the might counterfactuals of creaturely freedom

make the contents of God's foreknowledge of the free agents' possibilities.[182] On the

basis of might and would counterfactuals of creaturely free will, God knows the

characteristics of the agents He chooses to create, and the actions they would take in

certain situations if they follow a certain life-trajectory.[183]

In addition, as was described earlier, in Boyd, the choices of an individual define

the character and thereafter the individual acts in conformity with his or her character.

Thus, as far as Boyd is concerned, the predictions of Peter's denial and Judas's betrayals

are based on God's perfect knowledge of Peter's and Judas's past and present solidified

characters and the "might" counterfactuals.[184] What Boyd means is that God infers from

known facts about Peter and Judas and then, as a sovereign Lord, He "decides at some

point to providentially ensure that just this situation would come about."[185] It could be

said, inferring from his exposition, that based on the "would" and "might"

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[180]See p. 19 above for the propositions of molinism.

[181]God's pre-creational knowledge includes hypothetical statements of what free agents might or might not do in certain situations as well as what they would and would not do in other situations (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 126).

[182]Ibid., 126-127.

[183]Ibid., 128. In responding to Bruce Ware and others he concludes, "The open view of the future does not undermine God's wisdom or sovereign control . . . it rather infinitely exalts it" (ibid., 130).

[184]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 35-39; idem, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 130-133 (Matt 26: 33-35).

counterfactuals God creates the kind of people who will fit into his purpose, which

implies God determines such individuals. Elaborating on Peter's denial, he remarks that

"God knew and perfectly anticipated . . . that if the world proceeded exactly as it did up

to the point of the Last Supper, Peter's character would be solidified to the extent that he

would be the kind of person who would deny Christ in a certain situation."[186] In the

context of this discussion, it could be mentioned that, in Boyd, the process by which God

acquires His knowledge is analogous to humans. The extent of what God knows is the

same as what humans know except for the fact that God predicts with a sufficient degree

of certainty because of His possession of "might" and "would" counterfactual knowledge.

This is why Boyd states that "anyone who knew Peter's character perfectly could have

predicted that under certain highly pressured circumstances (that God could easily

orchestrate), he would act just the way he did."[187]

It should be emphasized that, for Boyd, moral responsibility is in the context of

self-determined freedom. Therefore, God drawing individuals into His determined plans

only after the individuals have solidified their characters does not make God responsible.

According to Boyd,

> Moral culpability is not just about people *acting* certain ways when they could
> have and should have acted differently. It's more about people *becoming* certain
> kinds of people when they could have and should have become different kinds of
> people. Hence, if God decides that it fits his providential plan to use a person whose

[185]Boyd, *Satan and Problem of Evil*, 131.

[186]Ibid.

[187]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 35; idem, "The Open-Theism View," 20.

choices have solidified his character as wicked, God is not responsible for this person's wickedness.[188]

In this brief discussion of Boyd's understanding of predictions involving choices of individuals, we may say with certainty that the future choices of free agents that God foreknows as certain are those that flow from solidified character.

On the other hand, he recognizes that his explanation does not deal adequately with predictions found in the book of Daniel about Cyrus, Josiah, and the people of Israel.[189] However, he is not willing to admit that such prophecies establish divine foreknowledge of an individual's future decisions. Hence, he argues that in such prophecies God determines the activities and then sets the parameters within which the freedom of the individuals will occur and sets boundaries within which certain nations will strive.[190]

In the framework of Boyd's self-determinism, freedom is generally restricted. This implies that the freedom of the individuals involved in these prophecies is further limited; the scope of their free will is narrower than all other individuals. That is, God unilaterally manipulates human freedom. For God must orchestrate, in addition to restricting free will, the activities of individuals involved in order to get them to fulfill His predictions.[191] It seems, then, that God undermines individual freedom and takes

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[188]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 122.

[189]1 Kgs 13:2-3; 2 Kgs 22; 1; 23:15-16; Isa 45:13; Gen 15: 13-15 (Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 34; idem, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 121).

[190]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 33-34; idem, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 121.

[191]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 123; idem, *God of the Possible*, 35. David Hunt is correct in his observation that Boyd places greater emphasis on libertarian freedom but seems to find fewer free agents in the Bible because he denies freedom

advantage of the undermined freedom by making offers in a manner that the only

reasonable choice for the contingent being is to accept the coercive offer. There comes

into sight an in-built tension between affirmation of surety of the fulfillment of divine

predictions, on one hand, and holding to self-determination, on the other hand.

As a way of concluding the examination of Boyd's concept of divine

foreknowledge, it is necessary to emphasize that Boyd believes his concept of divine

foreknowledge has theological advantage over other alternative views. However, he does

not "wager the entire credibility of the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy on . . . the open

view of the future."[192] He recognizes that individuals with other theories of divine

foreknowledge may at the same time affirm the warfare explanation of the problem of

evil. However, he mentions that such people "do so with a certain inconsistency."[193] He

therefore writes, "The open perspective on the future, however, is more biblical and

logically more consistent with the warfare worldview of Scripture and the Trinitarian

Warfare Theodicy than the EDF doctrine."[194]

Two assertions stand out in Boyd's statement. The first assertion is that any

theological concept must be biblical and logically consistent. The other affirmation of

equal importance for Boyd is that among other things his trinitarian warfare view is the

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where biblical passages unambiguously indicate divine foreknowledge of a person's
future actions (David P. Hunt, "A Simple-Foreknowledge Response," in *Divine
Foreknowledge*: *Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy [Downers Grove, IL:
InterVarsity Press, 2001], 53).

[192]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 87.

[193]Ibid.

[194]Ibid. EDF is Boyd's abbreviation for Exhaustively Definite Foreknowledge.

most biblical and internally consistent warfare theodicy model.[195] In sum, we may observe that in spite of his caveat, the credibility of the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy depends to a great extent on the open view of the future. However, his claims for the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy must await evaluation in chapter 5.

Sovereignty of God

In discussing Boyd's concepts of free will and divine foreknowledge, we have discovered that because of contingent free will, the content of God's foreknowledge is what there is to be known: self-purpose and possibilities of moral agents' future decisions.

On the basis of the relationship between divine foreknowledge and self-determinism, Boyd is critical of the classical traditional view of divine sovereignty, God exercising meticulous sovereignty over His creation. In his attempt to object to this view he points out that the assumption, "sovereignty is synonymous" with unilateral or meticulous control,[196] has devastating effects on God's sovereignty. It undermines God's power in a sense that it denies Him the ability to respond and adapt to surprises and to the unexpected and the prerogative of being a risk-taker, the very things that human beings enjoy having.[197] He claims that the concept of meticulous divine sovereignty distorts the human understanding of God, which is "analogically rooted in our experience."[198]

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[195]See ibid., 88-144, for Boyd's explanation for the truth of these claims.

[196]Ibid., 147.

[197]Ibid., 148.

[198]Ibid., 149.

Depending on feminist theologians and analogy from human experience, he emphasizes that we appreciate leaders or individuals who influence others more than those who coerce. Thus, Boyd can say that "what is praiseworthy about God's sovereignty is . . . that out of his character he *does not* exercise all the power he *could*."[199] He intends to demonstrate that divine sovereignty is limited to influence not as a result of weakness found in God but as a necessary act that accompanies His decision to create creatures with self-determined free will. This is why he is of the conviction that God shares His power with His intelligent creatures. However, as wise as God is, He keeps enough power to Himself "so that the overall flow of history and the attainment of his ultimate aim in creation would remain within his power."[200] In other words, God took a risk in sharing His power, but has enough means to redeem the lost that may occur as a result of the risk.[201] Boyd is persuaded that shared power distinguishes God's style of leadership as persuasion and not coercion. I may correctly remark that Boyd sounds like a process theologian. However, unlike process theists who call attention to a necessary God-world relationality, Boyd assumes that relationality belongs to the essence of the Godhead.[202] In his view, God does not need the world to be relational: there is relationality among God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

At this point, Boyd relies on various sources to support the view that divine sovereignty is not meticulous. He refers to Irenaeus, Athenagoras, and Origen to say that

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[199]Ibid. (emphasis his).

[200]Ibid., 187.

[201]Ibid., 53-54.

[202]Ibid., 150n8; idem, *Trinity and Process*, 330.

there is no coercion in God.[203] Convinced as he is about his concept of divine

sovereignty, he is no less certain about the support contemporary science lends to his

theory. He observes, with contemporary scientific disciplines, that indeterminism and

determinism are complementary. Thus he writes, "From quantum mechanics as well as

from chaos theory, complexity theory and thermodynamics, 'we are presented with a

picture of the world that is neither mechanical nor chaotic, but at once both open and

orderly in its character.'"[204] In his experience, contemporary science proves that the

behavior of a group can be predicted, but in each and every individual there is

unpredictability, which stems from the nature of things.[205] Consequently, in Boyd, once

predictability is not exhaustive, God does not control everything.[206] From this, one can

infer that the relationship that exists between human freedom and divine determinism and

foreknowledge exists between self-determined free will and divine sovereignty.

Therefore, divine determinism, foreknowledge, and sovereignty are inextricably linked

together.

    The apparent relationship between divine determinism, foreknowledge, and

sovereignty raises a question about the possibility of God achieving His purpose for His

creation. Boyd addresses this issue by expounding on God's "*own character and*

ability."[207] On one hand, God's ability to know all counterfactuals and predict the

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[203]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 151.

[204]Ibid., 152.

[205]Ibid., 151-155.

[206]Ibid., 155.

[207]Ibid., 156 (emphasis his).

behavior of a group made it possible for God to foreknow from the beginning the probability of the fall, and also to foreknow that, if the fall should occur, some of the creatures would accept His offer of salvation and others would not.[208] We should be reminded that, in Boyd, the possibility of the fall is rooted in self-determined free will.[209] That is, God knows the probability of achieving His purpose on the basis of His knowledge of the future possibilities of agents' choices.

Similarly, he argues that God's essence is love, therefore He will not give up on His determined purpose for His creatures. Citing the stories of the flood[210] and Israel's obstinacy and God's ability to provide alternative plans to save the Israelites,[211] Boyd concludes that God will do anything to bring His purpose for creation to a realization.[212] Based on the previous discussions, one could confidently say that in Boyd God's effort to actualize His goal includes limiting one's scope of freedom, orchestrating some circumstances, and pulling individuals into His self-purposed plan.

Having described God's sovereignty as general, Boyd recognizes that his explanation seems to make God's governing activities in history arbitrary. However, he points out that the seeming arbitrariness arises from the nature of human freedom[213] and

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[208]Ibid.

[209]Ibid., 54.

[210]Gen 6 (ibid., 157).

[211]Exod 32:9-10; Jer 3:7, 7:31; 19:5; 32:35 (ibid.).

[212]Ibid., 158.

[213]Ibid., 162-177.

the variables that condition the quality of freedom.[214] This means contingent free will

dictates when and how God intervenes in human history, free to intervene after an

individual's character is solidified or does not act within his or her scope of freedom. In

other words, God's decision to create creatures with self-determined will not only limits

His power but also His freedom. Thus, Boyd observes that "God is not free to 'unlimit

himself' anytime he chooses."[215] This understanding of divine intervention in human

history requires a corresponding understanding of prayer. The following section

discusses the issue of prayer in terms of its role in divine sovereignty.

Prayer

Boyd conceives of prayer as a part of the package that comes along with God's

decision to create a world in which "love is possible."[216] In Boyd's view, prayer is a

necessary corollary of God's decision. According to him, prayer is the say-so in the

spiritual realm[217] as free will is the say-so in the physical realm. Since the nature of self-

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[214]Ibid., 191-204.

[215]Ibid., 184. Boyd's concept of divine sovereignty comes close to the process theist's understanding of the sovereignty of God. Boyd and process thinkers argue that God does not control all that happens in the world. His power is understood as persuasive; however, His endless resourcefulness and competence will lead Him to achieve His goal for the world (See Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 118-120; Ford, "Divine Persuasion and the Triumph of the Good," 288-293; Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 138, 154; Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 28). Nevertheless, while process theists hold that God only provides the ideal and creative possibilities toward the actualization of aesthetic value, Boyd emphasizes that God constantly works to achieve His goal for His creation.

[216]Ibid., 231.

[217]In Boyd, say-so means an individual's contribution or participation. Therefore prayer is a say-so in the spiritual realm means prayer is the process through which human agents contribute to activities in the spiritual realm.

determined freedom places constraints on what God can do unilaterally, petitionary and intercessory prayers are that which allows God to "steer a situation toward his desired end" without revoking contingent freedom.[218] Therefore, he remarks, "prayer [is] a central aspect of moral responsibility. By God's own design, it functions as a crucial constituent in the 'givens' of any particular situation that makes it possible for God more intensely to steer a situation toward his desired end."[219] He continues, "We may understand that, by his own choice, God genuinely needs us to pray for certain things if they are to be accomplished, just as we may understand that God needs us to cooperate with him on a physical level for certain things to be accomplished."[220]

Again, relying on the essentials of friendship or personal relationships, Boyd sees prayer as empowerment given to free agents to influence God. Through prayers, free agents participate in the center of influence in their relationship with God.[221] For him, prayer is a human activity that God has ordained to establish a free agent's personhood, participation in God's triune loving Lordship, and maintain constant communication in the Creator-creature relationship on a temporal level.[222] We can infer that prayer is the medium through which humans influence God in the God-human relationship. In this sense, petitioners and intercessors influence God to do their bidding and, as a result, prayer does not necessarily permit God to direct a particular situation to His desired end,

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[218]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 231.

[219]Ibid.

[220]Ibid., 232.

[221]Ibid., 233.

[222]Ibid., 233-234; idem, *Is God to Blame?* 129-130.

as Boyd indicates. Unequivocally, Boyd's emphasis is that God shares His sovereignty with humanity; however, he has not shown how God influences His people in any particular situation in order to bring them to do what He desires. Thus, all the elements that condition the scope of self-determined freedom limit God in terms of His activity in human life, and prayer also specifies what He can do. Thus, the certainty of God achieving His desired end in a war zone world by exercising providential sovereignty is still questionable.

Unlike process theologians who believe God cannot respond to petitionary prayers because He works in accordance with metaphysical principles that govern Him and creation[223] and classical theology that teaches that prayer has no effect on God,[224] Boyd insists on the effectiveness of prayer. He turns to scriptural passages[225] and some contemporary scholars, such as Walter Wink and Keith Ward, to emphasize that petitionary prayer influences God in an extraordinary manner, which makes an "incredible difference in the world."[226] Pointing to the war between the Amalekites and the Israelites and Moses' significant participation, he concludes that intercessory prayer also conditions the amount of influence an agent has over others.[227] According to him, the importance and urgency of prayer is evident in Christ's teaching. Therefore, he writes, "This teaching only makes sense if prayer actually accomplishes things: the more

[223]Boyd, Satan and the Problem of Evil, 229.

[224]Ibid., 228.

[225]Gen 4:13-14, 14:2-3; Exod 2:23-24, 3:7-10, 14:15-16, 17:8-14; Acts 7:34; 2 Kgs 20:1-7; Matt 8:2-3; Jas 5:16 (ibid., 226-227).

[226]Ibid., 227.

we pray, the more good is accomplished. Indeed, there are more conditional promises attached to prayer in Scripture than to any other human activity."[228] As a result, he asserts that a feasible theology must "render coherent the effectiveness and urgency of . . . prayer in the scripture."[229]

Although Boyd believes prayer plays an important role in God's sovereignty, he recognizes that many prayers go unanswered. He is certain that the arbitrary way in which prayers seem to be answered does not result only from God's will and the faith of the petitioners, but also other variables such as angelic free will and the presence of sin.[230] This does not mean he believes we are left to chance;[231] rather he is convinced that "God sovereignly influences the whole process, working to bring about as much good and to prevent as much evil as possible."[232]

As important and as powerful as prayer is, it does not always bring the desired results, he contends. However, he stresses an urgent trust in the sovereign leadership of the Lord.[233] Based on scriptural texts, he mentions that God never indicated that the suffering and pain in the world be part of His plan, neither did He promise that we will

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[227]Exod 17:11-13 (ibid., 204).

[228]Ibid., 227.

[229]Ibid., 227.

[230]Ibid., 234-238; idem, *Is God to Blame?* 135-137.

[231]Boyd believes some elements of spontaneity permeate the created world. Hence, how independent spontaneity and self-determined events interact with each other is partly a matter of chance, but he does not perceive the created world as a machine set in operation mode to run on its own (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 388).

[232]Ibid., 237.

escape from all the emotions and physical pains of the world, nor did He promise

absolute protection from all the evils of the world. However, He did assure us that He

bears with us our pains and sufferings, He is working to bring good out of evil; He uses

the pains and the sufferings we go through "to build our character and strengthen our

reliance on Him," and that eternal fellowship with God in His kingdom is our reward for

the sufferings in this world.[234]

In sum, prayer and contingent freedom, its nature and scope, play a significant

role in a particular event. Therefore, to understand God's specific interaction with a free

agent it is necessary to understand the agent's relationship with all the free agents who

are associated with the event in question. Citing the communication between God and

Job, Boyd indicates that it is beyond our knowledge to coordinate all the variables

associated to a particular episode.[235] Hence, God's interaction with creation will always

seem, from the outside, arbitrary to us.

Boyd's notion of human freedom and the part it plays in God's interaction with

the world makes the reason for a particular evil a mystery. This is why he emphasizes

that the mystery of evil is not "about God's character" but, rather, it is the result of the

"complexity of creation."[236] Boyd explains that all evil results from the agents' will;

however, by virtue of our lack of exhaustive knowledge of the variables of the condition

or a particular state of affairs, we cannot know why some events are preventable and

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[233]Ibid., 238.

[234]Boyd, *Is God to Blame*? 153-164, 196.

[235]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 220-226.

[236]Ibid., 215-216.

others are not.[237] So far, I have analyzed three main concepts: free will, divine

foreknowledge, and God's sovereignty, that underlie Boyd's Trinitarian Warfare

Theodicy. In discussing these concepts, we have discovered that contingent freedom is

self-determined, divine foreknowledge is limited; the content of divine foreknowledge is

that which God has purposed or determined, and sovereignty is general. Consequently, in

seeking to analyze Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy, it is important to examine how Boyd

employs his understanding of these concepts to explain the problem of evil.

The Fall and Evil

So far, I have analyzed the underlying theological elements of the Trinitarian

Warfare Theodicy. However, the task of examining the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy

will not be complete without an analysis of the fall and evil in Boyd. I wish to

accomplish this exercise by focusing on his understanding of the origin of the fall and

evil, and victory over evil.

Prehistoric Fall and Evil

In his book *God at War*, Boyd examines passages of Scripture and concludes that

the Bible is written from a warfare perspective.[238] As a result, he carefully demonstrates

that Gen 1 is in a warfare context. This makes Gen 1 a conflict-creation account.[239]

He also mentions that the Western cultural mind-set of secularism and

materialism does not give much credit to cosmic warfare,[240] but he indicates that the turn

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[237]Ibid., 216-220.

[238]Boyd, *God at War*, 99.

[239]Ibid., 102-113.

of modernism to postmodernism makes cosmic warfare all important because of postmodern awareness of "nonordinary reality" in the spiritual realm.[241] This boosts his confidence in the viability of his cosmic warfare explanation to the problem of evil. While Boyd is not prepared to accept the obsessiveness of evil spirits in the surrounding cultures of the Old Testament authors, he maintains that the biblical authors were influenced by their surrounding cultures, specifically the Canaanite culture. Again, he comments that the biblical motif of cosmic warfare is polemicizing against the Near Eastern cultural view of imperfect gods fighting against each other. In his view, although the Bible affirms cosmic conflict, yet the sovereignty of God is unparalleled.[242] It is therefore not surprising when he interprets most of the Old Testament passages in the light of a warfare motif in Ancient Near Eastern literature or culture.[243] In this context, Boyd identifies prehistoric[244] fall and warfare.

It should be emphasized that the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy "is predicated on the assumption that divine goodness does not completely control or in any sense will evil;

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[240]Ibid., 59.

[241]Ibid., 61-62.

[242]Ibid., 83.

[243]Ibid., 74-77.

[244]"I refer to the cosmic fall as prehistoric because it lies outside what we can by ordinary means know about history, and thus outside our ordinary definition of 'history.' But in my view this event is not ahistorical, hence not 'mythological.' For while it lies outside our 'history,' it does not lie outside the sequence of events that bracket our history" (ibid., 326n32).

rather, good and evil are at war with one another. This assumption obviously entails that God is not exercising exhaustive, meticulous control over the world."[245]

Referring to some Old Testament passages, Boyd comes to the conclusion that, although God is portrayed as the only God, there are other spiritual beings. He admits that these beings are sometimes called angels or gods. However, Boyd, considering the difficulties such as unbiblical cultural baggage that comes with the use of angels, prefers the term gods.[246] Boyd by no means suggests polytheism. He believes the usage of the term in Scriptures is an emphasis on the existence of such beings and a sarcastic way of making them "puny in comparison with Yahweh that they do not even warrant the title 'god.'"[247] Consequently, he gives a definite prominence to the concept of monotheism.[248]

The stress put on monotheism stems from a belief that the gods are creatures that God created billions of years before our present universe.[249] Therefore, according to Boyd, these gods are contingent beings endowed with self-determined freedom. They are personal and intellectual beings, powerful and self-determined, which implies they have the capacity to influence other creatures for better or for worse and the ability to obey or disobey God.[250] Boyd does not give God's purpose for creating the gods. But one can

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[245]Ibid., 20.

[246]He believes his usage of the term *god* has a biblical foundation.

[247]Boyd, *God at War*, 116.

[248]See ibid., 115-129, for his defense of monotheism.

[249]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 313.

[250]Boyd, *God at War*, 115-116, 118, 129, 141.

infer from Boyd's understanding of the relationship between love and self-determined will that God created them for the same reason He created humankind. This means that not only is God's sovereignty on earth general, but it is general also in heaven. As a result, he maintains that these gods form a heavenly council, which God consults before taking an action.[251]

In this way, Boyd proves that these heavenly beings co-rule with God as intermediaries between God and other creatures. In association with this, he mentions that some of these gods are warriors of God,[252] and others are assigned to oversee the welfare of the nations.[253] Hence, the decisions of these gods genuinely affect God "to the point where He may even alter previous plans in response."[254] This proves to Boyd that the angels are in a personal relationship with God; and the two centers, influence and non-coercion, on which relationships are built upon are genuinely respected. God abides by a non-coercion covenant with these lesser gods.[255] In his view, while God is sovereign over these gods, He treats them as personal beings and counsels with them.

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[251]Boyd recognizes that the use of first-person plural in passages such as found in Gen 1; 3:22; 6:1-4,7-8; 11:7; Isa 6:8, may be plural majesty, but on the basis of his concept of heavenly council, he insists that the standard interpretation among Jews has been plural as reference to heavenly council. This understanding makes more sense, according to him, in explaining the problem of evil and dissolves the academic problem of evil in Scriptures (ibid., 131-132).

[252]2 Kgs 2:11, 3:26-27; Pss 29:1, 34:7, 68:17, 103:20; Dan 7:10; Joel 3:11; Judg 5:20; Isa 40:26, 45:12; 2 Sam 5:23-24; 1 Chr 12:22 (ibid., 132-134).

[253]Deut 32:7-9, 17; Gen 11:7-8 (ibid., 135-136).

[254]Ibid., 130.

[255]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 193.

Citing biblical references[256] for support, Boyd uses this as an opportunity to reemphasize God's temporality, His ability to change His mind, interact with and respond to His creatures, disavowing the Greek philosophical concept of a timeless God.[257]

The notion of a primordial fall is inherent in this understanding of the relationship between God and these gods. This is evidenced in Boyd's discussion of the relationship between love and free will. Consequently, reading the creation account in the light of Near Eastern literature, Boyd identifies a pre-creational fall of the gods.[258] He establishes that Gen 1:1 is a description of prehistoric creation.[259] He speculates that the gods perverted their God-given duties by copulating with the inhabitants of the earth, apparently animals,[260] in procreating monsters such as Leviathan. This tentative statement is reached due to the fact that Boyd relies on watcher tradition[261] for the interpretation of Gen 6, from which he states that

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[256]1 Kgs 22:20; Exod 32:14-15; Jonah 3:4-10; Isa 14:13, 38:1-5, 6:8; Jer 18:6-11; Deut 4:19-20, 17:13; Job 1:6, 21, 38:7; Judg 5:20; Pss 104:4, 148:1-6; Hab 3:11; Heb 1:7 (Boyd, *God at War*, 130-131).

[257]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 129-131, 136. Timelessness is the view that presupposes that God is immutable, impassable, He is outside of time, and so on.

[258]2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Tim 3:6; Matt 25:41 (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 311; idem, *God at War*, 99, 101).

[259]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 313.

[260]Boyd does not show any obvious distinction between creatures of the original earth (ibid., 314).

[261]Watcher tradition is a belief developed during the intertestamental period to explain the origin of evil. It simply argues that watchers are a group of fallen angels who were assigned to watch over the earth, but rather mated with mortal women giving rise to a race of hybrids known as the nephilim. This belief is found in the Apocrypha; the Books of Enoch and Jubilees. Based on this teaching, Boyd argues that the story of Gen 6 "occurs in a number of different forms, but in outline it runs as follows. The Lord had

perhaps [the incident that resulted in the fall is] in a manner remotely analogous to the way deformed hybrid creatures were produced by the mixture of demonic and human natures prior to the flood. . . . The mingling of demonic influences with the good creative 'life-force' . . . of God produced hybrid creatures in this world that no longer perfectly reflected the glory of their original Creator. Nature became hostile, creatures become vicious, and the whole planet became subject to God's enemy and was no longer fit for the purpose for which it was originally created.[262]

Apparently, Boyd's understanding of self-determined free will is an integral part of the issue of a prehistoric fall. The gods' decision to exercise their will against the purpose of God is the beginning of the fall and evil. God's response to His rebellious creatures is discovered in Boyd's concept of divine victory over evil, which is analyzed in the next section.

Victory over the Fall and Evil

We have noted that Boyd's concept of divine sovereignty describes God as one who constantly relates with His creation. This section focuses on his concept of God's

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originally entrusted various angels with the responsibility of watching over humans, who in turn were assigned the task of watching over the earth. These angels, the original 'sons of God,' were to be guardians and educators of humankind, instructing them in the ways of God and giving them useful advice in making tools, working the land, building structures and so on.

Unfortunately, however, many of these exalted spiritual beings succumbed to lust for beautiful earthly women . . . and then abused the divine authority they had originally been given. For example, instead of providing moral instruction, these . . . angels instructed humankind in demonic magic; instead of teaching useful crafts, they taught humans how to fashion weapons of war to be used against each another.

Moreover, . . . these rebel angelic beings attained the pinnacle of evil . . . when they took human form and copulated with human women. . . . As in Genesis, the offspring of these hybrid unions were believed to be mutant giants . . . whose own offspring, according to some Watcher accounts, were mutant spiritual beings" (Boyd, *God at War*, 177). Boyd believes Dan 10 is a reference to the watcher tradition (137-138) and 2 Pet 2:4-9 and Jude 7-8 may be tapping into the watcher tradition (285-284).

[262]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 314.

reaction towards His fallen creation. This discussion is classified under historic fall and

evil, natural evil, and the ministry of Christ.

Historic fall and evil

According to Boyd, God engaged in a primeval warfare with the evil monsters to

preserve His creation.[263] However, God did not annihilate the evil forces, but subjugated

and domesticated the evil creatures.[264] It could be said that the fallen animals and the

hybrid creatures involved were the ones that were subjugated and the rest of the animals

were domesticated. This, in Boyd's view, is evidence of God's masterful sovereignty and

victory over formidable forces.[265]

In contrast to the traditional belief in a pristine creation, he opts for the concept,

the earth was "birthed . . . in an infected incubator."[266] This understanding is greatly

impacted by Boyd's view of a prehistoric fall. His concept of a self-determined free will

forces him to assume that God did not destroy the monsters He waged war with, but

subdued them. Therefore, he sees evil "at the very foundation of creation and in the

cosmic environment of the earth, something has rebelled against God and is therefore

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[263]Boyd believes the same warfare is portrayed by the Old Testament authors in mythological imageries. This is proven by God's warfare with demonic beings like Leviathan (Ps 74:14; Job 41), Rahab (Job 9:13; Ps 89:9-10; Isa 30:7; Ezek 29:3; 32:2; 2 Sam 5:24), Behemoth (Job 40:15-24) and Hostile waters or Yam (Ps 104:2-7; Job 38:6-11; Prov 8:27-29) (Boyd, *God at War*, 94-97, 101; see also 30-33).

[264]Boyd, *God at War*, 98; idem, *Satan and the Problem* of Evil, 314.

[265]Boyd, *God at War*, 98.

[266]Ibid., 107.

both hostile toward God and threatening toward the world."[267] Boyd then identifies that

the word translated "subdue" in Gen 1:26 is referring to "the suppression, the conquering

or the enslavement of hostile forces."[268] He argues that Gen 1 is an "account of God's

creation of this world *after* his battle with his cosmic foes, and *out of* the remains of the

battle."[269] This clearly shows that Boyd reads the Genesis account of creation from a

"restoration theory." This reading offers him a plausible answer to the scientific issues of

radiometric dating of the earth, fossilized sequence, and prehumanoid animal suffering.[270]

But he writes, "While the case for the restoration view is defensible and compelling, the

evidence is nevertheless admittedly tentative and controversial and should not be raised

to the level of a doctrine."[271] Again he indicates that he does not want the viability of the

warfare theodicy to depend on "restoration theory" and that the biblical view of warfare

is feasible without the restoration theory.[272] Hence, he writes that

> the creational monotheism of the Bible and of the church seems to logically require
> something like a prehistoric fall, regardless of how we interpret the *Chaoskampf*
> material of the Old Testament. Assuming that there is one eternal Creator God who is
> all-good and all-powerful, it is illogical to posit a foundational structural evil within
> the cosmos . . . without postulating a significant rebellion at some previous point that

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[267]Ibid., 99. See also 96.

[268]Ibid., 106.

[269]Ibid., 104.

[270]Ibid., 109.

[271]Ibid., 113.

[272]Ibid.

has corrupted the cosmos. . . . In short, if the all-powerful Creator is perfectly good but creation is largely evil, something must have interfered with the creation.[273]

Consequently, one could remark that the restoration theory is employed only to meet the requirement of his scientific hermeneutic principles, but then the question is: Can Boyd's model of warfare theodicy be feasible without the restoration theory of creation? This question will be addressed later.

Accordingly, God's purpose for refashioning the earth was to collaborate with His human creatures in subduing His enemies and restoring His lordship over the earth.[274] This may appear incongruent with his idea that God's purpose for creation is to acquire a people to share His triune love, but a thorough analysis of these two expressions makes clear that the two phrases are certainly in harmony, given that, in Boyd, humans co-rule with God. That is, when Boyd remarks that humans were given the power or key to subdue or unlock the evil forces,[275] he believes the key or the power is self-determined freedom, the ability to either join with God to conquer His enemies or support the enemies. However, humans did not use the key as God intended, but unleashed the enemies of God.[276]

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[273]Ibid., 101-102. Boyd argues that the linguistic evidence in Gen 1 is enough to indicate that something is hostile against God at the time of creation without even assuming a prehistoric fall and warfare (ibid., 103-110).

[274]Ibid., 107; Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 313, 315.

[275]Boyd, *God at War*, 110.

[276]Ibid., 111.

Boyd explains the occasion that led to the unleashing of the evil monsters by first

identifying one particular malicious god as the "the adversary of God."[277] In the context

of the traditional understanding of Isa 14:1-23 and Ezek 28,[278] Boyd sees that the

adversary

> was the pinnacle of God's creation, the one who possessed the greatest potential for
> good. For this same reason, however, Satan possessed the greatest potential for evil,
> for though he was the greatest of God's creation, he was nevertheless a contingent
> creature, which means that he possessed the capacity to choose one way or the other.
> . . . Lucifer tragically chose to exalt himself rather than offering himself as a gift of
> love to his Maker, and now Satan has fallen.[279]

Boyd's concept of self-determined free will allows him to argue that God did not

destroy Lucifer or revoke his free will. He was allowed to use all the potentials and

influential abilities he was endowed with when he was created, which he has decided to

use for evil.[280] Boyd indicates that

> over billions of years the original creation came under bondage to destructive spirits,
> some of whom perhaps had been agents originally entrusted by the Creator with
> caring for it. These guardians joined Satan's rebellion, however, and began
> exercising their domain of influence in an anticreational manner. . . . They perverted
> earth's animal inhabitants, perhaps infiltrating the environmental process. . . . Perhaps
> in a manner remotely analogous to the way deformed hybrid creatures were produced
> by the mixture of demonic and human natures prior to the flood . . . the minging of
> demonic and influences with the good creative 'life-force . . . of God produced hybrid
> creatures in this world that no longer perfectly reflected the glory of their original
> Creator.[281]

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[277]Ibid., 115.

[278]Boyd analyzes each Old Testament passage that uses the word Satan and
refutes the theory that affirms "demonic-in-Yahweh." These passages include Zech 3:1-
10; 1 Chr 21:1; Job 1; Isa 45:7; Lam 3:8; Amos 3:6 (ibid., 157-162).

[279]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 172.

[280]Gregory A. Boyd and Edward K. Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic* (Wheaton, IL:
Victor Books, 1994), 42.

[281]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 313-314.

The impression one gets is that Lucifer penetrated the heavenly council with his rebellion, which led to the prehistoric fall and warfare. However, some conclusive remarks of Boyd militate against this impression. He makes a clear distinction between the destructive forces such as *Yamm*, *Leviathan*, *Rahab,* and *Behemoth*, which God battled with at the foundation of the earth, and the rebellious gods with Lucifer/Satan as their prince.[282] In association with this, he writes, "The figure of Satan comes to absorb within himself the chaotic cosmic characteristics previously attributable to Leviathan and other anticreational beasts."[283] This conclusive statement lends credence to the assumption that Satan's diabolic activities began after the prehistoric warfare. In other words, it is difficult to ascertain from these remarks whether or not Satan was involved in the prehistoric fall and warfare. Despite this difficulty in deciphering Satan's involvement in the prehistoric fall and warfare, it is certain that Boyd portrays Satan as the brain behind the act that led to resetting the demons loose once again after God had restrained them in the prehistoric battle. An indication that God did not bring them under a forcible control, the nature of Boyd's concept of self-determined freedom does not give room for compulsion; the only way God subdued them was to lessen the intensity of their actions.

In any case, Boyd does not mention the cause of Satan's rebellion. Discussing the prologue to the Book of Job, Boyd appears to make God's authority the issue of Satan's rebellion. But in the same context, he points out that, since the passage is an epic poem, it is not sufficient to cite divine authority as the issue of Satan's rebellion. In his view,

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[282]Boyd, *God at War*, 163-164.

the introduction only "sets up a specific episode that will vindicate God's wisdom and integrity."[284] Consequently, the cause of Satan's rebellion is not mentioned.

Having identified Satan as an enemy of God, he describes the snake in Gen 3 as possessed by the old adversary of God. His deceptive act in the Garden of Eden brought about the fall of humanity.[285] He believes this traditional idea is an incontestable fact.

The central idea underlining the human fall is that misuse of self-determined freedom unleashed evil spirits and brought the world once again under the dominion of the enemies of God[286] with Satan as their prince,[287] the one who has "illegitimately seized the world and thus now exercises a controlling influence over it."[288] Elsewhere he writes, the adversary who later assumes the name Satan is "undiluted evil. He is Hitler on a cosmic scale! And his power to influence, as well as that of the other 'demons,' is vast."[289]

For Boyd, "the possibility of warfare seems to be a necessary concomitant to Yahweh's plan to rule the cosmos through intermediary beings, human and divine, who are free to some extent."[290] This means God wars with formidable enemies and genuine

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[283]Ibid., 164.

[284]Boyd, *Is God to Blame?* 86-87.

[285]Boyd, *God at War*, 155-157.

[286]Ibid., 111.

[287]John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Luke 4:5-6; 1 John 5:19; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; Luke 4:7-8 (ibid., 180-181).

[288]Ibid., 181.

[289]Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, 36.

[290]Boyd, *God at War*, 137-138.

resistance.[291] This is the reason Boyd emphasizes that God does not always have His own way, but "*God always does the most God can do*."[292] With this emphasis, it seems Boyd makes absurd the idea that there is a divine purpose behind every evil. In this sense, Boyd successfully makes Christ's ministry a battle against the kingdom of Satan and building the Kingdom of God.[293]

It appears an agent's free will is significantly related to this understanding of the origin and perpetuating of evil.[294] This concept stands close to Augustine's concept of the origin of evil. While they both agree that evil began with the misuse of the free will of a created being, they disagree on many issues. Whereas Augustine clearly accepts creation *ex-nihilo* and free will in the compatibility sense, Boyd affirms creation out of the debris of prehistoric warfare and self-determined freedom, which makes it difficult for God to prevent creatures from doing evil and arousing warfare. For Boyd, since freedom is a metaphysical result of love, God cannot stop evil without destroying freedom and the capacity to love. Thus, evil is a risk God took and has to endure. In addition, Boyd seems to assume some sort of dualism but not metaphysical dualism as found in later Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism. It is "ethical and provisional

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[291]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 166-168.

[292]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 211 (emphasis his).

[293]Jesus' view about the rule of Satan and the pervasive influence of his army was not simply a marginal piece of first-century apocalyptic thought that he happened to embrace. It is, rather, the driving force behind everything Jesus says and does. His exorcisms and miracles and teachings are proven facts of a warfare between Satan and his troops and God and His army (ibid., 35-36; see Boyd, *God at War*, 180-286).

[294]2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Tim 3:6; Matt 25:41 (Boyd, *God at War*, 178-179, 283-287).

dualism."[295] That is to say, Satan and his forces are not from eternity, but were created beings to whom God has given the ability to oppose Him.

Boyd does not depersonalize demons as powerful social forces and structures; he perceives demons as personal moral beings with freedom who have power to influence other moral beings with their evil activities. Therefore, he sees evil as a reality, not as an illusion. Boyd argues that evil is not a substance created by God; it is a possible reality resulting from God's willingness to create agents with free will. While prehistoric misuse of free will brought evil beings into existence, humankind's misuse of the will released all that God negated when He refashioned the earth.[296] In the context of Boyd, that which God negated is self-love. For this reason, evil is a "tragic intrusion into God's otherwise good creation."[297]

Natural evil

Discussion on the origin of the fall and evil earmarked an adverse use of contingent freedom from God's purpose as the root cause of evil. Consequently, like Augustine and process theists, Boyd does not distinguish natural from moral evil. For him, there is nothing natural about natural evil.[298] All evils are the result of actions of agents who contribute to how things transpire over and against God. However, he does not overlook the scholars' perspective on natural evil.

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[295]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 311.

[296]Ibid., 341.

[297]Boyd, *God at War*, 165.

[298]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 18.

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Boyd approvingly cites several authors such as W. E. Stuermann, Edwin Lewis, and Robert J. Russell to affirm the magnitude of natural evil and animal suffering.[299] He writes, "Nature in its present state . . . is not as the Creator created it to be, any more than humanity in its present state is as the Creator created it to be. When nature exhibits diabolical features that are not the result of human wills, it is the direct or indirect result of the influence of diabolic forces."[300]

He identifies the strengths and weaknesses of seven approaches to natural evil,[301] but his insistence that the diabolic features of nature are the result of demonic activities led him to conclude that all the seven explanations to the problem of natural evil are insufficient. On the other hand, he notes that a viable explanation of natural evil must incorporate insights[302] from all the seven approaches; "but none of these approaches alone constitutes such an explanation."[303] Hence on the basis of his explanation of the

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[299]Although he quotes them, he does not accept all their concepts. For instance he does not believe in Lewis's concept of eternal dualism and Stuermann's idea that the countenance of Satan is indelible in creation (ibid., 243-247).

[300]Ibid., 247.

[301]The seven approaches are: natural evil fulfills higher harmony of creation, nature suffers because of human sin, nature is an inevitable by-product of God's aim of developing souls with moral character, natural evil is nature's way of participating in the self-sacrificial life of God, natural evil exists because God is inherently limited, natural evil exists because there is necessary limitation in creation, and the menacing nature of *das nichtige* (ibid., 248-290).

[302]The insights that Boyd claims are unavoidable in any feasible explanation to natural evils are: some natural evils are punishment for sin, objective medium of relationality that allows free agents to interact with each other, epistemic distance between God and free agents, self-giving love of God, natural and moral evils have the same cause, and creatures possess potential for both good and evil (ibid., 290-291).

[303]Ibid., 290.

origin of evil and insights from the above view on natural evil, Boyd came up with three explanations of pain and suffering in the world.

First, he agrees with Augustine that human sin contributes to the natural disasters we experience in the world.[304] Arguing from the context of his principle of proportionality—the potential of moral agents to bless entails equal potential to harm— he concludes that when humanity succumbed to the influence of Satan, we actualized our potential to harm each other and our environment. Consequently, according to Boyd, we harm nature and we are harmed by nature.[305] He concedes to the biblical teaching that suffering happens as punishment for sin or as a form of discipline, but he argues that generalizing this idea is absurd and askew.[306] This does not imply that Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy incorporates suffering as punishment as an explanation to evil. In Boyd's judgment, such method of rulership was meant only for the people of Israel who were "to be the yeast God mixed with the whole world until all of it was leavened."[307] Thus God no longer uses such method in His sovereignty. This becomes more evident when in discussing God's love and justice he remarks, "We certainly have no reason to assume that God is punishing people because of sin—he took care of that on Calvary—or that he's disciplining them to refine their character, though God will always use suffering

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[304]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 252; Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, 34.

[305]Ibid., 256.

[306]Boyd, *Is God to Blame?* 80-83.

[307]Ibid., 82.

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to bring about whatever good he can."[308] Thus, some time ago before Christ's death,

suffering as punishment for sin or as a form of discipline was a feasible explanation of

the problem of evil, but after His death it no longer serves as a plausible explanation for

pain and suffering. However, he creates tension in his theory when in a sermon he

bluntly states that the process of character purification, which is sometimes excruciating,

begins as soon as an individual accepts Christ.[309]

Secondly, siding with advocates of nature as inherently limited, Boyd argues that

some things labeled natural evil are due to limitations in nature. God's creation is

something other than Himself, which implies there are limitations and imperfections in

creation.[310] He remarks that "*any created thing must, for example, possess a limited set*

of characteristics which rules out the possibility of possessing other characteristics

incompatible with these. But this can lead to unfortunate consequences."[311]

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[308]Ibid., 84.

[309]Gregory A. Boyd, "Tormented by the Flame," Christus Victor Ministries, http://www.media.whchurch.org/2009/2009-01-11_Boyd_Tormented-by-the-Flame.wmv (accessed February 11, 2009). See also his answer to a question about the thief on the cross: idem, "What About the Thief on the Cross," Christus Victor Ministries, http://www.gregboyd.org/qa/ salvation/after-life/what-about-the-thief-on-the-cross/ (accessed February 11, 2009).

[310]Boyd echoes Aquinas's statement when he writes, "The rock which holds you up must also be hard enough to allow you to stub your toe on it. The air which you breathe must also be thin enough to allow you to fall through it when not supported by a hard surface. The water which quenches your thirst must also be dense enough so you can't breathe in it, and so on. The dependability of the world which makes it possible for rational, morally responsible creatures to live works against us in certain circumstances. Indeed, every positive feature of any created entity is a potentially negative feature in certain circumstances" (Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic,* 35).

[311]Ibid. (emphasis theirs).

On the other hand, he agrees with Hick on the concept of epistemic distance and objective reality. Boyd contends on the grounds of agents' morality and responsibility that some unpleasant qualities of nature are consequences of metaphysical requirements of "neutral medium of relationality."[312] He argues that

> freedom of choice . . . requires that the alternatives under consideration be viable alternatives. If the choice is to be a matter of morality, not survival, it must be possible genuinely to project a future for oneself living out one's choices. If God in all his glory, power and splendor were perfectly obvious to us from the start, it is doubtful our choice to love him could have a distinctly moral quality to it.[313]

He continues, "Objective reality has to be impersonal and somewhat unbending if creatures are to live morally responsible lives within it. For us to be morally responsible in relation to the world, we must be able to influence the world, but the world must also be able to influence us. That is, it must be somewhat pliable but not immediately accommodating to our every whim."[314] It is not clear whether Boyd implies two sets of limitation: one set is because creation is something other than God and the other set is for the purpose of forming epistemic distance between God and man, or one set serves the two purposes. Whichever way one looks at these limitations, in Boyd's opinion they are not inherently evil.[315] However, a couple of Boyd's ideas make this assertion beg the question: First is the theory that our present earth was created upon an evil-infested incubator. Second is the idea that some of the animals God warred with were

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[312]Neutral medium of relationality is an objective neutral environment which allows free agents to exercise their freedom by interacting with each other (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 425).

[313]Ibid., 258.

[314]Gen 2:15-15, 3:2-4 (ibid.).

[315]Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, 35.

subordinated to domestic animals. Finally, the fact that the human race is not able to

distinguish between these inherent limitations and imperfections in nature means they

manifest evil effects in the same manner as human sin. On the other hand, if we grant the

relationship Boyd creates between love and self-determined freedom it can be said that

the limitations and imperfections in nature are inherent possible evil. The definiteness of

this assumption must await the assessment of the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy.

In his third explanation of natural evil, Boyd acknowledges that there are ominous

aspects of nature that cannot be attributed to sin or corrective measures. In his view,

nature exists alongside invisible agents, Satan and his cohorts, who influence it for the

worst.[316] He cites early Church Fathers such as Origen, Athenagoras, and Tertullian, and

some contemporary theologians to demonstrate that the idea that natural evil is the result

of demonic influence has been the understanding of natural evil throughout the history of

the church, only to be distorted by Augustine's concept of meticulous divine providence

and the rise of "Enlightenment naturalism, rationalism and biblical criticism."[317] We

could infer that the event in the Garden of Eden gave Satan the opportunity to revitalize

the subdued evil and put him in charge of creation. For this reason evil is the "byproduct

of creation which is gone berserk through the evil influence of this Satanic army."[318]

Boyd's attempt to attribute recklessness in nature to the misuse of the freedom[319] is a

feasible explanation for the existence of evil before the prehistoric battle.

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[316]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 247.

[317]Ibid., 295.

[318]Boyd, *God at War*, 182-183.

[319]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 318.

The significant points arrived at in this discussion are Boyd's claims that God does not cause evil, and even though He brings good out of evil He does not have any purpose for evil. Natural and moral evils are the result of the wrong use of the freedom of contingent— angelic and human—beings. It then becomes obvious that if the human race had directed their will in championing God's purpose for this refashioned earth, the limitations and imperfections in nature may not have been conspicuous.[320] Satan, asserts Boyd, uses the neutral environment as a weapon against humanity.

Ministry of Christ

Having briefly discussed Boyd's understanding of a refashioned earth, human fall and evil, the next step seeks to clarify his concept of the function of the ministry of Christ in the divine process of gaining victory over His rebellious creatures. As mentioned above, the fall of the human race unleashed the evil beings and made Lucifer the king of the world. When Satan became the ruler of the earth, humans and nature turned against each other; nature became a weapon in the hands of the enemy of God. As a result, in Boyd's opinion the centrality of Jesus' ministry is to bind Lucifer and his followers and establish His Kingdom.[321] His discussion of Jesus' work in regard to eliminating sin and evil may be organized in terms of Christ's life, death and resurrection, the church, and eradication of fall and evil.

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[320]Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, 35; Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 252.

[321]Boyd, *God at War*, 181-182. See also Gregory A. Boyd, "The Kingdom as a Political-Spiritual Revolution," *Criswell Theological Review* 6 (2008): 23-41; idem, *The Myth of a Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Thus, he sees every activity of Christ as a conflict with the archenemy of God. Hence, according to Boyd, Christ saw the victims of diseases and pain—demoniac, epileptics, and paralytics—as casualties of war. Therefore, every healing and exorcism that Christ performed was a step toward the vanquishing of the rule of Satan and setting people free from demonic inflicted pain and suffering. All the miracles over nature that Christ performed were a demonstration of God restoring creation to its proper order.[322] Furthermore, in Boyd's opinion, Christ's teachings were all demonstrations of warfare motive. However, for Boyd, the most significant aspect of Christ's ministry is His death and resurrection; Christ's death and resurrection were acts of war that demonstrated and accomplished His victory over evil, and "spell Satan's ultimate demise."[323]

According to Boyd, for Christ's substitutionary death to be meaningful, it must be recognized that the primary significance of His death is cosmic. In other words, while Boyd believes Christ died to deliver the fallen human race, his emphasis on Gen 3:15 requires that God's first aim is to subjugate His enemy, Satan,[324] and enthrone Christ where He rightfully belongs, at the right hand of God.[325] In this cosmic context, Boyd

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[322]Boyd, *God at War*, 184-214.

[323]Ibid., 238. Richard M. Davidson agrees that "Boyd has provided a comprehensive survey of 'warfare worldview' that permeates Jesus' life and ministry. Not only His life and ministry, but most importantly, Christ's atoning death and resurrection is presented in scripture as the part of the 'Christus Victor' (Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11 [2000]: 114).

[324]Boyd, *God at War*, 242-244.

[325]Ibid., 244-248.

comments that Christ's death and resurrection paid the ransom, which set human beings totally and unconditionally free from the bondage of the evil one and reconciles them to God. Whoever accepts it is thereby reinstated to the original position and responsibility of stewards of the creation that God had always intended for humans.[326] While not discounting the value of Christ's victory, he observes that Christ's victory is not yet fully realized. Satan is still the god of the world and the ruler of the power of the air. In his opinion, the church, the earthly benefactors of Christ's victory, is responsible to manifest Christ's mission of building a kingdom for the rest of the world.[327]

The Church. Boyd describes the church as "God's eternal 'trophy case' of grace." It evidences "God's brilliance and power in bringing about the destruction of his foes, and thus the liberation of his people."[328] He agrees that "the church has always been a very human and a very fallen institution, exhibiting all the carnality, pettiness, narrowness, self-centeredness and abusive power tendencies that characterize all other fallen institutions," yet he insists that it is the very institution that proclaims the glory of God by lacking any glory of its own.[329] The church is called upon to declare to authorities in heavenly places and on earth, principalities, and powers Christ's victory over Satan. The church's proclamation of Christ's victory over his cosmic foes includes saving humans from Satan's den, freeing the earth from all spiritual and physical

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[326]Ibid., 249-268.

[327]Ibid., 253.

[328]Ibid., 252.

[329]Ibid., 252-253.

destructive oppression and social injustices. For Boyd, when the church is engaged in overthrowing the devil and the salvation of humans and the restoration of the earth, it is Jesus accomplishing His kingdom. The enthroned Christ manifests His redemptive and restorative work through His church.[330]

Boyd does not take for granted the activities of the enemies of God from the cross to the eschaton. In his opinion, Satan directs his activities to hinder the mission of the church. On the basis of several scriptural texts, Boyd identifies Satan as the one behind every sin, causing hardships, famine, physical pain in the world, and instigating persecution, falsehood among believers, false teachings about the Kingdom of God, and tempting and deceiving God's people in an attempt to oppose the mission of the church.[331] He asserts that, in the last day, Satan "is permitted to head up a vicious attack of demonic forces upon the earth."[332]

Thus, for Boyd, Christian life is a warfare, exorcising the enemy, consequently, there is the need for every Christian to put on the spiritual armor.[333] We should be reminded that due to the nature of contingent freedom God has to endure the atrocities of His enemies until the scope of their freedom elapses. Thus, "there shall come a time, Scripture declares, when God shall conclude this cosmic epoch by fully manifesting throughout his cosmos the victory that he has already won through his Son."[334]

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[330]Ibid., 254.

[331]Ibid., 276-279.

[332]Ibid., 277.

[333]Ibid., 280-283.

[334]Ibid., 287.

Eradication of sin and evil. Boyd addresses the full realization of God's victory over sin and its accompanying evil by first examining the biblical support for already-existing concepts of God's victory over evil: annihilation, eternal torment of the wicked, and universalism. Without hesitation he asserts that there is no biblical or philosophical support for the position of universalism.[335] After his examination of the other two concepts— annihilation and eternal torment of the wicked—he concludes that the Bible affirms both theories; therefore he does not discount the value of both. Rather, with his firm belief that the Bible does not contradict itself, he insists that the biblical description of hell is not literal. He contends that the use of metaphorical language in communicating the idea of hell is intended only to impress upon humanity the dreadfulness of hell.[336]

Thus, his explanation of how God wins the battle against evil is an attempt to integrate the two prominent concepts of hell,[337] annihilation and eternal torment of the wicked, by introducing into his system *das nichtige*.[338] Boyd defines *das nichtige* as

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[335]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 321.

[336]Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, 162.

[337]In an essay posted on his website, "The Case for Annihilationism," Boyd acknowledges that biblical description of hell is better understood along the lines of annihilationism. However, he writes, "I am not completely convinced of this position" (Christus Victor Ministries, www.gregboyd.org/essays/god-essays/judgement/the-case-for-annihilationism [accessed May 21, 2009]). In an email correspondence he writes, "I still think my proposed rapprochement between eternal torment and annihilationism is coherent and possible. But I now am not convinced it's necessary" (Gregory A. Boyd, e-mail to Martha Duah, January 31, 2009, Berrien Springs, MI).

[338]Karl Barth is the originator of the concept of *das nichtige*. Many terms such as nothingness, chaos, *nihil*, and inimical principle of negation have been considered for Barth's *das nichtige*. However, in an editor's note, Bromiley and Torrance point out that "it is not used in its more common and abstract way, but in the secondary sense, to be

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having the potential to become actualized. Possibilities that God has negated become actualized if wills overturn the divine negation and "impute" reality to these negated possibilities by choosing them. Now "the nothingness" acquires authority, for now a free agent with authority has invested itself into it. *Nothing* has become *something*. What was negated by God is affirmed by a creature, and thus the possibility of something opposing God—the possibility of evil—becomes actualized.[339]

It is obvious that Boyd's concept of love and its metaphysical corollary, freedom, is the force behind this definition of *das nichtige*. From this perspective of *das nichtige*, he takes sin to mean overriding God's definition of reality with what He has negated.[340] Evidently, sin is the act of choosing the possibilities that God has negated and evil is the content of the choice of yes to God's no.

The idea that self-determined freedom is finite sets the stage for Boyd's concept of hell and allows him to come close to expressing the idea of annihilation when he comments that during the eschaton, the wills that say yes to the realm of negated possibilities and the content of their choices will be rendered as nothing.[341] But he

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filled out from Barth's own definitions and delimitations of 'that which is not.'" It is neither God nor His creature. It is all the possibilities that God said no to when He said yes to creation. It is the object of God's non-willingness. It exists in a third order of its own at the limit of the left side of God's creation, as God is the limit of the right side of his creation. It is antithesis which is primarily and supremely directed toward God Himself and therefore to the totality of the created world. It menaces and threatens God's good creation. Man misuses his freedom by succumbing to this threat and allows nothingness to invade creation. It takes many forms: sin (concrete form of nothingness), death, evil of suffering, the devil and hell; however, its presence in the world is known only by revelation. The creature in itself has no knowledge of nothingness. Before God nothingness is an adversary and a problem, it does not possess a nature or an existence which can be discovered by the creature. The creature does exist in an objective encounter with nothingness but it cannot recognize this encounter with nothingness nor understand what it is that it encounters. Nothingness is known only at the heart of the gospel. For details on Karl Barth's *das Nichitge* see *Church Dogmatics* III/1-4, 286-368.

[339]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 340.

[340]Ibid., 341-342.

[341]Ibid., 342.

argues, on the basis of the immortality of the soul and God's love for any agent's original potential to choose for or against God, that annihilating the wicked means destroying something God has created to be "intrinsically and essentially immortal and indestructible."[342] Therefore, he makes a distinction between the will and the content of the choices of the will as follows: the "entire *content* of what is willed against God is exposed as nothingness" but the will that makes the negated possibilities real will exist eternally.[343] That is, "the potential for eternally saying yes to reality as defined by the loving Creator metaphysically requires the potential eternally to say no to this reality, just as the creation of two adjacent mountains logically requires the creation of an intervening valley."[344] Consequently, the eternal existence of the wicked wills is congruent with the love of God. For, in his opinion, God allowing the wicked wills to become "eternalized in their self-creation" is His judgment upon the wicked.[345]

Boyd expounds on the intensity of God's judgment by describing the eternal existence of the wicked as contentless and without objective shared medium. Since God's love defines all reality at the eschaton and the soul is immortal, the wicked will continue to choose negated possibilities, but this time the negated possibilities cannot be actualized. Thus, for Boyd, the wicked will does not participate in reality during the

[342]Ibid., 342-343.

[343]Ibid., 342 (emphasis his).

[344]Ibid., 342-343.

[345]Boyd believes Scriptures' view of God's judgment is expressed as allowing the will to reap the consequences of the choices it makes. Therefore, permitting the wicked will to exist and continue with choosing negated possibilities for eternity is God's judgment upon the wicked (Rom 1:20-25; Rev 21-25-27). Ibid., 343-344, 354-355; Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, 163.

eschaton; the only reality is God's love and those who participate in it.[346] This means to enjoy eternity with God is conditional but the souls of both the wicked and righteous are immortal.

Boyd's use of the phrase "objective shared medium," as I noted earlier, points to a middle ground that allows free agents to relate to each other. It is on this middle ground that freedom becomes a reality; agents exist parallel to each other and share common time.[347] Consequently, Boyd affirms firmly that existence without objective shared medium comes with dreadful consequences. In his opinion, without objective shared medium the will that says yes to God's no is self-enclosed, separated from the only reality—"love, joy and peace which humanity has."[348] This reality, according to Boyd, is real only to itself, "a wholly separate and wholly isolated reality . . . an unreal reality."[349] It does not share time with the will that says yes to God's love; it has nothing in common with humanity, for it lacks "every semblance of a shared humanity."[350] Yet from the perspective of the wicked, "their reality is all there is."[351] Relying on C. S. Lewis and several other scholars, he suggests that hell is real only to the agent that wills it. Hence, he concludes that scriptural texts on annihilation and eternal suffering might be considered as "the domain of negatively defined wills as constituting a sort of

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[346]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 345.

[347]"Time is simply the measurement of change in our shared objective environment" (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 351).

[348]Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, 163.

[349]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 347.

[350]Ibid., 350-354.

infinitesimally narrow parameter outside of the kingdom of God that separates reality

from unreality, love from war and what once was and could have been from what now is

and always will be."[352]

On the other hand, in his recent articles and sermons on hell, he shows that the

traditional view of eternal conscious burning in hell is inconsistent with other biblical

passages.[353] Arguing in favor of annihilationism, he writes, "When all the biblical

evidence is assessed apart from the Hellenistic philosophical assumption that the soul is

innately immortal, it becomes clear that the fate of the wicked is eventual annihilation,

not unending torment."[354] In his opinion the fire that annihilates the wicked, sin, and evil

not only purifies the earth but also the righteous. It completes all the work that was not

completed in the sanctification process. Thus, the afterlife process of purification and

annihilation comes to an end, but the consequences are forever.[355]

Although, he contends that annihilationism is consistent biblical teaching, he is

not "completely convinced" of it.[356] In another essay, he indicates that he is "strongly

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[351]Boyd and Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic*, 165.

[352]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 353.

[353]According to Boyd the traditional view of hell is in tension with biblical teaching on God's victory over evil, God's love, and the concept that God's anger lasts for a moment but His love is everlasting (Pss 30:5, 103:9; 1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 20:21; Lam 3:32-33; 1 John 4:8, 16; Rev 21:4; Phil 2:10-11; Col 1:20; Acts 3:21). Boyd, "Tormented by the Flame."

[354]Boyd, "The Case for Annihilationism."

[355]Boyd, "Tormented by the Flame."

[356]Boyd, "The Case for Annihilationism."

inclined toward" annihilationism.[357] However, he insists that the proposed rapprochement between theories of eternal suffering and annihilationism is "coherent and possible."[358]

Summary and Conclusion

Due to the unresolved difficulties associated with the three main theodicies, as described in chapter 2, it became essential to analyze warfare theodicy for its feasibility. This chapter is an inquiry into Gregory A. Boyd's model of the warfare theodicy.

The chapter began by giving a brief biography of Boyd and a survey of his writings on theodicy. It became evident that at the heart of his theological inquiry lies the desire to make Christian beliefs reasonable to the scientific mind. This mind-set resulted into the construction of a theological framework which is a breed of classical and process theisms. On the basis of his strain of theism, he has written several books on a variety of subjects; among them is theodicy, which is developed extensively in three books.

The tenor of his theodicy was not only to reconcile belief in God with the reality of evil but also to make the warfare motif of Scripture more scientific, to reconcile the essentials of biblical warfare with the changed outlook of the contemporary mind. Convinced that the biblical warfare theme could no longer be presented to the

[357]Boyd, "Are You an Annihilationist, and if so Why?" Christus Victor Ministries, http://www.gregboyd.org/?s=why+i+annihilationst (accessed March 12, 2009).

[358]Through e-mail correspondence he writes, "I still think my proposed rapprochement between eternal torment and annihilationism is coherent and possible. But I now am not convinced it's necessary. My only reason for remaining open to the traditional view of endless torment was because I felt it possibly made better sense of the several passages in the NT teaching that the punishment or destruction was 'aionion' and because I thought the principle of proportionality might require it. But I've become convinced that my principle of proportionality doesn't require this." Gregory Boyd, e-mail to the author, January 31, 2009.

contemporary mind, in view of the results of scientific discoveries, it was his aim to formulate a warfare explication that could preserve the essentials of the belief in God and biblical warfare motif and at the same time satisfy the scientific demands. To Boyd, this means the biblical phenomena must be in harmony with basic scientific developments, such as quantum physics.

To achieve his aim, Boyd establishes, on the basis of Christ's life, ministry, death, and resurrection, that God's goal is for human beings to receive love and replicate and reflect back His triune love. This purpose entails a metaphysical risk of endowing humans with freedom, freedom to either accept or reject God's love. Having established this fact, Boyd describes contingent freedom as self-determined, and it is genuine when it is irrevocable, finite, and holds individuals responsible for their moral acts and makes moral responsibility proportional. Free will of human agents is self-determined not in a sense of self-existence but because within the factors that determined a person's existence, the individual makes decisions with these elements acting as influential factors, not determinants.

By showing that contingent freedom is self-determined, he makes contingent free will the basis on which he explains divine foreknowledge and sovereignty. The emphasis that Boyd places on contingent freedom finds its strongest support in his concept of divine foreknowledge, which, in his estimation, future decisions of free agents are "not-yet"; therefore, God does not know them exhaustively but as possibilities. In essence, by knowing His own decision to act in the future, His perfect knowledge of past and present realities allows Him to predict possible outcomes of agents' free decisions in the future. That is, in Boyd's opinion, an act cannot be free and at the same time foreknown. This

means God has to manipulate events in order to achieve His purpose. Consequently, any view on the relationship between human and divine foreknowledge that is contrary to this view makes human free will illusory.

Boyd's argument against the classical traditional concept of divine foreknowledge is specifically over the issue of God foreknowing individual future free decisions before they are actualized. It seems, superficially, that Boyd's persistent affirmation of self-determinism is making it difficult for him to affirm divine foreknowledge of future actions of free agents. However, we may extrapolate from the analysis that the difficulty lies in his conception of the relationship between divine foreknowledge and determinism. He avows the classical traditional understanding of the relationship between the two concepts. That is, in his view, divine foreknowledge is identified and grounded in determinism. As a result, Boyd's concept depicts not only the influence of Hartshorne's process philosophy, but also the influence of Greek philosophy. Critics of openness-of-God theology argue that incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and libertarian human free will is an argument held by Aristotle even though he did not apply it to divine foreknowledge.[359]

Boyd's model of self-determined freedom enables him to present divine sovereignty in a way that demonstrates God working in partnership with humans. By virtue of His non-coercive covenant, He limits His power and empowers humanity to be co-rulers over the earth. Thus, divine sovereignty is influential. Like process theists, he

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[359]William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1988), 1-58; Erickson, *What Does God Know and When Does He Know It?* 148-149; Steven C. Roy, *How Much Does*

establishes that God only leads the world through persuasive power. However, for Boyd, God sometimes intervenes in human history on the basis of what contingent freedom allows. The nature of divine sovereignty means God does not always get what He wants to happen on the account of contingent free will and the various variables that condition it. For Boyd, this does not mean God cannot achieve His purpose.

However, the relationship that he creates among his concepts—self-determined freedom, divine foreknowledge and determinism, and divine sovereignty—makes God's intervention seems arbitrary and some individuals' freedom illusive. Thus the factors which he claims condition human freedom and God's freedom to intervene in human history are his attempt to explain away the difficulties that this relationship raises.

With these three concepts—freedom, divine foreknowledge, and sovereignty—defined, Boyd manages to explain the problem of evil, using each concept to address specific issues involved in the problem of evil. From Boyd's belief in the existence of spiritual personal beings eons ago and reading Gen 1 from a warfare context, he ascertains that evil first began by the misuse of free will by some of the spiritual beings. He does not hesitate to point out that these rebels, with their leader Satan, orchestrate all evil in the cosmos.

Boyd's insistence on contingent beings as responsible for all evil seems to relieve God of the responsibility for evil. He establishes that God foreknew only the possibility of evil but did not know for certain what contingent beings would do with their freedom. Therefore, God does not have a specific divine purpose that somehow justifies the suffering. However, Boyd puts emphasis on God's victory over evil by stating that as an

God Foreknow? A Comprehensive Biblical Study (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity

omni-resourceful God, He responds and adapts to surprises and the unexpected. He will realize His purpose for creation *ad hoc* in history by subjecting the wills that rebel against Him and rendering the content of their decision to nothingness.

Although Boyd explains the problem of evil with the help of these three concepts, it is clear that his concept of free will becomes, for him, the stronghold of his theodicy to accommodate the contemporary mind-set. This assessment draws attention to Boyd's aim to offer a more feasible theodicy. On one hand, he wants to bring his concept of theodicy in harmony with what he esteems to be the just demands of science. On the other hand, he desires to preserve the essential elements in the traditional understanding of the problem of evil.

Despite Boyd's effort to formulate a contemporary theodicy, his attempt to do so raises an imperative question. Is this Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy capable of handling the problem of evil? Though the question raised as a result of my analysis brings to the fore the need to evaluate Boyd's theodicy, however, the next chapter will analyze White's warfare model, the Great Controversy. I intend to evaluate the two models of warfare theodicy in chapter 5 in terms of their feasibility, inner consistency, and coherence with respect to the stated goals of this study. The next chapter is a descriptive analysis of a warfare approach to the question of the co-existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God and evil as presented in the writings of Ellen G. White.

Press, 2006), 198-202.

CHAPTER 4

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY THEODICY:

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Introduction

In concluding chapter 2, it was shown that the three main Christian approaches to

the problem of evil are not viable and that there is a need to examine the warfare

approach as expounded in the writings of Boyd and White. In chapter 3, the Trinitarian

Warfare Theodicy of Boyd was examined. The present chapter deals with a descriptive

analysis of White's model of warfare approach to understand her concept of cosmic

conflict and the theological concepts embedded in it. To reach the goal of this chapter,

first a general background of Ellen G. White and the corpus of her writings on theodicy

will be presented. Then an analytical discussion of the Great Controversy Theodicy will

follow.

General Background

Ellen G. White

Ellen G. White was born to Robert F. Harmon and Eunice Gould Harmon, a

Methodist family, on November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine, and grew up in Portland,

Maine, a city with a harsh environment that "toughened the character of those it did not

break."[1] She lived in an era when the United States was going through enormous

political, social, and religious changes.[2]

In 1836, she had an accident that brought her formal education to an abrupt end,

and the knowledge acquired from that time onward was by reading and learning practical

skills from her mother.[3] In 1840, White accepted the teachings of Jesus' return to the

earth in 1843 after attending lectures by William Miller, a Baptist preacher. In the same

year, two dreams and pastoral counseling with Levi Stockman[4] led her to establish a

deep relationship with Christ that prepared her for a lifelong ministry.[5]

However, it was not until December 1844, after the great disappointment of the

Millerites,[6] that her work began. The bitterness of the disappointment and doctrinal

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[1]Frederick Hoyt, "Ellen White's Hometown: Portland, Maine, 1827-1864," in *The World of Ellen G. White*, ed. Gary Land (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1987), quoted in Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*: *The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 46.

[2]Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 46-49.

[3]On her way home from school, Ellen was hit on the nose by a stone thrown by an angry girl. The accident left her physically weak, which made it difficult for Ellen to cope with the strain of formal education. As a result, she gave up on formal education. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4 vols. (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1858-1864; facsimile ed., 1945), 2:7-11; idem, "Notes of Travel," *Review and Herald*, November 25, 1884; Arthur L. White, *The Early Years 1827-1862*, vol. 1 of *The Biography of Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1985), 28-31.

[4]E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:8-12.

[5]Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915; reprint, 1943), 37-42.

[6]Millerism was a movement of earnest and devoted men and women who, through the study of the biblical prophecies of Dan 8 and 9, came to the understanding that the Lord would return to the earth about 1843. However, when the appointed time came and Christ did not come, the people were disappointed but not discouraged. Renewed study of the prophecies led the Millerites to appoint October 22, 1844, as the exact day for

differences divided the Millerites into groups, each going their separate way.[7] The

smaller group felt obligated to study biblical prophecies more closely to understand the

events that took place in October 1844.[8] It was under these circumstances that White's

work began with a vision, which did not explain the reason for the disappointment but

gave this company of believers the assurance of God's leadership. Her subsequent

visions confirmed the results of Bible study by this group of believers, which led to

conclusive statements on doctrinal issues.

Although her ministry began in 1844, it was not until 1858 that she began writing

and publishing on the great controversy theme.[9] Her writings cover many biblical

themes. White wrote in the historical, social, and religious context of the nineteenth

century.   Maintaining a constant practice of writing diaries, letters, sermons, periodical

articles, and books, her personal experience enriched her writings. With the help of

literary assistants, whose duties were to edit, gather, and bring together all her writings

relating to various subjects in preparation of books,[10] she wrote and published 5,000

Christ's coming. But when the appointed time passed and Christ did not come, the
experience of the year before was repeated to a greater extent. They were disappointed
and most pulled out from the movement. However, those who believed that the word of
God does not fail continued their search into the Bible and discovered that the time was
right, but the event was Christ entering upon the day of atonement phase of His high
priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, Dan 8:14 (ibid., 54-63).

[7]Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 50.

[8]E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:30, 31.

[9]Arthur L. White, *The Early Years 1827-1862*, 371.

[10]Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and
Herald, 1958; reprint, 1980), 3:91-93; Marian Davis to W. C. White, March 29, 1893,
quoted in Arthur L. White, *The Australian Years 1891-1900*, vol. 4 of *The Biography of
Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1983), 383.

periodical articles, twenty-six books, and 100,000 pages of manuscript by the end of her

life in 1915. In her will, she made provision for the steady publication of her writings.

Consequently, there are about 128 titles in English; many are compilations from her

manuscripts. Her volume *Steps to Christ* is translated into about 144 languages.[11] She

was also a preacher who traveled all over the United States, Europe, Australia, and New

Zealand, as well as a mother and home-maker.[12]

Theological Context of White's Theodicy

As already indicated in the introductory chapter of this study, the Enlightenment

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[11]Arthur L. White, *Ellen White*: *Woman of Vision* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000); Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 108.

[12]On the one hand, some scholars deny the reliability and the authenticity of her visions and writings due to her childhood accident. They contend that White's childhood head injury suggests she was a victim of partial complex seizure, and attribute her visions to epileptic seizures. See Gregory Holmes and Delbert Hodder, "Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Visions or Partial Complex Seizures?" *Journal of Neurology* 31 (April 1981): 160-161; E. L. Altshuler, "Did Ezekiel Have Temporal Lobe Epilepsy," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 59 (June 2002): 561-562; J. Wuerfel, "Religion Is Associated with Hippocampal but Not Amygdala Volumes in Patients with Refractory Epilepsy," *Journal of Neurology, Neuropsychiatry, and Neurosurgery* 75 (April 2004): 640-642; B. K. Puri, "Spect Neuroimaging in Schizophrenia with Religious Delusions," *International Journal of Psychophysiology* 40 (February 2001): 143-148; Ronald Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*: *Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform*, 3rd ed. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2008). On the other hand, others compare the characteristics of partial complex seizure disorder with phenomena associated with White's visions and conclude that there is no evidence that she suffered from this illness. They affirm that her visions are divine revelations and the content of her books is relevant to Christianity. Her ministry helped in founding the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and resulted in the establishment of publishing companies, sanitariums (which developed into hospitals), schools, and reformed health educational systems around the world. See Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Takoma Park, MD: Review and Herald, 1951); Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 62, 63; Donald I. Peterson, *Vision or Seizures*: *Was Ellen G. White the Victim of Epilepsy?* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988).

elevated the problem of evil "into a challenge to the credibility and coherence of Christian faith itself."[13] The Enlightenment culture assumed the world is a self-contained mechanical system, governed by mathematical laws without the need of divine intervention. Thus, the world is comprehensible through human reason by means of science and technology. The theological and philosophical implication of this cultural mind-set was that traditional Christian beliefs were contested. Theologians and philosophers of religion developed theodicies that are reasonable to the cultural mind-set of the era. They limited God's involvement in human history, and elevated human abilities to solve the problem of evil.[14] Even Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who in 1791 argued against philosophical theodicies, could not refrain from limiting the role of God in the problem of evil.[15]

In 1793, Kant argued that ascribing human tendencies to evil to natural or hereditary defects removes responsibility of evil from us to our progenitors. According to him, "an evil disposition is found in self-love, and recovery from it is reached through

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[13]Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1998; reprint, 2000), 225.

[14]Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought*: *An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion*: *Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 32-33; Surin, *Theology and the Problem of Evil*, 37-58; M. Sarot, "Theodicy and Modernity," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 22-25.

[15]He argued that theodicy is a rational attempt to defend God against rational complaints made against God's holiness, goodness, and justice. He claimed that such a defense either makes evil an illusion or an inevitable consequence of the nature of things, or that evil is not the work of the Supreme God but it must be suffered in patience and faith. Immanuel Kant, "On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies," in

supernatural help when an individual proved himself or herself worthy to receive it."[16]

Thus, the divine activity in the world is significantly reduced. While the eighteenth

century rejected the classical concept of divine providence, the nineteenth century sought

to affirm it. Consequently, nineteenth-century thinkers like George Wilhelm Friedrich

Hegel (1770-1831), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), and Friedrich Schleiermacher

(1768-1834) claimed that the Creator of the world is responsible for evil, but Friedrich

Nietzsche (1844-1900) contended that evil is an illusion.

Hegel, a German idealist, attempted to resolve the problem of evil and its

challenges to Christianity by focusing on the fall of humanity. In discussing the

narrative story of Gen 3, he asserted that the state of humanity before the fall was

innocence, lack of responsibility for the world, and a separation from the Divine Spirit.

The fall is a movement from innocence to knowledge. Knowledge is evil because it is an

alienation from natural innocence, but necessary for reconciliation with the Divine Spirit.

The knowledge of the separation from God creates a yearning for spiritual growth, a

process that closes the gap between God and man. Thus, for Hegel, human misery and

suffering are necessary for spiritual growth.[17] Like Leibniz, Hegel argued that the world

is as it ought to be and nothing can thwart God's purposes.[18]

Kant on History and Religion, trans. Michel Despland (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1973), 283-297.

[16]Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902-68), quoted in Michel Despland, *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1973) 186.

[17]George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The History of Philosophy*, trans. John Sibree (New York: P. F. Collier, 1902).

[18]Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought*, 87.

Schopenhauer, a contemporary of Hegel and an atheist, rejected the concept of divine providence, but did not abandon the notion of cosmic justice. In his opinion pain and suffering in the world arise from the needs and necessities of life. Moral and natural evils are perfectly balanced, and any minute change to the world would render it entirely impossible; humankind would die of boredom or inflict more suffering than what human beings face from the hands of nature. He maintained that natural evils are punishment for moral evil. For him, "the world itself is a tribunal of the world."[19]

Schleiermacher, who is considered the father of liberal Protestantism, envisaged sin and evil as inherent when he contended that humanity was created with a sinful propensity and potentiality to develop a full God consciousness. He argued that natural evils are imperfections in nature which were supposed to be an incentive to the development of the spirit, but turned evil because of human sin. The methodology of liberal Protestantism avoided the discussion on the origin of sin.[20] Consequently, the problem of evil was generally absent in liberal theology.

Nietzsche argued that evil is an illusion. In his view, evil is the creation of resentful and frustrated people of the lower class in society. They spiritualize their revolt against the aristocratic society by inverting the cultural values of the upper class, condemning them as evil. In his opinion, humans brought evil upon themselves and

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[19]Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Sufferings of the World," in *Complete Essays of Schopenhauer*, trans. Bailey Saunders (New York: Willey Book Company, 1942), 5:1-18.

[20]Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. Hugh Ross Mackintosh and James Stuart Stewart (New York: T & T Clark, 1948), 291-324.

should resolve it by reevaluating contemporary values.[21]

White's great controversy theodicy seems to be an alternative approach to theodicies that make God responsible for the cause of evil and those that consider evil as an illusion. She gives several indicators that her explanation is not just a pastiche of the theodicies that preceded her explanation, but a biblical explanation of the problem of evil. She remarks as follows:

> There are those who, in their inquiries concerning the existence of sin, endeavor to search into that which God has never revealed; hence they find no solution of their difficulties; and such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and cavil seize upon this as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ. Others, however, fail of a satisfactory understanding of the great problem of evil, from the fact that tradition and misinterpretation have obscured the teaching of the Bible concerning the character of God, the nature of His government, and the principles of His dealing with sin.. It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all his dealings with evil.[22]

White's Writings on Theodicy

In several of her remarks, White identifies the great controversy between Christ and Satan as the key to understanding the central theme of the Bible, the plan of redemption. Scholars who have investigated her writings have affirmed that White makes the great controversy the organizing principle of her writings. It is the principle by which she approached, interpreted, and drew lessons from biblical passages.[23] Her

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[21]Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1994).

[22]E. G. White, *The Great Controver*sy, 492.

[23]Joseph Battistone, *The Great Controversy Theme in E. G. White's Writings* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 1-3; George Knight, *Reading*

writings on philosophy, religion, education, science, health, and history are informed by

her understanding of the great controversy. In addition, it is the same principle that

became her principal explanation of the problem of evil.[24] Concluding the introduction to

her book *The Great Controversy*, she states her purpose as follows:

> To unfold the scenes of the great controversy between truth and error; to reveal
> the wiles of Satan, and the means by which he may be successfully resisted; to
> present a satisfactory solution of the *great problem of evil*, shedding such a light upon
> the origin and the final disposition of sin as to fully make manifest the justice and
> benevolence of God in all his dealings with his creatures; and to show the holy,
> unchanging nature of his law, is the object of this book.[25]

In 1858, Ellen White began to pen her explanation of the problem of evil, a

project that was developed gradually in three stages. The first phase of the development

was in the form of a four-volume work entitled *Spiritual Gifts*.[26] With the exception of

the second volume and the last half of the fourth volume, *Spiritual Gifts* is a broad outline

of her views on theodicy. It is a brief sketch of the entire scope of the great controversy.

In volume 1, White describes the origin and nature of sin and how it affects the universe,

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Ellen White: *How to Understand and Apply Her Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and
Herald, 1997), 48-49; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 256-267.

[24]Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald,
1890; reprint, 1958), 338; idem, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press,
1917; reprint, 1943), 311; idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:341, 3:99-100; idem, "God So
Loved the World," *Signs of the Times*, December 1, 1890; idem, *The Great Controversy*,
x, 193; idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press,
1855-1909; reprint, 1948) 5:738.

[25]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, xii (emphasis added).

[26]*Spiritual Gifts* was developed in a six-year period (1858-1864). The first
volume, *The Great Controversy between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His
Angels*, was published in 1858. The second volume, *My Christian Experience, Views and
Labors in Connection with the Rise and Progress of the Third Angel's Message*, in 1860.
In 1864 she published the third and fourth volumes of the series, *Important Facts of Faith
in Connection with the History of Holy Men of Old* and *Important Facts of Faith: Laws of*

including planet Earth. She explains that the divine plan to redeem and restore planet
Earth and eradicate sin and evil is through Christ's ministry, suffering and death, and
resurrection.[27] The third volume and the first half of the fourth volume describe the
devastating effects of sin in the lives of the people of Old Testament history and divine
activities to protect and save the human race from evil.

The second stage of the development was an expansion of the material found in
Spiritual Gifts. As with any expansion of a work, this stage of the development brought
out a new and more complete treatment of her great controversy theodicy. This stage
includes an exact reproduction of some content from *Spiritual Gifts*, along with
additions.[28] The four-volume work, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, covers the controversy from
the beginning to the end in a more detailed and chronological manner.[29]

The first volume of the *The Spirit of Prophecy* series discusses the fall of Satan
and goes on to describe the creation of planet Earth and the relationship that existed
between the Creator and humankind, the condition of the relationship after the

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Health and Testimonies Nos. 1-10, respectively. See Arthur L. White, *Woman of Vision*,
267-269; E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:100-101.

[27]E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:270-271.

[28]According to Joseph Battistone, at this point in her theodicy development,
White's understanding of the conflict was fully developed, therefore, the materials were
presented chronologically and in detail. Battistone, *The Great Controversy Theme in E.
G. White's Writings*, v.

[29]The first volume (*The Great Controversy between Christ and His Angels and
Satan and His Angels*) in the *The Spirit of Prophecy* series was published in 1870. In the
years 1877 and 1878 the second *(Life, Teachings and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ*)
and third (*The Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ*) volumes
were published, respectively. The last book (*From the Destruction of Jerusalem to the
End of the Controversy*) of the series was published in 1884. The titles in parentheses
were the subtitles of each of the four volumes of the *Spiritual Gifts*.

disobedience of humans, and the divine plan to restore the relationship between God and

humanity. She also gives a detailed account of divine activities in the patriarchal epoch

to restore the broken relationship between God and the human race and Satan's craftiness

to stop the restoration process. The second volume is a comprehensive work on the

divine plan to redeem and restore humanity. She puts emphasis on Christ's life and

mission as manifested in His teachings and miracles in connection with human

redemption from sin and evil. The first half of volume 3 describes Christ's suffering and

death, stressing its meaning and importance, the importance of the law, and the universal

implication of sin and evil. The second half of this volume describes the manifestation of

the Holy Spirit to destroy the activities of the evil one in the lives of the apostles from

Pentecost to the martyrdom of Paul.[30] The last volume deals with the history of the

church—its trials and triumph, the destruction of Satan and all his followers, and the

renewing of the earth, revealing the schemes of the adversary and the justice and

benevolence of God. It describes how the conflict between Christ and Satan manifests

itself in the history of the church from the destruction of Jerusalem till the restoration of

the earth. The fourth volume specifically answers the question of how long the

controversy will last and how the issue that initiated the controversy will be settled.

Both the *Spiritual Gifts* and the *Spirit of Prophecy* series were written primarily

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[30]Separate from the *The Spirit of Prophecy* set, White published a volume entitled *Sketches From the Life of Paul* in 1883, which also developed the great controversy theme as manifested in Paul's conversion, ministry, and martyrdom.

with Seventh-day Adventist readers in mind.[31] But the final stage of the development of her theodicy under the general title *Conflict of the Ages* was designed for a wider public. The *Conflict of the Ages* is an enlarged version of the *Spirit of Prophecy* adapted for the general reading public.[32]

With the exception of *Prophets and Kings*, all the volumes of the *Conflict of the Ages* series are revised and expanded versions of the *Spirit of Prophecy* series and the final stage of the development of her theodicy. These developmental stages show a systematic growth in the understanding of her visions and concepts, a process evident in other theologians and writers. Hence, in the remainder of this chapter, the *Conflict of the Ages* series is the primary material for the analysis of her great controversy theodicy. However, some attention is also given to the first two series and statements found in other writings that may have a significant impact in achieving a full understanding of her theodicy.

Analysis of the Great Controversy Theodicy

We now turn our attention to the descriptive analysis of White's Great Controversy Theodicy. As evident in chapter 2, the problem of evil is a theological issue

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[31]Arthur L. White, *The Lonely Years*, vol. 3 of *The Biography of Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1984), 434-435; E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:438.

[32]Arthur L. White, *The Lonely Years*, 438. Due to the demands for certain volumes, the individual volumes of the *Conflict of the Ages* series were not published sequentially. The first volume of the *Spirit of Prophecy* was revised, expanded and enlarged as *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), *Prophets and Kings* (1917), volume 2 and the first half of volume 3 of the *Spirit of Prophecy* were revised, expanded, and enlarged as *The Desire of Ages* (1898), the second half of the third volume of the *Spirit of Prophecy* as *Acts of the Apostles* (1911), and the last volume of the *Spirit of Prophecy* as *The Great Controversy* (1888 and 1911 editions).

of which the underlying theological concepts, free will, divine foreknowledge, and divine sovereignty appear to be incompatible. Thus this analysis of the great controversy theodicy examines White's understanding of free will, divine foreknowledge, and divine sovereignty, how she relates these theological elements to each other, and how they influence her theodicy or vice versa.

Free Will

White's affirmation of human free will is evident in her remarks on the original qualities of humanity in relation to God's law of liberty. She comments:

> God placed man under law, as an indispensable condition of his very existence. He was a subject of the divine government, and there can be no government without law. God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character. Such a course would have been contrary to God's plan in dealing with the inhabitants of other worlds. It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule.[33]

It is quite clear that White believes that humans were created with free will, and she gives three reasons why God endowed them with free will: (1) God provided humans with free will because He prefers service done to God and humankind to be voluntary; (2) God awarded humans with free will because He wants them to develop into a complete reflection of their Creator;[34] and (3) God bestowed the human race with free will because

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[33]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49.

[34]Character development in the context of White's discussion on creation does not mean growing from moral imperfection to perfection. It is more like maturing the human faculties. She writes, "When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. 'God created man in His own image' (Genesis 1:27), and it was His purpose that the longer man lived the more

He wants to disabuse Satan's charge against divine government[35] that free will and God's law of love are incoherent and incongruent.[36] Elsewhere, she points out that God's character is the grounds for providing created beings with freedom.[37] However, it remains to be seen how she understands the nature of free will.

Nature of Free Will

In this section, the main concern is to examine whether White proposes a libertarian or deterministic free will.[38] With respect to the nature of human free will she writes, "God made man upright; He gave him noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil. He endowed him with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance."[39] White's notion of the nature of free will shows up in her view of the fall. In her opinion, in spite of the

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fully he should reveal this image—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase" (E. G. White, *Education* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903; reprint, 1952], 15).

[35]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34-36.

[36]Satan's charges against God will be discussed later in this chapter; however, for the purpose of this section a mention of it is in order.

[37]In a letter to O. A. Olsen about his relationship with people who were not in good relationship with the Lord, White asserts that "according to the beneficence of his own nature he made man as a free moral agent, to set forth the wisdom, the love and the holiness of God, and the justice of all his doings" ("Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, June 19, 1895," in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 4 vols. [Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987], 1397).

[38]See chapter 3 above, "Self-Determined Freedom," footnote 2.

[39]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49. It seems clear to her that the human race was given the same opportunities, to be specific the same quality of freedom, given to other intelligent beings in other worlds who were created for the same purpose the human race was created. See ibid., 331-332.

qualities to make the human race true to its allegiance and its environment, the race chose the other alternative.[40] Thus, humans were created with the ability to act self-consciously irrespective of external and internal influences. Individuals have the power to decide between alternatives, and they are responsible and the ultimate explanation of their behaviors. Free will is, therefore, understood in a libertarian sense.

But, describing the progeny of Adam she mentions that "man after the fall, 'begat a son in his *own* likeness, after *his* image.' While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents."[41] The original flawless free will is now tainted with sin. The descendants of Adam and Eve, which includes all humans, are born with evil dispositions.

Upon further reflection on White's understanding of the effects of sin, one may conclude that sin annuls her libertarian model of free will. But, the way she correlates free will with sin makes it possible to define her concept of free will as including the ability to know and understand divine laws and the power to fulfill moral obligations.[42] Consequently, free will makes character development possible. In other words, our choices make us responsible for what we become. Thus, for White, sin does not annul libertarian free will but corrupts it.

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[40]Ibid., 49-51; 52-57.

[41]Ibid., 80 (emphasis original).

[42]Ibid., 49. Although White is not a philosopher, her concept of free will in many ways shares some qualities with Kant's understanding of the will in relation to morality. It is so because Kant's concept of free will is developed within an overarching theological framework as White's. See Immanuel Kant, *Religion with Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960).

There seems to be a tension in White between corrupt libertarian free will and character development. If the first humans could not develop their characters through the use of their flawless libertarian free will, it is difficult to hold their progeny with corrupt libertarian free will responsible for what they become.[43] White deals with this tension with what is theologically termed prevenient grace.[44] In her observation, God restores to every human being some measure of the will lost to sin. This act of God awakens the will to a state of being conscious of the existence of a Supreme Being, human depravity, right and wrong, and the desire for character development.[45] Thus prevenient grace

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[43]She seems to address this problem with a theory that is analogous to a concept found in John Wesley, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," in *John Wesley's Sermons*: *An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzernrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991). See Woodrow Wilson Whidden, "Ellen White and John Wesley," *Spectrum* 25 (1996): 49.

[44]It is an act of God upon the human prior to and without reference to anything humans may have done. Although White does not use the term prevenient grace there are indications in her writings that suggest such an understanding of grace. For example she writes: "It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Job 14:4; Romans 8:7. Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness" (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892; reprint, 1956], 18, emphasis added). See ibid., *Selected Messages*, 1:389-391.

[45]Ibid., 24, 26-27.

restores the discerning properties of free will. It is God's initiative to help humanity to engage its God-given free will.[46] For White, after the discerning properties of free will are restored through prevenient grace, neither God[47] nor Satan[48] infringes on an agent's free will. But, God grants spiritual aid to those who make the decision to live in harmony with the will of God.[49]

While her concept of libertarian free will rejects divine coercion, it does not eliminate God.[50] In spite of sin the "power of choice is ours, and it rests with us to

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[46]"We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty it is left with us to decide our course" (Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* [Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1893; reprint, 1894], 116). According to John Locke, "Liberty is not an Idea belonging to Volition or preferring; but to the Person having the power of doing, or forbearing to do, according as the Mind shall choose or direct" (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, xxi, 10, ed. Roger Woolhouse [New York: Penguin Books, 2004], 238, emphasis original).

[47]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 331.

[48]In her admonition to the church on true conversion, she writes, "Satan is the great originator of sin; yet this does not excuse any man for sinning; for he cannot force men to do evil. He tempts them to it, and makes sin look enticing and pleasant; but he has to leave it to their own wills whether they will do it or not. He does not force men to become intoxicated, neither does he force them to remain away from religious meetings; but he presents temptations in a manner to allure to evil, and man is a free moral agent to accept or refuse" (E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:294).

[49]"God wishes us to have the mastery over ourselves. But He cannot help us without our consent and co-operation. The divine Spirit works through the powers and faculties given to man. Of ourselves, we are not able to bring the purposes and desires and inclinations into harmony with the will of God; but if we are 'willing to be made willing,' the Saviour will accomplish this for us, 'Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' 2 Corinthians 10:5" (E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911], 482-483).

[50]"The higher powers of the being are to rule. The passions are to be controlled by the will, which is itself to be under the control of God. The kingly power of reason, sanctified by divine grace, is to bear sway in our lives" (Ellen G. White, "One of the Greatest Temptations," *Signs of the Times*, December 1, 1914).

determine what we will become."[51] This is a strong evidence of her objection to any

form of theological determinism with its associated concept of deterministic

predestination.[52] She writes, "No walls are built to keep any living soul from salvation.

The predestination, or election, of which God speaks, includes all who will accept Christ

as a personal Saviour. . . . This is the effectual salvation of a peculiar people, chosen by

God from among men. All who are willing to be saved by Christ are the elect of God. It

is the obedient who are predestinated from the foundation of the world."[53]

The foregoing discussion is a demonstration of White's emphasis on free will in a

libertarian sense. However, human free will interpreted in this sense is seen by some

scholars as incompatible with divine foreknowledge and divine sovereignty. It is argued

that since God foreknows everything, He foreknows future free choices before they are

realized. If God foreknows all future free choices before they happen, He must be the

cause of free choices and meticulously sovereign over His creation, and humans are not

free. This ambiguity has been the source of bitter theological contention. This explains

the need to understand White's model of divine foreknowledge and divine sovereignty

and their relationship with her understanding of agents' free will. Hence the following

two sections undertake this task by first considering her concept of divine foreknowledge,

and its relation to libertarian free will.

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[51]E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1900; reprint, 1941), 56.

[52]White does not object to predestination entirely. Her objection is against the idea that God, from eternity, has elected some humans to salvation and others to eternal condemnation. See John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

Divine Foreknowledge

This section continues to investigate White's understanding of the theological

concepts underlying the problem of evil by describing her concept of divine

foreknowledge. Her discussions on this subject are brief and, in most cases, are in the

context of Christ and His ministry.[54] In the ensuing discussion an attempt is made to

identify her model of divine foreknowledge by considering her understanding of eternity,

the content of divine foreknowledge, and divine risk.

Eternity

By eternity White intends a very long period of time. She writes, "I Am means an

eternal presence; the past, present, and future are alike to God. He sees the most remote

events of past history, and the far distant future with as clear a vision as we do those

things that are transpiring daily."[55] White's definition is reminiscent of the traditional

claim that God exists outside of time, and His "now" simultaneously encompasses all

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[53]Ellen G. White, "The Abiding Trust," *Gospel Herald*, June 11, 1902.

[54]Ellen G. White, "The Word Made Flesh," *Signs of the Times*, April 26, 1899; reprint, *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906; idem, "The Mystery of God," *Signs of the Times*, March 25, 1897; idem, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898; reprint, 1940), 22. Most of the mentions of divine foreknowledge are references to a God who possesses foreknowledge of the future.

[55]Ellen G. White, "Individual Responsibility to Accept Truth; Christ, the Great 'I AM'; The Holy Spirit and His Works," in *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), 14:21.

time.[56] However, since she does not compare God's seeing to human beings observing an expanse from an elevated point, but from historical events transpiring daily, it would be correct to infer that, for White, eternity encompasses all time—past, present, and future in a temporal sequence.

This does not suggest eternity is the same as our time. The distinction she makes between eternity and our time becomes clear when we consider her understanding of the origin of our time. White believes our time came into existence with our universe,[57] but God is the "Eternal One."[58] That is to say, God created our time, but eternity is not created; eternity exists because God exists. While created time is a creation of God, eternity is an attribute of God. Her frequent use of the expression "before the foundation of the world"[59] implies that our time exists in God's time, eternity. Thus, eternity and created time share temporality, yet they differ from each other. While eternity is infinite and immeasurable, created time is finite and measurable. She writes, "Planted firmly upon the earth, and reaching heavenward to the throne of God, is a ladder of shining brightness. God is above the ladder, and his light is shining along its whole length. This ladder is Christ. . . . The angels of God are constantly ascending and descending this glorious ladder. They will not let you fall, if you keep your eye fixed upon the glory of

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[56]One of the earliest theologians to use this approach to defend divine foreknowledge is Boethius: see chapter 3, "Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy," footnote 61; Paul Helm, "Divine Timeless Eternity," in *Four Views*: *God and Time*, ed. Gregory E. Ganssle (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 28-60.

[57]E. G. White, *Education*, 129.

[58]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 500.

[59]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 799.

God that is at the top of the ladder." [60] What she implies is that God transcends created

time and yet He acts and responds to what happens in it without breaking its continuum.

Hence, eternity, in White, is not timelessness—absence of duration, but endless time.

Content of Divine Foreknowledge

On the question of the content of divine exhaustive foreknowledge, White states:

It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the
foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the
apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate.
God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made
provision to meet the terrible emergency.[61]

Furthermore, in her article "The Plan of Salvation," White is careful to point out

that divine purpose, the plan to create, and the plan of salvation existed from eternity.[62]

She notes that "God sees *beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought*, the

outworking of his purpose of love and blessing. . . . *Through creation and redemption*,

through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character are revealed."[63] She

also contends that Christ is the provision through whom humanity will be saved from sin

and evil.

In her opinion, before God began creating, He foreknew the problem of evil and

predestined a solution for it. For God to predestine a detailed, definite, and achievable

solution—a response to free will actions—to the problem of evil, which is also the

consequence of free actions, He must foreknow all actual and possible free choices. This

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[60]Ellen G. White, "Instruction to Teachers," *The Advocate*, January 1, 1902, 1.

[61]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 22 (emphasis added).

[62]Ellen G. White, "The Plan of Salvation," *Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893.

means the content of God's foreknowledge is exhaustive and definite; it includes future

free choices and the result of His provision for sin. [64] Thus, White reflects a classical

view of divine foreknowledge.

On the other hand, there seems to be a sense in which White's understanding of

divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge differs from the classical view. When her

statements on divine foreknowledge are taken in totality, the difference between White's

theory and the classical view of divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge is evident on

two levels. First, unlike the classical view, White's concept proves that the content of

divine foreknowledge does not shape human history. [65] In addition, for White, God

responds appropriately to His foreknowledge of free choices when actualized in created

time. Second, unlike proponents of the classical view of divine exhaustive definite

foreknowledge who consider predestination to mean all things are causally determined,

White considers predestination as a divine plan. This is because she believes Christ is the

only provision predestined in eternity as the solution to the problem of evil.[66] This

implies that God does not cause free choices and humans are free in a libertarian sense.

Thus, for White maintaining divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge and libertarian

[63]Ibid. (emphasis added).

[64]In her discussion on Esau and Jacob, White indicates that God knew them and the choices they would make in the future before their birth. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:113.

[65]In an article discussing the struggle between the tempter and the tempted, she writes, "Christ quoted a prophecy which more than a thousand years before had predicted what God's foreknowledge had seen would be. The prophecies do not shape the characters of the men who fulfill them. Men act out their own free will, either in accordance with a character placed under the molding of God or a character placed under the harsh rule of Satan" (Ellen G. White, "Walk in the Light," *Review and Herald*, November 13, 1900, 2).

free will simultaneously does not create tension. Therefore, in her view, foreknowledge

is neither grounded in predestination nor vice versa. She also does not make

foreknowledge and predestination one and the same.

A tenable question that arises from White's concept of divine foreknowledge is:

How does God foreknow free will choices definitely in His eternity without causing

them? However, she does not consider this to be a problem. In her opinion, though we

know the reality of divine foreknowledge, its ontological structure is beyond the reach of

human reasoning. She remarks, "There are many mysteries which I do not seek to

understand or to explain; they are too high for me, and too high for you. On some of

these points, silence is golden."[67]

Thus far the discussion proves White's affirmation of exhaustive definite

foreknowledge. However, she made a statement that appears to undermine my analysis

of her concept of divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge. In 1897, White wrote, "In

the councils of heaven, before the world was created, the Father and the Son covenanted

together that *if man proved* disloyal to God, Christ, one with the Father, would take the

place of the transgressor, and suffer the penalty of justice that must fall upon him."[68] The

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[66]Ellen G. White, "Chosen in Christ," *Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1893.

[67]E. G. White, "The Importance of Unity; The Holy Spirit a Mystery," in *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), 14:179. According to her, human reasoning powers can search only into what is revealed. E. G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905; reprint, 1942), 430-431.

[68]Ellen G. White, "Insights into Incarnation," in *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 11:345; idem, "Christ's Sacrifice Testifies to the Permanence of God's Law," in *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), 21:195 (emphasis added).

statement appeared again in an 1898 article entitled, "Christ's Attitude Toward the Law."[69] This conditional statement seems to compromise her understanding of divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge.[70] But given the contexts of the two occurrences of this conditional statement, White appears to underline the importance of the law of God. She does that by referring to divine decision, made in eternity, to suffer the penalty of justice that must fall upon the human race to vindicate every precept of the law instead of abrogating it to meet humankind's condition. While the statement is conditional, it is not expressing the uncertainty of divine foreknowledge of what human free will choices would be. It is rather expressing that the significance of the law of God is from eternity.

Furthermore, White's historicist approach to the prophecies of the books of Daniel and Revelation is evidence of her affirmation that God knows the future in every detail.[71] For she believes prophecies are predictions of what God's foreknowledge had

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[69]Ellen G. White, "Christ's Attitude Toward the Law," *Review and Herald*, November 15, 1898, 1.

[70]Richard Rice also points to White's statements on divine foreknowledge that appear to conflict with each other. Richard Rice, *The Openness of God*: *The Relationship of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will* (Nashville, TN: Review and Herald, 1980), 90.

[71]The historicist approach to prophecy is an interpretation that follows a progressive and continuous development of history as the fulfillment of prophecy. Ellen G. White, "Testimony Concerning the Views of Prophecy Held by John Bell—II," in *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 17:3. Furthermore, in discussing Revelation she remarks, "In the Revelation are portrayed the deep things of God. . . . Its truths are addressed to those living in the last days of this earth's history, as well as to those living in the days of John. Some of the scenes depicted in this prophecy are in the past, some are now taking place; some bring to view the close of the great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven, and some reveal the triumphs and joys of the redeemed in the earth made new" (E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 584). See her treatment of Dan 7, Rev 12 and 13 in *The Great Controversy*, 438-450.

seen would be.[72] In addition, there are passages in her writings that imply divine

exhaustive definite foreknowledge of the future.[73] As a result, one cannot conclude

otherwise than to affirm her strong affirmation of exhaustive definite foreknowledge.

God Who Risks

Some contemporary theologians claim that the affirmations of divine exhaustive

definite foreknowledge and divine risk are incompatible.[74] In this section an attempt will

be made to understand White's notion of divine risk and how she relates it to her concept

of divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge.

White discusses divine risk in relation to Jesus' ministry on earth. Underlining

the value Christ places on the fallen human race in her discourse on the parable of the lost

sheep, she remarks:

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[72]E. G. White, "Walk in the Light," 1.

[73]The following are a few of her passages that imply divine exhaustive and
definite foreknowledge: "Moses saw the chosen people established in Canaan, each of the
tribes in its own possession. He had a view of their history after the settlement of the
Promised Land; the long, sad story of their apostasy and its punishment was spread out
before him. He saw them, because of their sins, dispersed among the heathen, the glory
departed from Israel, her beautiful city in ruins, and her people captives in strange lands.
He saw them restored to the land of their fathers, and at last brought under the dominion
of Rome" (E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 475). "And now another scene passed
before him. He had been shown the work of Satan in leading the Jews to reject Christ,
while they professed to honor His Father's law. He now saw the Christian world under a
similar deception in professing to accept Christ while they rejected God's law. He had
heard from the priests and elders the frenzied cry, 'Away with Him!' 'Crucify Him,
crucify Him!' and now he heard from professedly Christian teachers the cry, 'Away with
the law!' He saw the Sabbath trodden under foot, and a spurious institution established in
its place" (ibid., 476-477). Jesus reads Peter's character and his life history (idem, *The
Desire of Ages*, 139).

[74]Sanders, *The God Who Risks*; Rice, *The Openness of God*, 36-37.

Who can estimate the value of a soul? Go to Gethsemane, and there watch with Jesus through those long hours of anguish when he sweat as it were great drops of blood; look upon the Saviour uplifted on the cross; hear that despairing cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Look upon that wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet. Remember that *Christ risked all*; "tempted like as we are," he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict. *Heaven itself was imperiled* for our redemption. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Jesus would have yielded up his life, we may estimate the value of a soul.[75]

Again, discussing the human nature of Christ she writes:

Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, *at the risk of failure and eternal loss*.[76]

In addition, writing about the temptation of Christ, she recognizes that "if man has in any sense a more trying conflict to endure than had Christ, then Christ is not able to succor him when tempted. Christ took humanity with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man with the *possibility of yielding to temptation*, and he relied upon divine power to keep him."[77]

Two assertions arise from White's comments on divine risk.[78] First, divine risk is

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[75]Ellen G. White, "Seeking the Lost," *The General Conference Bulletin*, December 1, 1895, CD-ROM (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2008), 639, (emphasis added).

[76]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 49 (emphasis added).

[77]Ellen G. White, "Extracts from 'Life of Christ'," *The General Conference Bulletin*, February 25, 1895, CD-ROM (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2008). See also idem, *The Desire of Ages*, 117 (emphasis added).

[78]Taking into consideration the first statement in relation to other remarks on the ministry of Christ in the writings of White, the phrase "*Heaven itself was imperiled*" could mean the whole of heaven is involved in the plan to redeem and restore the fallen race. The last two remarks unambiguously emphasize the kind of nature Christ took upon Himself in order to meet the needs of humanity. Although the human nature of

associated with divine activity performed in human history. This implies that, although

foreknowledge and risk are divine activities, they are distinct activities. While divine

foreknowledge is an activity performed in eternity, divine risk was taken in human

history. Consequently, in her opinion, divine risk does not increase or decrease the

content of divine foreknowledge, but it is evident that the content of divine

foreknowledge involves not only future choices of free moral agents but also the outcome

of His plan to redeem His creation from the problem of evil.

The second assertion, which flows from the first, is that it was divine confidence

in what God foreknew about the future that led Him to decide on endangering His most

treasured asset in heaven, His Son, in human history. These two assertions are also

manifested in White's claim that Christ paid the price and only He is a sufficient ransom

for the fallen race.[79] Experientially, management takes risks frequently, but management

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Christ is debated, many scholars agree that, if Christ had taken upon Himself any other
nature than the degenerating human nature resulting from sin, the applicability of His
mission to reconcile the fallen human race with God through His death could not be
accomplished. See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI:
Baker, 1998), 722-723; Raoul Dederen, "Christ: His Person and Work," in *Handbook of
Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and
Herald, 2000), 160-203.

[79]White writes, "The blood of beasts could not satisfy the demands of God in
atoning for the transgression of his perfect law. The life of a beast was of less value than
the life of the offending sinner, therefore it could not be a ransom for sin. It could only be
acceptable with God as a figure, representing the perfect Offering which the blood of
beasts prefigured. . . . Man could not atone for man. He was created lower than the
angels, and his sinful, fallen condition would constitute him an imperfect offering, an
atoning sacrifice of less value than Adam before his fall. . . . The divine Son of God was
the only one of sufficient value to satisfy the claims of God's perfect law. The angels
were sinless, but of less value than the law of God. They were amenable to law. They
were messengers to do the will of Christ, and before him to bow. They were created
beings, and probationers. Upon Christ no requirements were laid, as upon created beings.
He had power to lay down his life, and to take it again. . . . His life was of sufficient value

never puts its most treasured assets in harm's way without knowing the certainty of the

outcome. As a result, risks do not entail lack of certainty of the end results. We may

assume that, for White, divine risk is Christ vacating the heavenly realm and exposing

Himself to the sinful world and the cruelty of its intelligent creatures rather than the

uncertainty of the outcome.[80]

The discussion on White's concepts of eternity, content of divine foreknowledge,

and divine risk has established her model of divine foreknowledge as exhaustive definite

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to rescue man from his fallen condition" (E. G. White, *The Redemption Series*, 8 nos.
[Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1877-1878), 1:9-10.

[80]Richard Rice has argued extensively that affirming divine exhaustive definite
foreknowledge denies God the experience of taking genuine risk. He states, "If God knew
with complete certainty that Christ's earthly mission would end in victory, He did not
risk His Son in sending Him to the world for man's salvation. He simply paid the price
for a guaranteed result. . . . It does exclude a quality from His experience that is one of
the most moving aspects of human love . . . namely, the willingness to commit oneself
wholly to another in spite of an uncertain and indefinite future" (Richard Rice, *The
Openness of God*, 88, 37). White maintains that divine foreknowledge is exhaustive and
definite, God took a risk and Christ's death is a ransom. She writes, Christ "humbled
Himself to man's nature . . . and the plan was entered into by the Son of God, knowing all
the steps in His humiliation, that He must descend to make an expiation for the sins of a
condemned, groaning world" (Ellen G. White, "Christ Man's Example," *Review and
Herald*, July 5, 1887, 1). For White, the three concepts—divine foreknowledge, Christ is
a ransom, and divine risk—together express "agape" love towards the fallen race. God's
willingness to give Christ as a ransom in spite of His foreknowledge of the cruelty that
the fallen race will manifest towards His Son is love that goes beyond moving aspects of
human love. It is precisely God's foreknowledge of Christ's victory that made Him risk
His Son. Thus, God did not take a risk because He was uncertain of the result of the plan
of the salvation rather, it was the subjection of Christ, one person of the trinity, to the
frailty of the human race and its deteriorated environment. "Christ was the Majesty of
heaven, the Commander of the heavenly hosts. But He put off His crown, and divested
Himself of His royal robe, to take upon Him human nature, that humanity might touch
humanity" (Ellen G. White, "A Crucified and Risen Saviour," *Signs of the Times*, July
12, 1899, 5). Furthermore, White states that "God and Christ knew of the apostasy of
Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not
ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the
terrible emergency" (E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 22). This remark suggests that

foreknowledge. How she deals with the alleged theological contradiction between libertarian free will and divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge has also been identified. For her, divine predestination is a planned provision for the problem of evil, not predestined free will choices. Therefore, there is no contradiction in affirming libertarian free will and exhaustive definite foreknowledge. The next section explores how her model of free will and divine foreknowledge impacts her model of divine sovereignty.

Sovereignty of God

Like most theologians, White holds that God is the creator of the universe. He has authority and power over all His creation. He continually upholds His creation. He directly or indirectly acts in human history to restore humankind in the image of God.[81] These acts in human history are revealed through special revelations, such as visions, dreams and incarnation, Scripture,[82] the convicting and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit,[83] and the mission of the church.[84] If, according to White, humans possess libertarian free will, how can God be said to be in control of all things? If He does not cause free will choices, how can He be sovereign in bringing humanity back to the perfection in which the race was created? White's solution to this ambiguity between

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God would not have risked to create if He was not certain of His plan to redeem the situation of sin and evil.

[81]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 331-332; idem, "God Rules Over All," *Bible Training School*, February 1, 1915.

[82]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 23-24.

[83]E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 47-56; idem, *Christian Education*, 56.

[84]E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 25-34.

libertarian free will and divine sovereignty may be identified by considering the wills of God: permissive, limitative, directive, preventive, and controlling wills.

Permissive Will

In White's opinion divine permissive will is evident in two ways.   First, discussing the origin of sin and evil, she insists that "God permitted him [Satan] to demonstrate the nature of his claims, to show the working out of his proposed changes in the divine law. . . . The whole universe must see the deceiver unmasked."[85] For her, divine permission of sin not only allows Satan to identify himself as an enemy of God, but also the permission to work on the wicked as well as the righteous.[86]

Second, she sees divine permissive will manifested in every occurrence. Even about Christ's suffering she remarks that "the Father's presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world." [87] By making human wickedness against Christ evidence of divine permissive will, she

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[85]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 42. Some scholars hold that evil exists under the permissive will of God. See J. B. Russell, *Satan*: *The Early Christian Tradition*, 45.

[86]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 129.

[87]E. G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 488-489. Discussing how our action affects each other, she writes, "Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. Whatever comes to him comes from the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Nothing can touch him except by the Lord's permission. All our sufferings and sorrows, all our temptations and trials, all our sadness and griefs, all our persecutions and privations, in short, all things work together for our good. All experiences and circumstances are God's workmen whereby good is brought to us" (ibid., 489).

necessarily identifies the human race as permitted to exercise individuality in making choices.[88]

Thus every action that libertarian free will effectuates is possible because of divine permissive will. In other words libertarian free will is allowed to function under the permissive will of God. For White, though God has permitted free will to function, He is not directly responsible for the events that libertarian free will effectuates.

Limitative Will

While White affirms divine permissive will, she seems to point out that God limits the things He permits. Once again, depending on her understanding of the origin of sin and evil, she notes that the casting of Satan and his cohorts out of heaven puts a limit on sin and evil from spreading to the entire angelic population.[89] Furthermore, based on Gen 3 she writes:

> In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct. It was Satan's plan that Adam and Eve should by disobedience incur God's displeasure; and then, if they failed to obtain forgiveness, he hoped that they would eat of the tree of life, and thus perpetuate an existence of sin and misery. But after man's fall, holy angels were immediately commissioned to guard the tree of life. Around these angels flashed beams of light having the appearance of a glittering sword. None of the family of Adam were permitted to pass the barrier to partake of the life-giving fruit; hence there is not an immortal sinner.[90]

This implies, for White, that God has put a limit on the length of the existence of sin and evil. The definite limit on sin and evil is death. In her view, this limit involves a

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[88]E. G. White, "Let This Mind Be in You," *Signs of the Times*, September 3, 1902.

[89]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 42.

[90]Ibid., 60.

promise to put an end to sin and evil, to redeem and restore His creation through Christ in spite of Satan's desperate campaign to exterminate God's people and His creation.[91] She refers to biblical stories to describe how divine limitative will manifests itself universally and in particular events.[92] These stories include Jesus' victory over Satan's temptations,[93] the story of Job, Peter's fall,[94] disobedience of the first human parents,[95] and Rev 7:2, 3.[96] In each of these cases, she emphasizes the effects of limitative will on the advancement of sin and evil.

Thus, the Prince of sin and evil is limited to planet Earth, and he is limited as to the extent of influence he can exert and does not have all eternity to prove his principles to intelligent creatures. In the same manner, humans are limited in the extent of influence they can exert on each other.

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[91]Ibid., 65-66; idem, *Acts of the Apostles*, 222; idem, *Education* 27; idem, *The Great Controversy*, 506.

[92]Some scholars such as Millard J. Erickson see divine limitative will as manifested in some particular evil events. Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 142.

[93]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 129-130.

[94]Ellen G. White, "Peter's Fall and Restoration," *The Youth Instructor*, December 15, 1898.

[95]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 60.

[96]"Four mighty angels are still holding the four winds of the earth. Terrible destruction is forbidden to come in full. The accidents by land and by sea; the loss of life, steadily increasing, by storm, by tempest, by railroad disaster, by conflagration; the terrible floods, the earthquakes, and the winds will be the stirring up of the nations to one deadly combat, while the angels hold the four winds, forbidding the terrible power of Satan to be exercised in its fury until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads" (Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, comp. Ellen G. White Estate [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952], 308).

Directive Will

White's perception of divine directive will is illustrated in her discussion on Joseph's story.[97] She observes that God did not approve the evils worked against Joseph and yet He did not prevent it. However, the "divine hand had directed" the disastrous outcome of Joseph's brothers' sinful act to good results.[98]

It appears that, for White, God redirects evil acts that the perpetrators intended to hinder the manifestations of God's glory and His blessings to humankind. This is because in comparing Joseph's experience with Christ's, she notes that God overruled evil doers' course of events to "bring about the event that they designed to hinder."[99] In her view, divine directive will does not imply that God manipulates in such a way that evils that are permitted to occur are necessary for the production of greater good. For she emphasizes that "God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them."[100] This implies that not all heinous evils are redirected and these are evidence of warfare between the Creator and His rebellious creatures. It also indicates that White's concept of directive will does not override libertarian free will.

Preventive Will

Another will that is already implicit in White's concept of divine sovereignty is preventive will. The biblical passage about Abraham and Abimelech is frequently used

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[97]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209-240.

[98]Ibid., 222.

[99]Ibid., 239.

[100]Ibid., 223.

as a proof of divine preventive will. [101] Ironically, White does not make any comment on the most prominent biblical evidence of divine preventive will. However, she alludes to divine preventive will when she uses the story of Balaam as an illustration in her exposition on the snares of Satan. "The Spirit of God forbade the evil which he [Balaam] longed to pronounce"[102] on the people of God.

It seems to White that God has generally permitted evil, but He sometimes prevents some concrete evil occurrences. On the one hand, she recognizes that, while God's children remain faithful to Him, "no power in earth or hell could prevail against them." [103] On the other hand, she acknowledges that preventive will does not coerce libertarian free will. According to White, "the curse which Balaam had not been permitted to pronounce against God's people, he finally succeeded in bringing upon them by seducing them into sin."[104] In other words when God's people choose to follow the perpetrators of evil against them, they remove themselves from under the protection of God and deny themselves the benefit of divine preventive will. They are then "left to feel the power of the destroyer." But when they remain faithful to God, irrespective of how perpetrators of evil present themselves, God prevents some concrete evil occurrences from befalling them.[105]

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[101]Gen 20. See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 424.

[102]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 529.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Ibid., 529-530.

[105]Ibid., 529.

Controlling Will

In addition to permissive, limitative, directive, and preventive wills, White asserts that it is "the word of God" that "controls" nature, not "inherent power that year by year the earth continues her motion round the sun and produces her bounties."[106] She observes that divine controlling will is manifested upon nature in two ways: nourishment and punishment. From her point of view, in spite of the effects of Satan's and humans' rebellion on the natural world, God, through controlling will, nourishes nature, which enables nature to remain a lesson book to humankind.[107] On the other hand, her discussion on the flood emphasizes that nature has been a weapon storehouse for God where, through divine controlling will, He drew weapons for the destruction of the wicked during the flood, and He will draw weapons from there again against the wicked at the second coming of Christ.[108]

White's view of permissive, limitative, directive, preventive, and controlling wills, as described above, reflects her disavowal of the idea that creation is left to chance.[109] It also displays her objection to meticulous divine sovereignty.[110] Her

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[106]Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913; reprint, 1943), 185.

[107]Ibid.

[108]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 109-110.

[109]It is a belief that affirms that occurrences in the world are brought about spontaneously. But for White "the same creative energy that brought the world into existence is still exerted in upholding the universe and continuing the operations of nature. The hand of God guides the planets in their orderly march through the heavens. It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth continues her motion round the sun and produces her bounties" (E. G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, 185).

approach shows that she believes that God rules and works to achieve His purpose for

His creation. However, He works in a manner that does not interfere with agents'

libertarian free will. Thus, the consistency between White's view of sovereign activities

and agents' libertarian free will requires a corresponding understanding of prayer.

In the history of Christian theology, discussion on divine sovereignty raises the

question of the efficaciousness of prayer. The following section discusses White's view

of prayer in the context of her understanding of divine sovereign activities.

Prayer

White discusses prayer in relation to divine sovereignty. She identifies prayer as

human activity, which God has assigned as an essential factor in His sovereignty over His

creatures. According to her, through general and special revelations God speaks to us;

and prayer is a necessary privilege through which human agents express their thoughts

and feelings in the divine and human relationship.[111] This means for White, "prayer is

the opening of the heart to God as to a friend."[112] It is a channel through which

libertarian free will communicates with God.

Relying on biblical evidence, White identifies the benefit of prayer as spiritual

and material things necessary to help petitioners' to be faithful to God in spite of the

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[110]Meticulous control means "all events are carefully controlled and manipulated in such a way that no evils are permitted to occur except as they are necessary for the production of a greater good" (William Hasker, "Must God Do His Best?" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 16 [1984]: 216). It is often affirmed by scholars who believe in theological determinism, free will, and exhaustive definite divine foreknowledge. See Feinberg, "God Ordains All Things," 19-43.

[111]Ellen G. White, "Prayer," *Signs of the Times*, June 18, 1902.

hideous nature of sin and evil. [113] This means prayer can "move the arm of God."[114] In this context, prayer is efficacious. Nevertheless, she is critical of the idea that prayer enriches God's knowledge about us or informs Him about our needs[115] and commands Him to do what we desire.[116] She is equally critical of the idea that "there can be no real answer to prayer."[117] For White, God has made it "plain that our asking must be according to God's will; we must ask for the things that He has promised, and whatever we receive must be used in doing His will."[118] This is why she affirms that prayer "enables us to receive God."[119] This implies prayer demonstrates human agents' willingness to let God work His purpose in them. Through prayer the divine sovereign wills work in cooperation with libertarian free will. "The natural cooperates with the supernatural. It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask."[120]

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[112]E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 93.

[113]Ellen G. White, "The Power of Prayer," *Signs of the Times*, January 29, 1902.

[114]Ellen G. White, "The Work for This Time," *Signs of the Times*, September 4, 1879, CD-ROM (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2008).

[115]"The ear of the Lord is open to the cry of every suppliant. Even before the prayer is offered or the yearning desire of the soul made known, the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Never has there been a genuine desire, never a tear shed in contrition of soul, but grace from Christ has gone forth to meet the grace working upon the human heart" (E. G. White, "Prayer," 2).

[116]E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:149.

[117]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 525.

[118]E. G. White, *Education*, 257.

[119]E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 93.

[120]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 525.

While not discounting the importance of prayer, White indicates that prayers must meet certain conditions before they are answered. By conditions to answered prayer, she means petitioners must feel the need for help, be humble, persistent, and pray in faith with intensity.[121] Prayers that do not meet the stipulated conditions are our insult to God.[122] However, "to every sincere prayer He answers, 'Here am I.' He uplifts the distressed and downtrodden."[123] But, sometimes "it may not come just as you desire, or at the time you look for it; but it will come in the way and at the time that will best meet your need."[124]

As I bring this discussion on White's concept of divine sovereignty to an end, her understanding can be summarized in the statement "God is a moral governor as well as a Father."[125] In other words, divine sovereign activities in human history are governed by moral obligations and the love of the Creator. Thus, by creating agents with libertarian free will, God chose to abide by moral obligations in ruling over them. In this sense, divine sovereign activities do not threaten or obstruct or manipulate creaturely freedom. To be precise, White recognizes that God has sufficient moral reasons for acting the way

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[121]Ibid., 530; idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:538, 539; idem, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 145, 146; idem, *Steps to Christ*, 95-97.

[122]E. G. White, *Christ's Object's Lessons*, 143.

[123]E. G. White, *The Desire of A*ges, 356. White notes that Christ feels the agony and curse of the suffering world. The choices of moral agents affect God's experience with the world. See ibid., 823; idem, *Education*, 263.

[124]Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892; reprint, 1901), 258.

[125]Ellen G. White, "As It Was in the Days of Noah," in *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 12:208; idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:520.

He does in history. This idea becomes apparent in her insistence on God's decision not to destroy evil at the moment of its intrusion, but permit it and then provide other means, which are morally consonant with His character, to save creation. Thus, all the sovereign devices mentioned are dynamic realities vital to redeeming the fallen race, restoring creation, and eradicating sin and evil which means that, although special concerns are directed toward the children of God, divine sovereignty is universal; He rules over all His creation.

The descriptive analysis thus far has focused on the concepts of free will, divine foreknowledge, and sovereignty that are implied in White's model of warfare theodicy. It is evident that free will is libertarian, divine foreknowledge is exhaustive and definite, and divine sovereignty is general. The following sections seek to explore White's understanding of sin and evil.

Sin and Evil

So far, White's views on the theological elements (free will, divine foreknowledge, and divine sovereignty) embedded in her model of warfare theodicy have been examined. This section analyzes her understanding of sin and evil; it is done by exploring her concept of the origin of sin and evil and the divine victory over sin and evil.

Origin of Sin and Evil

Convinced that through the Scripture enough may be understood about God and His dealings with evil, [126] White relies on the Scripture to deal with the perplexing issue

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[126]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 492-493.

of the origin of sin and evil.[127] She observes that before the appearance of sin the

universe existed in harmony with the will of God; all creatures were at peace and shared

impartial love with each other and showed supreme love towards their Creator.[128] For the

law of love is the foundation of God's government, and the "happiness of all created

beings" depended upon their perfect obedience to the law.[129]

With regard to the obedience to the law, White argues that God by virtue of His

nature desires that obedience to the law must be voluntary. Therefore, He endowed

intelligent creatures with freedom of the will.[130] However, the misuse of the freedom of

the will originated sin and distorted the harmony that existed between God and His

creation. This is why White defines sin as "'the transgression of the law;' it is the

outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the

divine government."[131] She distinguishes Lucifer, the first of the covering cherubs, as the

first created being to misuse the freedom of the will that his Creator endowed him with.

He deliberately coveted the honor and allegiance that is exclusively the privilege of

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[127]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33-43.

[128]Ibid., 34; E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 493; idem, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, facsimile ed., 4 vols. (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1969), 4:317; idem, *The Truth about Angels*, comp. Ellen G. White Estate (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 28-29.

[129]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 492.

[130]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34; idem, *The Great Controversy*, 493.

[131]She bases her definition of the sin on 1 John 3:4. E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 493.

Christ, the Son of God.[132] Thus for White, sin began with Lucifer's choice to disobey God's law.

For White, the exact cause of Lucifer's disobedience is inexplicable. She writes, "Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin."[133] White's insistence that there is no cause for Lucifer's rebellion is based on her model of free will. As is evident in the discussion on her model of free will, external and internal elements may influence agents' free choices but those factors do not determine agents' free choices. Therefore, by stating that there is no cause or reason for Lucifer's disobedience, she means no external factors or decay or deficiency in Lucifer determined his choice to rebel. Lucifer's disposition to serve himself was neither determined by his environment nor by divine purpose.[134] For

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[132]Her identification of Lucifer as the originator of sin and evil is based on Ezek 28 and Isa 14. E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 494; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 35; See also idem, *The Truth about Angels*, 32. Since the time of the Church Fathers Ezek 28:12-19 and Isa 14: 12-15 have been used to explain the fall of Satan from heaven and the origin of sin and evil. However, from the end of the nineteenth century on scholars argue that the passages are full of mythological materials, therefore, they have nothing to do with origin of sin and evil or Satan. José Bertoluci investigates and clarifies the claims of the Church Fathers in "The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy between God and Evil" (Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1985).

[133]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 493.

[134]White's understanding of the origin of sin is similar to Thomas Aquinas's concept of the cause of evil. Thomas Aquinas relied on Aristotle's four kinds of cause (Aristotle, a Greek philosopher and a student of Plato, argued that there are four causes: material, formal, efficient and final. Material cause is the elements of an object; for example, wood is the material cause of a table. Formal cause is the essence, pattern, or form of something. Efficient cause is the source of change, which can be external or accidental. Final cause is the end or purpose for which a change takes place. See Bertrand

White, God neither created sin as part of His creation nor caused sin by creating deficient beings.

Relating the origin of sin to evil, White argues that "the consequence . . . of sin is . . . evil."[135] In other words evil is inevitable once sin originated. This implies that for White, sin and its consequence are not privation of good that a thing ought to have—a necessary condition from which degeneration departs, in this case imperfect will[136]—but

Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 169). Aquinas argued on the one hand that evil has material cause where evil flows accidentally. On the other hand, based on his definition of privation ("A privation is that *from which* generation departs. It can, however, be called an accidental cause, inasmuch as it coincides with matter" [Aquinas, *De Principiis Naturae*, III.21]), "the effect of the deficient secondary cause [imperfect being] is reduced to the first non-deficient cause as regards what it has of being and perfection, but not as regards what it has of defect. . . . And, likewise, whatever there is of being and action in a bad action, is reduced to God as the cause; whereas whatever defect is in it is not caused by God, but by the deficient secondary cause" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 8. Ia. 49.2).

White's argument implies that sin has no material cause, formal cause, and final cause, but it has a primary efficient cause: Lucifer, the source of disorder in God's creation.

[135]In a discourse on the fourth commandment, she indicates that "the fall of Adam was a terrible thing, and the consequence of his sin so fraught with evil that language cannot portray it" (Ellen G. White, "The Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment Unchanged," *Signs of the Times*, January 8, 1894, 3). This is not a direct reference to the consequence of Lucifer's disobedience, but depending on her discussion of the events that took place after Lucifer's sin, the war in heaven and the deception of the first humans, the same statement can be made about the effects of Lucifer's sin.

[136]"Evil has a deficient cause in voluntary things otherwise than in natural things. For the natural agent produces the same kind of effect as it is itself, unless it is impeded by some exterior thing; and this amounts to some defect belonging to it. Hence evil never follows in the effect, unless some other evil pre-exists in the agent or in the matter, as was said above. But in voluntary things the defect of the action comes from the will actually deficient, inasmuch as it does not actually subject itself to its proper rule. This defect, however, is not a fault, but fault follows upon it from the fact that the will acts with this defect" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 49.1). Thus, privation of good is a potential evil in God's creation. Once an agent misuses the imperfect free will, the agent becomes the cause of the defect action of the imperfect free will.

divergence from good.   There is no necessary imperfection in God's creation to warrant sin and evil.

From the foregoing discussion, we may ponder the difficult question, Why did God permit sin and its evil consequences? It seems to White that God could have easily eradicated Lucifer at the initial stages of his insidious behavior. She sees the eviction of Lucifer and his cohorts, a third of the angelic host, from heaven as evidence of divine ability to destroy Lucifer instantly.[137] However, for the benefit of all intelligent creatures in the cosmos, to acknowledge the repulsive nature of sin and evil, He let Lucifer live. She writes:

> The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. . . . Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages—a perpetual testimony to the nature of sin and its terrible results. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority.[138]

While Lucifer's rebellion was not necessary, God has allowed it and its effects to be a lesson to His creatures. This permission began a controversy between Christ and rebellious creatures over the issue of allegiance of created beings to God.[139] White's understanding of the origin and divine permission of sin and evil raises concerns about

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[137]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 42; idem, *The Great Controversy*, 497-498.

[138]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 42-43. See idem, *The Great Controversy*, 499.

[139]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 36-40; idem, *The Great Controversy*, 497-498.

how God plans to overcome it. Thus, my next inquiry is on her understanding of divine victory over sin and evil.

Victory over Sin and Evil

As certain as White is about the mystery of the origin of sin and evil and divine authority over it, she is no less convinced about the divine plan to eradicate the intruder from His creation. From her point of view, based on divine foreknowledge, God had in place a plan to deal with sin and evil.[140] She insists that "the creation of the worlds, the mystery of the gospel, are for one purpose, to make manifest to all created intelligences, through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character. By the marvelous display of his love in giving 'his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,' the glory of God is revealed to lost humanity and to the intelligences of other worlds."[141] At this point, a more detailed and careful presentation of her view on the creation of planet Earth and the ministry of Christ are needed. The rest of this chapter analyzes White's model of creation and her understanding of the ministry of Christ and their relation to divine victory over sin and evil.

Creation

Convinced of the role planet Earth plays in the battle between good and evil,

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[140]E. G. White's theory of divine foreknowledge of sin and evil before it happened will be discussed in later analysis.

[141]Ellen G. White, "The Purpose and Plan of Grace," *Signs of the Times*, April 25, 1892, 6. See also E. G. White, "The Mystery of God," *Signs of the Times*, March 25, 1897.

White does not hesitate to depend on the Bible for an accurate "early history of our world . . . the creation of man, and of his fall." She concludes that studying the history of the human race without consulting the Bible generates false and unreliable theories.[142]

Relying on the biblical account of creation, White asserts that creation ("the heavens and all the host of them, the earth and all things that are therein")[143] is by a personal God;[144] it is done in six literal, consecutive days of evening and morning,[145] and not from eternally pre-existent matter.[146] From her perspective all of God's creation is good; human beings were created with characteristics such as "noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil," "high intellectual powers," and "the strongest possible inducements to be true to [their] allegiance."[147] They serve as the culmination and completeness of the creation of the earth.

Thus creation is not from preexisting material; it derives its existence from God, and nothing in it is intrinsically evil.[148] Evidently, White also believes that creatures are

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[142]Ellen G. White, "The Power of the Word of God," *Review and Herald*, November 10, 1904, 7.

[143]White, *Manuscript Releases*, 3:208.

[144]White, *Patriarch and Prophets*, 44.

[145]"The Bible recognizes no long ages in which the earth was slowly evolved from chaos. Of each successive day of creation, the sacred record declares that it consisted of the evening and the morning, like all other days that have followed. At the close of each day is given the result of the Creator's work" (ibid., 112).

[146]E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 3:208.

[147]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49.

[148]White's understanding rejects creation as emanation from God and dualism.

placed in orders,[149] yet her explanation does not support the theory of inherent limitations and imperfections. It seems that White's emphasis on humans as the climax of creation is only to accentuate the human place in creation, representative of God as rulers over God's works on earth.[150] Thus, it suffices to say that, from her point of view, the original creation of planet Earth cannot be anything short of perfect, lacking nothing essential and without flaws.[151]

White's emphasis on the biblical account of creation is also evidence of her views on scientific theories about the origin of the earth. In reacting to the nineteenth-century geological theories, she wrote,

> Infidel geologists claim that the world is very much older than the Bible record makes it. They reject the Bible record, because of those things which are to them evidences from the earth itself, that the world has existed tens of thousands of years. And many who profess to believe the Bible record are at a loss to account for wonderful things which are found in the earth, with the view that creation week was only seven literal days, and that the world is now only about six thousand years old. These, to free themselves of difficulties thrown in their way by infidel geologists, adopt the view that the six days of creation were six vast, indefinite periods.[152]

The point to be made here is as follows. On the one hand, she rejects the claims of evolutionists, geologists, and paleontologists that are contradictory to the biblical accounts of creation, and any harmonization of these theories with the biblical accounts of creation that seems to compromise the biblical account.[153] On the other hand, she does

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[149]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45; idem, *The Truth About Angels*, 48.

[150]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.

[151]E. G.White, "The Purpose and Plan of Grace."

[152]E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:91, 92.

[153]In analyzing Theistic Evolution and Progressive Creationism—examples of the attempts of harmonizing evolution theory with the biblical account of creation—

not create a dichotomy between theology and science. Like a few of her

contemporaries,[154] she believes that communication between theology and science is

necessary. She writes, "All true science is but an interpretation of the handwriting of

God in the material world. Science brings from her research only fresh evidences of the

wisdom and power of God. Rightly understood, both the book of nature and the written

word make us acquainted with God by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent

laws through which He works."[155] Consequently, for White, any conflict between the

Bible and science is a result of erroneous inferences drawn from observation of nature or

from a biased interpretation of the Bible.[156]

Fernando Canale writes, "The difference between Theistic Evolution and Progressive Creationism consists in the way they see God's involvement in the process of evolution. Both, however, share the conviction that evolutionary science tells the true story of what actually took place in historical reality. Moreover, following the dictates of timeless Greek metaphysics, both views assume that God does not work historically within the spatiotemporal sequence of historical events. Divine causality does not operate historically (sequentially), but spiritually (instantaneously). Thus, Christian harmonization of creation to evolution stands on the prior harmonization of reality to Greek metaphysical and anthropological dualisms that guided Augustine's and Aquinas' theological constructions. They systematized the dehistorization and spiritualization of Christian doctrine on which Theistic Evolutionism and Progressive Creationism build their theological syntheses" (Fernando Canale, "Adventist Theology and Deep Time/Evolutionary Theory: Are They Compatible?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15 [2004]: 98).

[154]According to Livingston, Charles Hodge, "would not separate science and theology into two distinct spheres of fact and value. For Hodge, science and the Bible were reconcilable. Conflicts could only be apparent and would be shown to be so when either the facts were better known or the truth of the Bible more clearly discerned" (Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 260). Hodge rejected Darwinism on the basis that it is a false scientific theory. See Charles Hodge, *What Is Darwinism*? (New York: Scribner, 1874).

[155]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 599.

[156]She cites geology as a case in point. E. G. White, *Education*, 128. For a detailed discussion of White's view on Creation, the Bible, and science and evolution, see

White's rejection of evolution and geological theories of the nineteenth century, which seem to give reasonable explanation for pain and suffering in nature, does not mean she denies the reality of the problem of evil. Rather, due to her emphasis on the primacy of Scripture, she is able to affirm the perfection of creation while at the same time maintaining that planet Earth is infested with evil. She proposes that everything is under "fixed laws." In addition to the fixed laws, human beings are "amenable to moral law," and are endowed with free will—"power to understand His [God's] requirements, to comprehend the justice and beneficence of His law, and its sacred claims" upon humankind.[157] Thus she recognizes that the human race is granted the power of choice just like the angels, and that in spite of the noble character of the first humans, they were not beyond the possibility of disobeying God.[158] For this reason, she insists that the first humans were not left ignorant about Satan's rebellion.[159] Affirming the literal

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Gerhard Pfandl, "Ellen G. White and Earth Science," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14 (2003): 176-194; Frank M. Hasel, "Ellen G. White and Creationism: How to Deal with Her Statements on Creation and Evolution: Implications and Prospects," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17 (2006): 229-244; Cindy Tutsch, "Interpreting Ellen G. White's Earth History Comment," A paper presented at Faith and Science Conference II, Glacier View, Colorado, 2003; idem, "Bible and Science," to be published in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* by Review and Herald in 2012.

[157]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 52. See also idem, *The Truth About Angels*, 48; idem, *The Redemption Series*, 2:6.

[158]As indicated, this does not imply inherent imperfections or limitations. Rather, one may assume that this description of human nature is in relation to divine nature due to her understanding that the object of creation of the human race was to progressively reflect more fully the image of God. E. G. White, *Education*, 15.

[159]E. G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 4:317. White suggests that the first humans had angels, who constantly taught them and reminded them of the rebellion of Satan, and nature as their lesson book. See E. G. White, *The Truth About Angels,* 49; idem, *Spiritual Gifts*, 1:20. Remarking on the role that nature played in instructing them, she writes, "Nature was their lesson-book. In the Garden of Eden the existence of God

interpretation of Gen 1-3, she concludes that they succumbed to Satan's deception and temptation "to distrust God's love, to doubt his wisdom, and to transgress His law."[160] Consequently, for White, by Adam's "disobedience of the divine law, the world was thrown into disorder and rebellion. Because of his disobedience, man was under the penalty of breaking the law, doomed to death."[161] The conclusion appears inescapable that White believes in the reality of the problem of evil.

This reflection shows that the perfect earth now experiences sin and its consequence, evil. However, scholars have argued that such an explanation of the reality of evil is applicable to moral evil, but does not deal adequately with natural evil such as the Lisbon Earthquake that set the Enlightenment thinkers searching for an explanation for such evils. It is to this issue of natural evil that we now turn our attention.

Natural evil

Natural evil became an issue needing the immediate attention of academicians after the Lisbon Earthquake in 1755. Voltaire, in reacting to the Lisbon disaster, wrote a poem against the providence of God. [162] Jean Jacques Rousseau, responding to the poem,

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was demonstrated in the objects of nature that surrounded them. Every tree of the garden spoke to them. The invisible things of God were clearly seen, being understood by the things which were made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Ellen G. White, "The Revelation of God," *Review and Herald*, November 8, 1898, 1).

[160]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 57.

[161]Ellen G. White, "The Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment Unchanged," 3. See also idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 52-57. She sees the tree of good and evil in Eden to be a test of faith. Thus, eternal happiness lies in human obedience to God's law of love. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 48-49.

[162]Voltaire was against hopes for any kind of wholeness as suggested by Leibniz's and Pope's explanations of evil. However, he believed in the future betterment of

reminded Voltaire about the fact that humans and their organizational structures contribute a great deal to physical ills and disasters.[163] White's views on moral and natural evils to some degree reiterate Rousseau's opinion. She remarks, "Even the child, as he comes in contact with nature, will see cause for perplexity. He cannot but recognize the working of antagonistic forces";[164] such evil forces are neither natural nor inherent in nature.[165]

In the ensuing discussion I examine how this explains natural evil and its excessiveness. I intend to do this by considering how White counteracts two main approaches to natural evil: Natural evil as a consequence of the laws of nature and as punishment for sin.

Natural evil as a consequence of laws of nature. White does not develop a complete theory on natural evil, although she makes remarks that express her opinion on the issue. We may deduce from White's concept of creation that natural evil is the

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humankind, therefore, spent most of his time in an attempt to eradicate moral evil. F. M. A. de Voltaire, *Poèmes sur le désastre de Lisbonne et sur la loi naturelle, avec Prefaces, des Notes etc.*, Genève, [1756]; reprinted from *Selected Works of Voltaire,* ed. and trans. Joseph McCabe (London: Watts and Co., 1911).

[163]Theodore Besterman, ed., *Voltaire's Correspondence*, vol. 30 (Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1958), 102-115.

[164]E. G. White, *Education*, 101.

[165]The term natural evil occurs several times (about eight times), but she used it in reference to the evil disposition in human character (Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, comp. Ellen G. White Estate (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1964), 182, 247; idem, "Contemplate Christ's Perfection, Not Man's Imperfection," *Review and Herald*, August 15, 1893; idem, "Instruction to Ministers," *Review and Herald*, February 18, 1909; idem, "The Character of John," *Signs of the Times*, April 20, 1891; idem, "Lessons from the Sermon on the Mount," *The Wisconsin Reporter*, September 15, 1909;

consequence of the disobedience to God's law, human actions, and lack of it and not the consequence of the laws of nature themselves.

The accuracy of the above deduction is based on the assertion she makes about the effects of the disobedience of our first parents. She observes that the disobedience of Adam and Eve deprived them of their relationship with God and subjugated them under Satan's rule; thereby they forfeited their privilege to gain immortality from eating the fruit of the tree of life and became slaves to sin.[166]

Similarly, White maintains that the effects of human disobedience are also manifested in nature. Human nature began to degenerate; they decreased in physical strength, mental power, and moral worth. The natural world also began to deteriorate under Satan's rule.[167] She relies on Christ's remarks, "An enemy hath done this,"[168] to explain the antagonistic forces in nature. From the foregoing discussion we may conclude that White's understanding of what some perceive as inherent or natural evil, "capricious outbreaks of disorganized, unregulated forces of nature,"[169] are calamities resulting from human disobedience to God's law. She writes, God "never made a thorn, a thistle, or a tare. These are Satan's work, the result of degeneration, introduced by him

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idem, "Words to the Young," *The Youth's Instructor*, November 23, 1893; idem, "Words to the Young," *The Youth's Instructor*, June 7, 1894).

[166]Ellen G. White, "Christ's Sacrifice for Man," *Signs of the Times*, June 13, 1900; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 62.

[167]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 59.

[168]Matt 13:28. E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:113; idem, *Education*, 101.

[169]E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 277; idem, "Calamities and the Great Controversy," in *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 19:279.

among the precious things."[170] This implies, it seems, that the curse upon the human race

is an announcement of the kind of government to which the original disobedience

subjected the race and its environment.[171]

While, for White, moral and natural evils in this world originated from Satan's

deception and the first parents' disobedience, human persistence in sinful actions and

disregard of the laws of nature contribute to the continually downward degeneration of

the human race and deterioration of the natural world. This results in chronic and

terminal conditions of individual humans[172] and natural disasters such as tornadoes, death

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[170]E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:186.

[171]This inference from White's position agrees with the meaning of the curse formula in the Old Testament. According to Old Testament scholars, the curse formula expels the object of the curse from a community relationship, status, or a position that the object of the curse enjoyed before. Josef Scharbert, "ארר," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1974), 1:408-409. See also F. Rachel Magdalene, "Curse," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (2000), 301-302.

[172]Discussing the deplorable state of the human race she writes, "Since the fall the tendency of the race has been continually downward, the effects of sin becoming more marked with every successive generation. But so great was the vitality with which man was endowed that the patriarchs from Adam to Noah, with a few exceptions, lived nearly a thousand years. Moses, the first historian, gives an account of social and individual life in the early days of the world's history; but we find no record that an infant was born blind, deaf, crippled, or imbecile. Not an instance is recorded of a death in infancy, childhood, or early manhood. . . . It was so rare for a son to die before his father that such an occurrence was thought worthy of record: 'Haran died before his father Terah.'"
     "Since the flood, the average length of life has been decreasing. Had Adam possessed no greater physical force than men now have, the race would before this have become extinct. . . ."
     "Still more deplorable is the condition of the human family at the present time. Diseases of every type have been developed. Thousands of poor mortals with deformed, sickly bodies and shattered nerves are dragging out a miserable existence. The infirmities of the body affect the mind, and lead to gloom, doubt, and despair. Even infants in the cradle suffer from diseases resulting from the sins of their parents."
     "Disease and premature death have so long prevailed, with an ever-increasing weight of suffering, that they have come to be regarded as the appointed lot of humanity.

of living things, earthquakes, and hurricanes.[173]   Humans in collaboration with evil forces

cause such damage to God's creation.

But this is not the case. God is not the author of the many woes to which mortals are subject; it is not because He desires to see His creatures suffer that there is so much misery in this world. Neither is it all due to Adam's transgression. We may mourn over the fall in Eden, and think that our first parents showed great weakness in yielding to temptation, thus opening the door for sin to enter our world, with all its attendant evils. But the first transgression is not the only cause of our unhappy lot. A succession of falls has occurred since Adam's day" (Ellen G. White, "Health Principles," *Pacific Health Journal*, February 1, 1902, CD-ROM [Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2008]). See also idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:30.

Encouraging health reform she states, "Since the laws of nature are the laws of God, it is plainly our duty to give these laws careful study. We should study their requirements in regard to our own bodies and conform to them. Ignorance in these things is sin. He [human] has treated its body as if its laws had no penalty. Through perverted appetite its organs and powers have become enfeebled, diseased, and crippled. . . . We ourselves must suffer the ills of violated law" (E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:369).

[173]In her discussion of calamities on land and sea, she mentions that "intemperance is the cause of most of the frequent accidents. . . . Men on whom devolve grave responsibilities in safeguarding their fellow men from accident and harm, are often untrue to their trust" (E. G. White, "Calamities and the Great Controversy," 19:280). As already indicated, White does not believe in biological evolution and its related fundamental laws of physics, which indicates that natural disasters occurred billions of years before the evolution of humans. Even so, she does not deny the fact that violations accompany the operations of the laws of nature. In her opinion, the manifestations of irregularities with the operations of the laws of nature are the results of human action or lack of it and not the laws themselves. This view of White can be illustrated with tectonic shifts. Tectonic shifts build up the land masses that we call home, but these are sometimes accompanied with earthquakes and tsunamis due to human actions or lack of it. Even human modification of its physical environment to meet its survival, changing needs, such as food, clothing, water, shelter and energy, has brought transformation and economic prosperity. On the other hand, it also has by-products like hazardous chemicals, such as chlorofluorocarbons, and disturbance of earth motions which place enormous demands on the physical environment to absorb and accommodate. This has resulted in depletion of the ozone layer as well as the earth; the repercussions are global warming, climate change, earthquakes, etc., which in turn cause intense pain and suffering and unprecedented destruction to the biological realm of creation. Some contemporary scholars believe much of natural evil and disasters are the result of human actions. See Robert John Russell, "Physics, Cosmology, and the Challenge to Consequentialist Natural Theodicy," in *Physics and Cosmology*: *Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Natural Evil*, ed. Nancey Murphy, Robert John Russell, and William R. Stoeger, S. J.

Thus the exacerbation and excessiveness of evil in the world are the effects of humans' continuous collaboration with Satan and his cohorts.[174] This explains why White makes a distinction between moral and natural evil, but does not treat them as separate subjects. She argues that there is a misuse of free will behind every evil occurrence.

(Vatican City State and Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2007), 1:109n3; Don Howard, "Physics as Theodicy," in *Physics and Cosmology*: *Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Natural Evil*, ed. Nancey Murphy, Robert John Russell, and William R. Stoeger, S. J. (Vatican City State and Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2007), 1:323-332.

William R. Stoeger, S. J., defines laws of nature as "the regularities, processes, structures and interrelationships which characterize the reality and make it what it is." Having defined laws of nature he makes two clarifications: 1. "The laws of nature as they actually are in themselves, whether we understand them or not, and whether we have actually adverted to them or not; 2. "'Our laws of nature'—the imperfect, incomplete models or descriptions of the regularities, process, relationships we have developed." He then indicates that "the actual processes and relationships which constitute the full range of the laws of nature are much more than those we actually understand and have modelled. . . . There are aspects of our experience of reality which really cannot be accounted for by 'our laws of nature,' but which we strongly suspect are due to relationships . . . which cannot be probed by the methods of the natural sciences. From the point of view of the natural sciences—from the point of view of the laws of nature we know and understand—they appear to be 'violations.' But are they really?" (William R. Stoeger, "Evolution, God and Natural Evil," in *Can Nature Be Evil or Evil Natural*? *A Science-and-Religion View on Suffering and Evil*, ed. Cornel W. Toit [Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 2006], 27-28). To a large extent, Stoeger's understanding of laws of nature supports White's view on the limitations of human knowledge of the laws of nature. We cannot conclude from limited knowledge of the laws of nature that irregularities in nature are the consequence or by-product of the laws themselves. Such conclusion, according to her understanding, cannot be substantiated. In other words, evidences from nature are not a complete representation of creation as originated from God (E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 52, 113, 114).

[174]White insists that "Satan is the great originator of sin; yet this does not excuse any man for sinning for he cannot force men to do evil. He tempts them to it, and makes sin look enticing and pleasant; but he has to leave it to their own wills whether they will do it or not. . . . Man is a free moral agent to accept or refuse" (E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:294).

Natural evil as punishment for sin. We now turn our attention to White's comments on the concept of natural evil as punishment for sin. What follow is an examination of how her remarks elaborate her understanding of natural evil.

Concerning the concept that natural evil is punishment for sin,[175] she writes: "It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment *arbitrarily* inflicted on account of sin."[176] Notice that she neither denies the fact that evil is the consequence of disobeying God's laws nor rejects the idea that evil is God's punishment for sin. In her opinion, while humans bring evil upon themselves by their sinful actions, some victims of specific evil occurrences are innocent and others contribute or provoke the evil action. Thus, her argument is on the wrong use of the concept to justify either all human pain and suffering or every natural disaster. Having pointed out the contrived concept of God's nature and sovereignty that generate from generalizing the idea, she discusses some reasons for affliction. Once again, this has not been done in one complete work, but her remarks on the topic are scattered throughout her writings and can be organized into three categories for clarity: character development, proving loyalty, and punishing and curbing sin.

1. *Character development*. It must be emphasized that, for White, character is important in the controversy between God and Satan. More so, it becomes very crucial

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[175]The idea that evil is a punishment for sin has been a response to theodicy for centuries. See Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought*, 18-31.

[176]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 471 (emphasis added).

when she mentions that "trials of life are God's workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from our character."[177] Based on the trial of Abraham, White affirms that by "testing trials" God shows His children "their own weakness, and teaches them to lean upon Him" and they become "educated, trained, and disciplined."[178] Indeed she claims that the central premise of Christian development into the likeness of Christ comes under the "pruning knife of trials." It is obvious that the pruning away of the dross from Christian character is accompanied with afflictions and difficulties. [179]

To emphasize the difficulties and afflictions that come with the pruning knife of trials, she refers to the Israelites' journey through the wilderness to say that God leads His children through paths where they encounter difficulties and afflictions that they may learn to depend on Him.[180] Again from Jesus' temptation she notes that the divine pruning of dross away from the Christian character sometimes involves being exposed to Satan's temptation "upon appetite, upon the love of the world, and upon the love of display which leads to presumption."[181] While she admits that God leads His children to

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[177]E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1896; reprint, 1955), 10. The trials' "hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing, is a painful process; it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. But the stone is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple. Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious stones are polished after the similitude of a palace" (ibid.).

[178]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 129, 130.

[179]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 677.

[180]E. G. White, "Rephidim," *Review and Herald*, April 7, 1903.

[181]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 116. "Many look on this conflict between Christ and Satan as having no special bearing on their own life; and for them it has little interest. But within the domain of every human heart this controversy is repeated. Never does one leave the ranks of evil for the service of God without encountering the assaults

paths where they encounter evil, she points out that God "never gives a trial to his children but he will be there to help; he knows just what they can bear, and he does not give them any more than they can bear."[182]

Given White's understanding of the connection between divine sovereignty and human free will, God does not cause the pain and evil that may come with Christian character development. He also does not impose the benefits of the trials He permits upon His children. His children enjoy the benefits of the trials He permits when they remain faithful in spite of the pain and suffering. This is why she writes, "If received in faith, the trial that seems so bitter and hard to bear will prove a blessing. The cruel blow that blights the joys of earth will be the means of turning our eyes to heaven."[183]

2. *Proving loyalty*. The second classification we find in White is that God permits evil to disprove Satan's accusations. White is decidedly against the use of the experience of Job to authenticate the view that "great calamities are a sure index of great crimes and enormous sins." Rather, she dwells on Job's experience to substantiate the fact that "good and evil are mingled, and calamities come upon all."[184] She cites Joseph, Daniel, John, Job, and Paul as examples of godly men who suffered the afflictions of

of Satan. The enticements which Christ resisted were those that we find it so difficult to withstand" (ibid.).

[182]Ellen G. White, "I Will Keep Thee from the Hour of Temptation," *Review and Herald*, April 29, 1890, 1.

[183]E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 10.

[184]E. G. White, "Job," *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953-57), 3:1140; According to her, every follower of Christ is a sharer in the sufferings of Christ. It is the self-sacrifice of Christ's followers that Satan and his cohorts seek to destroy. However, based on Col 3:3 she argues that God permits

Satan. In all these cases she places emphasis on the fact that the individuals suffered because of their faith and loyalty to heaven.[185]

White is insistent that the steadfastness of these courageous men in the midst of their afflictions proves their faith and loyalty and the truthfulness of God. This is why she emphasizes the history of these godly men. The history of these men shows that Satan persecutes the people of God. He attacks their weak points, works through the defects in their character to gain control, and tortures them and puts them to death. But in their steadfastness Satan's accusations are disproven and God is revealed in His chosen ones. The believers "learn the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence."[186] For White the records of these faithful men disprove any rationalization that seeks to make all calamities divine punishment for sin. The problem she finds with such rationalization is that it seeks to accuse every sufferer of sinful acts. For this reason she writes: "When calamity comes, unless the Lord indicates plainly that this calamity is sent as a punishment of those who are departing from the word of his counsel; unless he reveals that it has come as a retribution for the sins of the workers, let every man refrain from criticism. Let us be careful not to reproach any one."[187]

3. *Punishing and Curbing Sin*. The third reason White identifies for pain and

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Satan's assaults on His followers, but the life which is "hid with Christ in God," the enemy cannot destroy. E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 223, 224.

[185]E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 575.

[186]Ibid., 575-577; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 155.

[187]E. G. White, "Words of Counsel and Encouragement from Sister White," *Review and Herald*, August 16, 1906.

suffering is that some disasters are God's punishment for sin and limiting the spread of sin.[188] We have already noted that she is against the use of punishment for sin to explain every evil occurrence, but it also seems true that she observes some evils to be punishment for sin and putting a check on sin. Her understanding of divine punishment is distinct from the general view that every evil occurrence is divine punishment for sin. In this distinction, divine punishment for sin during the period of human probation is to arouse humanity to the sense of danger and the need to seek for that which is honorable and eternal, "to prevent the necessity of visiting judgments upon millions."[189] Referring to the Israelites' apostasy at Sinai, she maintained that had their transgression gone unpunished, "the earth would have become as corrupt as in the days of Noah. Had these transgressors been spared, evils would have followed, greater than resulted from sparing the life of Cain. It was the mercy of God that thousands should suffer, to prevent the necessity of visiting judgments upon millions."[190] Therefore, the goal of divine punishment during this period of human probation is "to save many" from the ultimate penalty of sin, eternal death.[191]

This conception of divine punishment for sin is maintained in her discussion of the sins of Miriam, Korah, and Nadab and Abihu.[192] While White is not prepared to

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[188]E. G. White, "Nature, Lessons from, Contrast of Nature and Man in Obedience to God," *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1980), 3:346.

[189]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 325.

[190]Ibid.

[191]Ibid.

[192]Ibid., 382; 359-362; 395-405.

accept the argument that sin is part of God's plan to serve divine eternal purposes, she

maintains that sins such as idolatry and rebellion against God's authority need to be

punished and curbed for they are Satan's schemes aimed at the total destruction of God's

creation.[193] She remarks:

> It was no less a mercy to the sinners themselves that they should be cut short in
> their evil course. . . . The same spirit that led them to rebel against God would have
> been manifested in hatred and strife among themselves, and they would eventually
> have destroyed one another. It was in love to the world, in love to Israel, and even to
> the transgressors, that crime was punished with swift and terrible severity.[194]

Again God punishes and curbs sin and evil because they are destructive. She

determinedly affirms that the wrath and love of God are coherent. In her view,

lawlessness and insubordination, hatred and strife, and any demoralization that

jeopardizes the mission to restore creation and to justify the character of God must be

punished.[195] God's wrath is caused by sin, and sinners bring it upon themselves, and it

can be averted only by repentance. Thus, for White, God's dealings with sin and evil are

a demonstration of divine love and justice. In other words, God cannot allow evil

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[193]In relation to idolatry she writes: "The moral and intellectual powers are
benumbed and paralyzed by the gratification of the animal propensities; and it is
impossible for the slave of passion to realize the sacred obligation of the law of God, to
appreciate the atonement, or to place a right value upon the soul. Goodness, purity, and
truth, reverence for God, and love for sacred things—all those holy affections and noble
desires that link men with the heavenly world—are consumed in the fires of lust. The
soul becomes a blackened and desolate waste, the habitation of the evil spirits, and the
'cage of every unclean and hateful bird.' Beings formed in the image of God are dragged
down to a level with the brutes" (ibid., 458).

[194]Ibid., 326.

[195]Ibid., 492, 544, 627-628.

without just punishment; allowing evil to go unpunished would be a contradiction in God's character.[196]

Some significant implications emerge from the discussion on natural evils. First, flowing from the above considerations is the idea that many suffer afflictions for various reasons unknown to the observer; hence, pain and suffering seem to be arbitrarily inflicted upon people; however, the ultimate goal of evils that God permits to befall people is to redeem and restore humanity and the earth, and to justify His character before the entire cosmos. Consequently, she warns about the tendency of evaluating divine permission of evil from a human viewpoint. She seems to suggest that self-centered assessment leads to disbelief in God.[197] That is to say, going through pain and suffering with a sense of indignation, of outrage, offense, or self-pity does not help in the restoration process.

Second, White held that some evils serve teleological purposes.[198] But it is relevant at this point to comment on the context in which she regards that some evils function in that manner. In her judgment, nature is a divine revelation intended to be beneficial to the human race in its growth into the full image of God.[199] She claims that,

[196]Ibid., 617-621.

[197]Ibid., 294.

[198]Richard Rice argues that White, like Hick, makes evils in nature "beneficial to moral growth" (Richard Rice, "The Great Controversy and the Problem of Evil," *Spectrum* 32 [2004]: 50).

[199]From her point of view, "Nature was their lessonbook. In the Garden of Eden the existence of God was demonstrated, His attributes were revealed, in the objects of nature that surrounded them. Everything upon which their eyes rested spoke to them. The invisible things of God, 'even His everlasting power and divinity,' were clearly seen, being understood by the things that were made" (E. G. White, *Testimonies for the*

although sin has marred creation, nature in its rebellious state bears testimony to the

Creator God.[200] In other words, nature is still humankind's teacher. Thus, due to its

present condition resulting from human sin, its lessons are taught with manifestations of

the harshness found in it.   God does not create or invent evil in order to achieve His

purpose of redemption and restoration. In her estimation, God sometimes uses this

marred creation to punish humanity's continuous disobedience[201] and/or permits Satan to

unleash his "deadly work of vitiating nature."[202]

Thus, White believes in shared responsibility. God is responsible for evil because

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Church, 8:255). As already pointed out under the discussion on free will, character
development before sin is not from imperfections to perfections, but advancing already-
existing good faculties. Thus, she makes sure her exposition does not assume the idea of
imperfection in creation. According to her, "All his faculties were capable of
development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase. Vast was the scope
offered for their exercise, glorious the field opened to their research. The mysteries of the
visible universe—the 'wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge' (Job
37:16)—invited man's study. Face-to-face, heart-to-heart communion with his Maker
was his high privilege. Had he remained loyal to God, all this would have been his
forever. Throughout eternal ages he would have continued to gain new treasures of
knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer and yet clearer
conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. More and more fully would
he have fulfilled the object of his creation, more and more fully have reflected the
Creator's glory."
    "But by disobedience this was forfeited. Through sin the divine likeness was
marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental
capacity was lessened, his spiritual vision dimmed. He had become subject to death" (E.
G. White, *Education*, 15).

[200]E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 24; idem, "Nature Speaks of God," *Signs
of the Times*, December 6, 1905; reprint, *The Watchman*, November 3, 1908. In these
passages she indicates that the creation as a lesson book in conjunction with the Bible is
to bring humanity from darkness unto Him, the Creator of the universe.

[201]E. G. White, "Nature, Lessons from, Contrast of Nature and Man in Obedience
to God," 3:346.

[202]E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:391.

He sustains the perpetrators and has given them the opportunity to challenge His

sovereignty. [203] However, moral creatures are responsible for their evil actions. Satan is

responsible for the entrance of sin and evil and his cohorts and humanity are responsible

for their actions as they play their roles in the controversy between good and evil.

This discussion has shown that through the disobedience of humanity planet Earth

failed to fulfill the purpose for its creation. It has become a field for the spiritual and

physical manifestation of the nature of evil. Creation has become "red in tooth and claw"

and human nature degenerated.   This is why, in White, evil is not inherent in creation; all

evils are the consequences of moral agents' actions. It is also for this reason that all other

intelligent creatures look to planet Earth for the full understanding of the nature of evil.

In this way, White makes divine dealings with His archenemy twofold: to redeem and

restore planet Earth and to eradicate sin and evil. It is this twofold task that we seek to

understand by making inquiries into White's perspective of the ministry of Christ.

Ministry of Christ

The discussion in the previous section identified planet Earth as infested with sin

and evil. She also points out that God in His eternity foreknew of this unfortunate

predicament of planet Earth. Therefore, He conceived a plan, the ministry of Christ, "to

be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world but for the good of all the

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[203]Discussing the final events before the seconding coming of Christ, she writes,
"God has not restrained the powers of darkness from carrying forward their deadly work
of vitiating the air, one of the sources of life and nutrition, with a deadly miasma. Not
only is vegetable life affected, but man suffers from pestilence. . . . These things are the
result of drops from the vials of God's wrath being sprinkled on the earth" (ibid., 391).

worlds which God has created."[204] Consequently, in seeking to analyze White's concept

of the ministry of Christ, it is important to examine how she employs the ministry of

Christ to explain the redemption and restoration of planet Earth from sin and evil and the

eradication of sin and evil.

Depending on Gen 3, White reveals that Satan immediately recognized his doom

and need to contend for his assumed sovereignty over the earth as soon as the curse upon

the serpent was announced, for the curse undoubtedly revealed the redemptive plan and

the "ultimate defeat and destruction" of sin and evil.[205] What this means, for White, is

that planet Earth had become the designated "battlefield . . . between good and evil."[206]

Therefore, she precedes her discussion of the ministry of Christ with the history of the

patriarchal eras of the Old Testament, placing emphasis on the role God's people played

in preparing the world for Christ's ministry on earth and Satan's craftiness in redirecting

their mission.[207] She remarks, "Satan had been working to make the gulf deep and

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[204]Ellen G. White, "The Purpose and Plan of Grace," 6.

[205]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 58.

[206]Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, comp. Ellen G. White Estate (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1973), 36.

[207]In this regard, White identifies the work of God in the lives of individuals such as Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah. From White's perspective, crucial to the unveiling of the plan of redemption is the history of Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites. Particularly relevant to her discussion of Israel's history is God's plan to bring evil to a definite end to justify His character. In her view, the different stages in the history of Israel parallel the different stages in the manifestation and fulfillment of the plan of redemption. She makes the calling of Abraham the beginning of setting apart a people who will practically make God's plan known to the world. Thus, the wilderness events become preparatory experiences for the Israelites for the task for which they were chosen—building faith in God, establishing noble character, becoming acquainted with the will of God and knowledgeable custodians of the plan of redemption. In her desire to identify the activities that gradually led to the fulfillment of the redemptive plan, she did

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impassable between earth and heaven. . . . He had emboldened" the human race in its sin

in order "to wear out the forbearance of God, and to extinguish His love for man, so that

He would abandon the world to satanic jurisdiction."[208] Notwithstanding Satan's cunning

ways to turn his defeat into victory, in her opinion, God always kept a remnant who

constantly expected the Messiah, even though their concept of the ministry of Christ was

distorted.[209]

For White, the ministry of Christ is more than Christ shedding His blood on the

cross. Relying upon the Old Testament tabernacle and its services and other biblical

passages such as Heb 9:11-28, she observes that there are parallels between two phases of

Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the priest's daily ministry and yearly

ritual in the earthly sanctuary. Each of these phases of Christ's ministry occupies a

period of time.[210] However, the shedding of innocent blood is necessary for these two

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not trivialize the painstaking efforts of Satan to ruin the plan of redemption. She called
Israel's rebellion against God's authority and their idolatry the most successful plan of
Satan to distract the Israelites from focusing on the prophecies about the mystery of the
gospel.

Hence, while not discounting the part that post-exilic Judaism played in the
fulfillment of the redemption plan, White points out that Satan, through Judaism, caused
the world to be ignorant about God's character by turning their worship to legalism. See
E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 125, 290, 293, 368-370; idem, *Prophets and
Kings*; idem, *The Desire of Ages*, 28-29, 35, 115. Her understanding of God's relationship
with the people of Israel gives a clear picture of her concept of divine sovereignty, which
will be analyzed as this discussion proceeds.

[208]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 35.

[209]Ibid., 29-30.

[210]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 357. White's study of the sanctuary
service in the Old Testament helps her to establish the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.
She identified parallels between the services with the ministry of Christ. Particularly she
recognizes that what happens in the heavenly sanctuary is realized in the church's
mission. Thus, Christ's ministry in heaven affects the mission of the church and His

phases of Christ's ministry. This seems to be the case when she writes, "As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary."[211] Hence, the following section surveys her understanding of Christ's life, death and resurrection, and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Christ's life, death, and resurrection. While many Christologies of the nineteenth century focused on the historical Jesus, White emphasized theological Christology.[212] This understanding of White's position shows up in her discussion on all the aspects of Christ's personal ministry on earth, and His death and resurrection.

White's discussion on Christ's life and ministry is a conscientious effort to portray the character of God and its bearing on sin and evil and human life. Accordingly, she sees Christ's life as "an example to us in childhood, youth, and manhood"[213] and His parables, sermons, and deeds such as healing and casting out

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people. For a thorough discussion on White's view of the parallels between the heavenly sanctuary and its ministration and the earthly tabernacle and its services, see Denis Fortin, "Ellen G. White's Conceptual Understanding of the Sanctuary and Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 9 (1998): 160-66.

[211]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 421.

[212]Historical Jesus Christology or sometimes classified as Christology "from below," refers to Christologies that deny the divinity of Christ, see Christ as a religious moralist and a reformer who existed in the past. See David Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879); Ernest Renan, *Life of Jesus*, trans. and rev. from the 23rd French ed. (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1856). Theological Christology or Christology "from above" emphasizes two-nature Christology; Christ is the pre-existent Word of God, who came down from heaven to save sinners.

[213]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 71.

demons as exposure of Satan's lies about the law and the character of God and an illustration of restoring the human race.[214] This means that Christ was "an offense and a perplexity to the prince of darkness."[215]

Reflecting on Christ's encounter with the devil in the wilderness, White identifies Satan's temptation of Christ on appetite as very important. She writes, "Just where the ruin began, the work of our redemption must begin."[216] It appears that, for White, Christ's victory over this temptation cannot be theologically isolated from Adam's failure. This means that the plan of redemption would have come to an abrupt end had Christ yielded to that temptation.[217] It also points to the fact that Christ came to "share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life."[218] Referring to scriptural passages, she observes that Christ's life is in perfect conformity to the law of God, which Satan claims cannot be obeyed, "to fill up the measure of the law's requirement, to give an example of perfect conformity to the will of God," "to magnify

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[214]See the healing at Bethesda (ibid., 206-207), the cleansing of the leper (ibid., 266), and restoring the sight of a blind man (ibid., 474-475).

[215]Ibid., 71.

[216]Ibid., 117.

[217]While White believes Christ's victory over the three temptations is important and related to the redemption of the human race, the victory of Christ over temptation of appetite is pivotal. Appetite was the ground of the temptation of the first human agents. She writes, "From the time of Adam to that of Christ, self-indulgence had increased the power of the appetites and passions, until they had almost unlimited control. Thus men had become debased and diseased, and of themselves it was impossible for them to overcome. In man's behalf, Christ conquered by enduring the severest test. For our sake He exercised a self-control stronger than hunger or death. And in this first victory were involved other issues that enter into all our conflicts with the powers of darkness" (ibid.) See also ibid., 118-131.

[218]Ibid., 49. See E. G. White, "A Crucified and Risen Saviour."

the law, and make it honorable," and "to show the spiritual nature of the law, to present

its far-reaching principles, and to make plain its eternal obligation."[219]

On the death and resurrection of Christ, White stresses its importance in the

divine plan of winning the battle between good and evil. She contends that Christ's

suffering and death is not only a cosmic revelatory model—an expression of God's love

for the human race, justice and truth, [220] but also reconciliatory,[221] substitutionary,[222]

propitiatory,[223] and a vindication of the character of God and His government.[224] Hence,

the two natures of Christ, truly human and divine, and His bodily resurrection are

emphasized.[225] Christ's life and death[226] reveal the plan of redemption, the true character

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[219]Matt 3:15 and Isa 42:21. E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 48-49. See Ellen G. White, "The Perfect Law," *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1898; idem, "Christ's Attitude Toward the Law"; idem, *Education*, 76-77. White's understanding of Jesus as our example is different from the socinian, examplarist, and moral-influence theories of atonement. Socinian theory was introduced by Faustus and Laelius Socinus in their rejection of vicarious satisfaction, arguing that Christ's death was an example. The moral-influence theory was developed from Peter Abelard's reaction to Anselm's satisfaction theory by Horace Bushel and Hastings Rashdall. For details of these theories, see Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 800-806. What makes White's understanding distinctive from these theories is that, in her opinion, it is not Christ's death that is an example, but the life He lived on earth.

[220]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 761-762.

[221]E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:201.

[222]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 753.

[223]E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 13; idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:237.

[224]The execution of the plan restores the human race into the image of God, based on the race's reception of Christ as their Savior (E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 568, 762; idem, *Christ's Object Lessons* 74; idem, *Education*, 125), reveals the insidious claims of Satan to all intelligent beings (idem, *That I May Know Him*, 361, 367).

[225]For White, the two natures of Christ were combined, yet both maintained their distinctive-character. Thus, her concept of the nature of Christ is distinctive from the

of God, and the nature of sin to all created intelligences; and His resurrection forever

establishes the fate of Satan and the fulfillment of the plan for the redemption of the

human race.[227]

The points to be derived from White's concept of the purpose of Christ's life,

death, and resurrection are as follows. First, it is an affirmation that the law of God is

unchangeable. She notes, by virtue of the incarnation of Christ and His earthly ministry,

death, and resurrection, that the law of God cannot be rescinded or changed to yield to

Satan's insinuations.[228] Second, the immutable nature of the law, which is the expression

of God's character, implies that His character is unchangeable. As a result, she argues

strongly against the theological idea that the moral law has been nailed to the cross[229] and

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nineteenth-century theories of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Albecht Ritschl that rejected the divinity of Christ and the kenoticism of Gottfried Thomasius. For a detailed discussion on Ellen White's concept of the nature of Christ, see Gil Gutierrez Fernandez, "Ellen G. White: The Doctrine of the Person of Christ" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1978); Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*: *A Chronological Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997).

[226]For detailed accounts on Ellen White's understanding of Christ's life and death, see Denis Fortin, "The Cross of Christ: Theological Differences between Joseph H. Waggoner and Ellen G. White," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14 (2003): 134-140; David B. Burke, "The Views of E. G. White on Substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ" (Term Paper, Andrews University, 1973); Chandradass Ephraim, "A Concept of Atonement in the Light of E. G. Whites [*sic*] Writings" (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1979).

[227]E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 701-702; idem, *The Desire of Ages* 758-764, 782.

[228]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 66-67, 70; idem, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 2 vols., comp. Ellen G. White Estate (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1977), 1:248.

[229]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 365; idem, *The Desire of Ages*, 308, 762-763; idem, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 49-50; idem, "Christ and the Law," *Signs of the Times*, July 29, 1886.

places emphasis on the possibility of lifelong obedience in the midst of conflict between good and evil.[230]

Christ's ministry in heaven. We now turn to White's consideration on Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. It must be kept in mind that she regards the priest's daily ministry and the yearly ritual in the Old Testament sanctuary service as a type of Christ's two-phase ministry in the heavenly sanctuary; the shedding of His blood is pivotal for this ministry in bringing the warfare between good and evil to an end.[231] In other words, we are interested in Christ's two- phase ministry and its relation to the problem of evil.[232]

The first phase of this ministry of Christ is subtitled the church. The section seeks to understand how this ministry manifests itself in the Christian church in the context of

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[230]"Our duty to obey this law is to be the burden of the last message of mercy to the world. God's law is not a new thing. It is not holiness created, but holiness made known. It is a code of principles expressing mercy, goodness, and love. It presents to fallen humanity the character of God, and states plainly the whole duty of man. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' This command contains the principles of the first four precepts" (E. G. White, "As It Was in the Days of Noah," 19:182).

[231]While not discounting the value of the cross in the controversy between good and evil, White points out that the issues of the controversy must become fully manifested to both the human race and angels; the distinction between the two governments must be plain before all creatures. She reveals the importance of the event of Christ's death and resurrection in the conflict between God and Satan when she writes, "Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion" (E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 758). She also believes the cross broke "the last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world," but the human race needs the opportunity to determine their destiny (ibid., 761).

the problem of evil. The second phase is also discussed under the expression eradication

of sin and evil. It investigates the effects of the second phase of Christ's ministry in

heaven on the problem of evil.

1. *The church*. According to White, the first phase of Christ ministry, daily

pleading "His blood in behalf of penitent believers," is inextricably linked to the mission

of the church. In other words, the benefits of Christ's daily intercession are manifested in

the mission of the church and the lives of penitent believers.[233] Therefore, it should not

come as a surprise that White considers the function of the church to be very important

for theodicy.

Explaining the function of the church, White writes, "The church is the repository

of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made

manifest, even to 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places,' the final and full

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[232]It should be kept in mind that the vocabulary White uses for the structure of the heavenly sanctuary and its services is drawn from Leviticus (Old Testament sanctuary services) and Heb 8 and 9.

[233]According to White, in every age God has had a people through whom He communicates His purpose. She identifies the people of Israel as a people through whom God made Himself known to the world. In her attempt to show the transition between the people of Israel and the church, she indicates in her book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, a book devoted to the discussion on the beginnings and mission of the church, that "the Jewish leaders [in the time of Jesus] thought themselves too wise to need instruction, too righteous to need salvation, too highly honored to need the honor that comes from Christ. The Saviour turned from them to entrust to others the privileges they had abused and the work they had slighted. God's glory must be revealed, His word established. Christ's kingdom must be set up in the world. The salvation of God must be made known in the cities of the wilderness; and the disciples were called to do the work that the Jewish leaders had failed to do." Logically, White does not hesitate to point out that the calling initiated a new group of people, the church, that God intends to work with to make His will known. E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 16.

display of the love of God."[234] She implies that the progression of God's plan of

redemption and restoration is manifested in the mission of the church. Hence, emphasis

is placed on the successes of the church in spreading the gospel of salvation to the world,

people coming to recognize the reality of the problem of evil and being saved from the

condemnation of sin and evil. [235] However, she sees the church as militant. She writes,

"Now the church is militant"; it is "confronted with a world in midnight darkness, almost

wholly given over to idolatry."[236] "While Christ is sowing the good seed, Satan is

sowing the tares. There are two opposing influences continually exerted on the members

of the church. One influence is working for the purification of the church, and the other

for the corrupting of the people of God."[237] It seems to her that the militant condition of

the church demonstrates the intensity and the reality of the problem of evil.

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[234]Ibid., 9. See also ibid., 122, 163, 600.

[235]She believes the successes of the church are reached with the help of the Holy Spirit and angels. In her view, the Holy Spirit is the third Person in the Trinity who took the place of Christ on earth. Ibid., 36-56. He is the one who witnesses to sinners and convicts and converts them if they willingly accept His witness. He makes "effectual the salvation wrought by the death of our Redeemer" (ibid. 52) and dwells in the hearts of the regenerated individuals, granting them enabling power to overcome the cunning schemes of the devil and "all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil and to impress His own character" (E. G. White, T*he Desire of Ages*, 670-671, 805). The holy angels serve as messengers, sending messages to heaven and bringing blessings upon the children of God, and as ministers, tending to the needs of God's chosen people. Idem, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 331-332; idem, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 79-80, 133-135, 145-148, 434-435, 527.

[236]E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:42. White's understanding of the church as militant is distinct from that of other nineteenth-century figures such as Friedrich Schleiermacher who suggested that within the church, there is the visible and invisible church. This concept is related to the doctrine of election. Albrecht Ritschl also argued that the church is the kingdom of God.

[237]Ellen G. White, "The Remnant Church Not Babylon," *Review and Herald*, September 5, 1893, 2.

White relies on the history of the church to support her view of Christ's work of commanding the mission of the church and Satan's work against and from within the church to intercept the mission of the church. She refers to the early history of the church until the time of Constantine to point out how Satan and his followers insinuated bigotry, prejudice, hatred, and persecution to destroy Christianity at its early stages.[238] Similarly she observes that the union between Christian and pagan teachings, during the dark ages, is the work of Satan. "That gigantic system of false religion is a master piece of Satan's power—a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will."[239] However, God raised up people groups and individuals (the Waldeness, pre-reformers, Reformers, and Protestants) to advance the mission of the

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[238]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 39-42.

[239]Ibid., 50. A historian, relying on the apostolic fathers, mentions that "on the one hand [Satan and his demons] inspire Roman Officialdom to persecute Christians, and on the other hand they seduce Christians to abandon the true faith, to fall into schism and heresy." Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (New York: Basic Books Publishers, 1975), 66. According to White, paganism became the controlling spirit in the church; and Satan, working through unconsecrated leaders of the apostate church, made the bishop of Rome the head of the church. He was declared infallible and given the title the "Lord God the Pope." White explains that, for the leaders of the church to conceal the papal usurper's authority, they conspired to prohibit the circulation of the Bible for centuries in order to establish the authority of the papal usurper. Only priests and prelates interpreted the Bible to sustain their pretensions. They sought to make changes to the Ten Commandments; the Sabbath worship was changed from Saturday to Sunday. The second commandment was disregarded by introducing the adoration of images and relics, long pilgrimages, acts of penance as works of atoning for sins. The idea of the immortality of the soul was introduced into church doctrines, which gave way for the development of several others, such as the invocation of saints, the Virgin Mary adoration, purgatory, and the doctrine of indulgences. The leaders also supplanted the Lord's Supper with the idolatrous sacrifice of mass (ibid., 49-60). See Raoul Dederen, "The Church," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 568, for a further discussion on the monarchical episcopacy.

church and to emancipate the church from her apostasy. [240] The massacre and

excruciating treatment of these men and women of faith were Satan's activities through

the church to hinder the divine plan to overcome evil.[241] Again she notes that the French

Revolution, which incapacitated the authority behind the church's persecuting activities,

had Satan's force behind it; it waged "war against God and His holy word as the world

had never witnessed."[242] Through the Revolution Satan massacred Protestants, burned

Bibles, abolished institutions of the Bible, and renounced the worship of God by

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[240]Her discussion of the Reformation includes the forerunners, John Wycliffe, John Huss, and Jerome, who prepared the way for the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther in Germany, Huldreich Zwingli in Switzerland, Jacques LeFevre, Guillaume Farel, Louis de Berquin and John Calvin in France, and later reformers such as John Tyndale, John Knox, and John Wesley in England and Scotland (E. G.White, *The Great Controversy*, 79-288). White is very selective in writing about the Reformation. She writes, "I have endeavored to select and group together events in the history of the church in such a manner as to trace the unfolding of the great testing truths that at different periods have been given to the world, that have excited the wrath of Satan, and the enmity of a world-loving church, and that have been maintained by the witness of those who 'loved not their lives unto the death'" (ibid., xi). See Denis Fortin, "The French Reformation and John Calvin in Ellen White's Book *Great Controversy*," in *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium*, vol. 5, ed. Merlin Burt (Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research Center, 2009), 79-94.

[241]White's discussion is a reference to various activities that church historians have sometimes classified as the Inquisition, Crusades, and the Thirty Years War. See E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, for a detailed discussion on such activities. In his book *Europe's Inner Demons*, Cohn discovered that the persons whom the church allegedly considered as heretics, persons who persistently denied monarchial Episcopal doctrines, were deemed to be in Satan's service and were condemned to death. Inquisitorial procedure was instituted to combat heretics (Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 16-74). For a detailed discussion on all the historical events mentioned in relation to the church, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949-1957).

[242]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 273.

introducing the worship of the goddess of reason.[243] This means that Satan's attacks on

God's people were meant to cause disillusionment about God and cause the last spark of

divine love for humanity to die. [244] However, God overruled the activities of Satan to

prove to the world He will not forsake His church and her mission. Those who fled from

persecution spread the message of Protestantism wherever they found refuge. The

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[243]Ibid., 273-277. Some scholars of the nineteenth-century came to a similar
conclusion with White on the revolution. See François-René de Chateaubriand, *Essai sur
les Révolutions*; *Génie du Christianisme*, annotated by Maurice Regard (Paris: Gallimard,
1978); James Bicheno, *The Signs of the Times* (London: J. Adlard, 1808); James
Winthrop, *A Systematic Arrangement of Several Scripture Prophecies Relating to
Antichrist*: *With Their Application to the Course of History* (Boston: Thomas Hall, 1795).
For sources on the revolution and its relation with the church, see E. G.White, *The Great
Controversy*, 688-689. William S. Peterson contends against White's exposition on the
Bible and the French Revolution. He argues that the sources White depended on for her
discussion are unreliable and she mishandled the sources. William S. Peterson, "A
Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White's Concepts," *Spectrum* 2 (1970): 57-69.
After a critical analysis of the sources in question, John W. Wood, in response to
Peterson's criticism of White's discourse on the Bible and the French Revolution,
concludes that the "sources were not poor ones nor were they mishandled." He continues,
"Not only is the study of the sources valid if, and only if, it proceeds along the stated
criteria which Mrs. White used, but that a study of this one particular chapter should
assume that *it does not purport to be a history of the French Revolution*. . . . Viewed in
this light the author's intended exposition of Revelation eleven . . . examines the
relationship between France's rejection of the Reformation, the resultant and long
continued social ills, and the consequent Revolution. Repeatedly and in many different
ways the author showed that this was her only purpose" (John W. Wood, "The Bible and
the French Revolution," *Spectrum* 3 [1971]: 55-72).

[244]Rice is of the opinion that White's explanation of the problem of evil must be
classified as a "luciferous theodicy." Richard Rice, "The Great Controversy and the
Problem of Evil," 49. Battistone also acknowledges the stress White puts on the presence
and purpose of Satan in the world. However, according to him, White is "not . . . a grim
pessimist." Battistone, *The Great Controversy Theme in E. G. White's Writings*, 113. We
may observe that she emphasizes Satan's work alongside God's work because it
conspicuously discloses the theme of the great controversy and its nature; she does so to
distinctively emphasize her conviction that good will ultimately conquer evil. It also
exposes the issue of the controversy. Furthermore, it puts emphasis on the nature of evil
and its originator. Finally, it arouses people's minds to the importance of being

separation of the English Puritans from the Church of England opened the way to religious freedom. The establishment of Bible societies on the European and American continents led to printing and a wide circulation of the Bible, and the work of foreign missions increased in an attempt to spread Christianity.[245] In brief, the first phase of Christ's ministry in heaven unveiled the nature of the problem of evil. On the one hand, those who accept Christ as the solution to the problem of evil have constant access to heaven. They obtain forgiveness of sins, they are reconciled to God, Christ imputes His righteousness on them, and their names are written in the book of life; and God's character emerges unassailable to intelligent creatures. On the other hand, Satan's insidious principles of sin and evil are discerned by intelligent creatures. Given this understanding of the first phase of Christ's ministry in heaven and its effects on the problem of evil, it remains to be seen what the second phase of Christ's ministry in heaven accomplishes in relation to the problem of evil in the next section on the eradication of sin and evil.

2. *Eradication of sin and evil.* According to White, in 1844 the first phase of Christ's ministry in heaven ended and the second phase began.[246] She classifies this second phase of Christ's ministry in heaven as an atonement. White writes, "In the service of the earthly sanctuary . . . when the high priest on the Day of Atonement entered the most holy place, the ministration in the first apartment ceased. . . . So when Christ entered the holy of holies to perform the closing work of the atonement, He ceased His

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acquainted with a knowledge of God and to alert them about the schemes Satan uses in distracting their attention from the truth.

[245]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 287-288; 289-293.

ministration in the first apartment. But when the ministration in the first apartment

ended, the ministration in the second apartment began."[247] Thus it is not Christ's work of

intercession that has ended, but His ministration in the first apartment of the heavenly

sanctuary. He moved into the second apartment to add on another duty to His

intercession in behalf of sinners. Hence, in her view, sinners who are willing to be

redeemed from the problem of evil have access to heaven through Christ in the second

apartment of the heavenly sanctuary.

In the light of her understanding of the typical sanctuary service, she notes:

> By virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be
> blotted from the books of heaven. Thus the sanctuary will be freed, or cleansed, from
> the record of sin. . . . Christ's work for the redemption of men and the purification of
> the universe from sin will be closed by the removal of sin from the heavenly
> sanctuary and the placing of these sins upon Satan, who will bear the final penalty. [248]

Thus, for White, the atonement is a process that cleanses the sanctuary,

accomplishes the full reconciliation of the universe to God, and extermination of sin and

evil. According to her the process consists of two steps.[249]

The first step, which White categorizes as investigative judgment,[250] focuses on

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[246]See ibid., 410-422, for her detailed discussion on the establishment of the year.

[247]Ibid., 428-429.

[248]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 357-358; idem, *The Great Controversy*, 422.

[249]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 480.

[250]"He [Christ] comes to the Ancient of Days in heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, which will be given Him at the close of His work as a mediator. It is this coming, and not His second advent to the earth, that was foretold in prophecy to take place at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844. Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man—to perform the work of

all the professed people of God. In her opinion, in this step the deeds of all professed

people of God, beginning from the dead and continuing to the living, are examined in the

heavenly books against the standard of God's law. On the one hand, the sins of the truly

penitent are blotted out and their union with Christ is reaffirmed and their names remain

in the book of life. On the other hand, false believers and those who gave up their

relationship with God are sifted and blotted out from the book of life.[251] "While the

investigative judgment is going forward in heaven . . . there is to be a special work of

purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth."[252] In her view, by

the end of this step, "the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation

is ended . . . Christ declares: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is

filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that

is holy, let him be holy still.'"[253]

On the other hand, Satan resorts to compromise to work against the professed

people of God. He induces "Christians to ally themselves . . . with those who, by their

devotion to the things of this world, had proved themselves to be as truly idolaters as

were the worshipers of graven images."[254] In this context, she perceives that the

aftermath of this plan of Satan will be a replica of the condition of the church during the

dark ages. The union, therefore, will bring Protestant churches and secular institutions

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investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to
its benefits" (ibid.).

[251]Ibid., 482, 483.

[252]Ibid. 425.

[253]Ibid., 490, 491.

[254]Ibid., 298.

under the leadership of papal supremacy at the end of time. [255] According to White, the

united body in its attempt to solve problems which arise because of the neglect of God's

commandments[256] will accuse the few who will not join the union of "disaffection toward

the government,"[257] reinforce the Sunday Sabbath law, and then persecute those who

recognize God as supreme and worship on the Saturday Sabbath.[258] Here, she makes

Sabbath worship a major issue at the close of the controversy.

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[255]Relying on scriptural passages, Rev 12:17; Rev 13, White observes that Satan's last scheme will be to use the church as a medium to unite the world under one umbrella. She believes that Satan makes it easy for papal supremacy to unite the Protestant churches under her leadership by causing its members to be indifferent through indulgence of appetite and self-gratification, weakening individuals' mental, physical, and moral powers, introducing heretical teachings to their taste and capacities, enticing them with spiritualism, and undermining the integrity of the Bible through human theories and scientific facts. See ibid., 445, 520-521; 531-550, 563, 566, 573, 588. "The fallen angels who do his bidding appear as messengers from the spirit world. While professing to bring the living into communication with the dead, the prince of evil exercises his bewitching influence upon their minds" (ibid., 552, 556). For more details on the union between Evangelicals and Catholics, see Charles W. Colson, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," *First Things* 43 (1994): 15-22; Editorial, "The Gift of Salvation," *First Things* 79 (1998): 20-23.

[256]According to Ellen White, during this time the world will "became one vast field of strife, one sink of corruption"; lawlessness, dissipation, a horde of robbers and assassins and disease, natural disasters, and desolation will become ubiquitous in the world as a consequence of disobeying God's commandments. E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 584-586, 589-590.

[257]Ibid., 587, 590-592.

[258]Ibid., 592, 604-607. See fn. 155 above for the formation of the papal supremacy and the formation of the Sunday Sabbath Law. Scholars agree that a time of trouble will come upon the human race before the destruction of evil, but disagree on the particulars of the events that will take place during that period as described by Ellen White. For a detailed discussion on the subject see Jonathan Butler, "The World of E. G. White and the End of the World," *Spectrum* 10 (1979): 2-12; Stephen T. Hand, "The Conditionality of Ellen White's Writings," *Spectrum* 16 (1974): 67; Thomas A. Norris, W. Larry Richards, and Harold E. Fagal, "Reader's Symposium: Discussions of Butler on Ellen White's Eschatology," *Spectrum* 11 (1980): 24-31.

The fact that Sabbath worship is an issue is evident in that White argues that at the close of Christ's intercessory ministry in heaven a clear distinction would be made between Sunday and Saturday Sabbath keepers. Inferring from the story of Jacob, she asserts that Satan will accuse Saturday Sabbath keepers "on account of their sins," and "the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost." Yet, without Christ's intercession, they will prevail for their characters have been sanctified.[259] She also mentions that God's wrath will descend upon the wicked for uniting in seeking to oppress and destroy His people.[260] In the midst of warfare between good and evil, Christ's Second Coming takes place.

White makes Christ's Second Coming an important part of the second phase of His ministry in heaven. She regards the second advent as an event that will be visible and audible, sudden and cataclysmic, glorious and triumphant, and also personal and literal.[261] On the basis of several scriptural passages, she affirms that at the Second Coming of Christ many will be raised from the dead.[262] On the one hand, those dead in

[259]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 618, 621.

[260]She bases her argument on these biblical passages, Rev 14:9, 10; 16:2-6. Ibid., 627-628.

[261]"Between the first and the second advent of Christ a wonderful contrast will be seen. No human language can portray the scenes of the second coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven. He is to come with his *own glory*, and with the *glory of the Father and of the holy angels*. He will come clad in the robe of light, which he has worn from the days of eternity. Angels will accompany him. Ten thousand times ten thousand will escort him on his way. The *sound of the trumpet will be heard*, calling the sleeping dead from the grave. The *voice of Christ will penetrate the tomb, and pierce the ears of the dead, 'and all that are in the graves . . . shall come forth'*" (Ellen G. White, "The First and the Second Advent," *Review and Herald*, September 5, 1899, 1, emphasis added).

[262]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 635.

Christ will be resurrected with perfect and incorruptible bodies; the faithful living at His

return will also be changed and together they will be endowed with immortality.[263] She

also argues that they will be taken to heaven to spend the millennium there.[264] On the

other hand, the wicked, including the few who were resurrected at Christ's second

coming,[265] are put to death for a thousand years and the earth left desolate. She contends

that at this point Christ will place the sins of all the redeemed on Satan in the presence of

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[263]Ibid., 644-645.

[264]Throughout church history, there have been various views on millennialism. There are three main views of millennialism: amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennial. Amillennialism takes different forms, but common to all the forms is the belief that the thousand years are symbolic and it represents a perspective upon the history of the church. Others believe the millennium is a period between Christ's first and second coming, a period when Satan cannot stop the spreading of the gospel. Postmillennialism holds that the millennium is a period in which the gospel power will be influential on every nation and kindred, resulting in the establishment of a millennial reign on earth as evidence of Christ's victory over evil. After this, Christ returns to establish His eternal Kingdom. Premillennialism implies that Christ returns to earth before the millennial reign. However, there are two categories of those who believe in premillennialism, dispensational and nondispensational premillennialism. Dispensational premillennialism is a belief that the millennial reign is a period when Christ will personally rule the earth from Israel; all the Old Testament prophecies and promises concerning Israel will be fulfilled within the millennium. Nondispensational premillennialism is the belief that the millennial reign follows the second coming of Christ. Adventists understand it to refer to a thousand-year reign of saints in heaven while the earth is left desolate. For a thorough discussion on the millennium see Peter M. van Bemmelen, "The Millennium and the Judgment," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8 (1997): 150-160; Eric Claude Webster, "The Millennium," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 927-946; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1211-1224. White is among those who believe in nondispensational premillennialism.

[265]White believes that at the second advent of Christ "'they also which pierced Him' . . . those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient" (E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 637).

God and the entire host of heaven; "he will be declared guilty of all the evil which he has caused them to commit" and confined to the desolate earth.[266]

The second step in the atonement process, according to White, begins after Christ takes the redeemed to heaven. The redeemed "in union with Christ" will investigate the deeds of the wicked, including Satan and the fallen angels, "comparing their acts with the . . . Bible, deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body."[267] This step also determines the punishment of the wicked. This judgment ends after the millennium when Christ returns the second time to earth to execute the judgment set off against the wicked.[268]

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[266]Ibid., 657-658. It is quite obvious that, for White, before the controversy comes to an end all issues of the conflict between Christ and Satan would have become clear and a line of demarcation will have been drawn between true and false religions, in spite of Satan's effort to deceive every intelligent creature about God and his government. She argues that Satan has perverted true religion into witchcraft and sorcery, the cornerstone of ancient idolatry. She observes that these practices, which are based on necromancy, are Satan's effort to affirm his deception in Eden. Satan cannot accrue followers through centuries without modifying his scheme; therefore, she concludes witchcraft and all forms of ancient idol worship in the Dark Ages are embraced under the term spiritualism. She remarks, "It is true that spiritualism is now changing its form and, veiling some of its more objectionable features, is assuming a Christian guise. But its utterances from the platform and the press have been before the public for many years, and in these its real character stands revealed. These teachings cannot be denied or hidden."

"Even in its present form, so far from being more worthy of toleration than formerly, it is really a more dangerous, because a more subtle, deception. While it formerly denounced Christ and the Bible, it now *professes* to accept both. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect" (E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 558, emphasis hers). While she recognizes that Satan adulterates religion in every historical era, she observes that true religion has always existed. It is also clear that no one can survive Satan's schemes without the ministry of Christ.

[267]Ibid., 661.

[268]Ibid.

Thus, White recognizes a third advent of Christ to earth and a resurrection of all the wicked. According to her, at the end of the millennium Christ returns with the redeemed, angels, and the New Jerusalem. "As He descends . . . He bids the wicked dead arise to receive" their punishment. Then Satan and his cohorts, beholding Christ and His entourage, prepare to attack them.[269] At the same time, before all who ever lived on earth, Christ is crowned.[270] He then executes the judgment written against the wicked. They will be destroyed "not by water but by fire."[271] "Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. . . . In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches."[272]

Hence, her model of how God will eradicate sin and evil is annihilation. This is because she believes that at the end of the controversy between good and evil, the righteous will be rewarded with immortality and the wicked with second death. Based on Gen 3, White asserts that humanity's endless existence depended on the continuous partaking of the tree of life, but the disobedience of the first humans deprived them and their posterity of the access to the tree of life.[273] While, the "consequence of Adam's sin passed upon the whole human race," through Christ "life is the inheritance" of all who

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[269]Ibid., 662-663.

[270]Ibid., 666.

[271]E. G. White, "Nearness to the End; Using Our Means for the Advancement of the Cause," *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 19:134.

[272]E. G White, *The Great Controversy*, 673.

[273]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 61-62.

will repent from their perversity in spite of the problem of evil. [274] This means

immortality is conditional.[275] This is an express disavowal of the Platonic concept of

immortality of the soul,[276] which is propagated by paganism and much of Christendom.[277]

She sees conditional immortality as the central biblical principle that corrects the delusion

introduced into the world by Satan in Eden.[278] In this sense, she describes death as a

sleeplike condition, with no consciousness, that is interrupted only by the resurrection.[279]

Given that her understanding of annihilation is by fire, it would be correct to infer that

she also rejects the notions of her day relating to annihilation, self-destruction as a natural

consequence of sin.[280]

 However, there seems to be a tension between White's understanding of

annihilation and biblical passages that describe the punishment of the wicked as

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[274]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 544.

[275]Contemporary advocates for conditional immortality are John R. W. Stott, *Evangelical Essentials*: *A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988); Clark H. Pinnock, "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent," *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (1990): 246-259; John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 21-41; and Edward W. Fudge, "The Final Judgment of the Wicked," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27 (1984): 325-334.

[276]Plato, *Phaedo* 75, 76. (trans. David Gallop).

[277]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 551.

[278]Ibid., 533-534, 561.

[279]On the basis of Eccl 9:5, 6, she claims death does not take the wicked straight to hell and the righteous immediately to heaven. See ibid., 544, 550, 557-558.

[280]See Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 447-50.

endless.[281] But, upon further reflection on her concept of conditional immortality, it

becomes clear that, for White, everlasting punishment of the wicked is not endless

suffering in a burning fire.   Rather it is a total destruction in a consuming fire that burns

until there is nothing left; it is an exclusion from the universe and the presence of God.

"The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept

away. No eternally burning hell will keep before the ransomed the fearful consequences

of sin."[282] The punishment of the wicked is not eternal but the consequence of their

complete destruction remains eternal.[283] This is why she remarks, "One reminder alone

remains: our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of his crucifixion. Upon his wounded

head, upon his side, his hands and feet are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has

wrought. . . . God's original purpose in the creation of the earth is fulfilled as it is made

the eternal abode of the redeemed."[284] It is, therefore, evident that she makes the ministry

of Christ pivotal in the restoration of planet Earth and the vindication of God's character,

in the conflict between good and evil.[285]

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[281]Some of these passages are 2 Thess 1:9; Matt 3:12; Matt 25:41, but specifically Matt 25:46 depicts parallelism between the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous. "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (NKJV).

[282]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 674.

[283]Ibid., 654-673; idem, *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882; reprint, 1945).

[284]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 674.

[285]Alberto R. Timm acknowledges that Ellen White makes the controversy between good and evil the "framework" of the entire drama of human existence, and the sanctuary serves as the "organizing motif of Bible truth," but he also mentions that White makes a link between the sanctuary services and the great controversy. "Ellen G. White: Side Issues or Central Message?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7 (1996):

Summary and Conclusion

The chapter has analyzed White's model of warfare theodicy. It began with a brief biography of White and a survey of her writings on her great controversy model of warfare theodicy. Her intention in proposing her model was to "present a satisfactory solution of the great problem of evil."[286]

To understand her model, the analysis focused first on her theories of free will, divine foreknowledge, and divine sovereignty. The relevance of these theological concepts in any theodicy is how well the author coordinates them in explaining the problem of evil. In White, free will is libertarian and a gift bestowed on intelligent creatures. It is not just the ability to choose from alternatives, but also the potential to know and understand moral laws and fulfill moral obligations. Free will does not possess its full potential as a result of sin. Consequently, God provides initial grace to every individual. Agents' free choices determine their destiny, but "there is no true excellence of character apart from Him [Christ]."[287]

168-179. See his discussion on "The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Message, 1844-1863: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1995), 397-420. Richard M. Davidson mentions those who have done analysis of the cosmic conflict and the sanctuary as separate concepts. However, in his opinion, there is a correlation between the two, and they conjoin to encapsulate the grand narrative of Scripture. Therefore, concluding his study, he writes, "This warfare/Sanctuary worldview provides a Grand Story encapsulating the Christian message to share particularly with our postmodern friends, but also with our Enlightenment friends, with our animist, Buddhist, and Moslem friends. Indeed, the Bible presents this Grand Story to give to every kindred and nation, tongue, and people—centered in Jesus, mighty Protagonist of the Great Controversy and ultimate embodiment of the Sanctuary/Temple." Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," 119.

[286]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, xii.

[287]E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 21.

White describes divine foreknowledge as exhaustive and definite. The content of divine foreknowledge includes actual and possible free choices and the results of His plan of salvation. Typically, this affirmation of the classical traditional view of divine foreknowledge and libertarian free will is incoherent. But such tension is averted by defining predestination, which is divine eternal activity, as a plan of redemption and makes Christ the only provision for the solution to the problem of evil. Foreknowledge is neither grounded in predestination nor vice versa.

We may observe that she adopts a view of divine sovereignty whose structure and use fits her overall understanding of libertarian free will and divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge. God is a moral being and a Father who rules over His creatures through permissive, limitative, preventive, directive, and controlling wills expressing His goodness to individual persons and His creation as a whole. Prayer is also described as a human activity, but God has made it necessary in His sovereignty over His creatures. Prayer is a channel through which humans communicate their thoughts, feelings, and wants to God. It is efficacious, but it does not inform God about human needs in order for Him to provide. Rather, prayer is a demonstration of human willingness to receive the purpose of God.

These observations have significant implications for understanding White's model of warfare theodicy. Since created intelligent beings possess libertarian free will, sin is the misuse of libertarian free will and evil is its consequence.   Lucifer, now Satan, is identified as the first intelligent creature who misused his free will; however, the cause of Lucifer's misuse of his free will, according White, is a mystery. He later deceived the human race to follow suit. Thus, the problem of evil may not be understood apart from a

correct understanding of agents' free will. The misuse of libertarian free will has the effect of making sin and evil intruders into God's good creation. As a result, evil did not co-exist eternally with God and it was not inherent in nature. Every evil occurrence is rooted in the moral agents' rebellion. Consequently White recognizes that there are two kinds of evil, moral and natural evils, but does not treat them separately. On the one hand, White describes the antagonistic forces in nature as acquired characteristics resulting from human disobedience to divine law. The continuous human disobedience to God's laws and Satan's activities exacerbate the degeneration of the human race and deterioration found in creation. On the other hand, some evil occurrences are permitted for teleological purposes such as punishing and curbing sin, shaping character, and proving some individuals' loyalty to God. This is because she considers nature as a lesson book.

Similarly, by virtue of the divine ability to foreknow the future exhaustively and definitely, God had a plan to deal with sin and evil. White argues that planet Earth and Christ serve the purpose of demonstrating God's response to Satan's accusations. The importance of planet Earth in the divine purpose explains why White rejects evolution and geological theories of her time for the biblical perspective of creation ex-nihilo in six literal, consecutive days. However, she recognizes planet Earth's failure to reach the purpose for which it was brought into existence. This means God foreknew Satan's deception and the human fall and made provision to ultimately redeem and restore planet Earth and eradicate sin and evil. It is in this context that Christ, His life and ministry on earth, death and resurrection, and heavenly ministry are considered as crucial in human history.

Through her model of divine sovereignty, she shows how Christ steadily moves toward the achievement of His purpose of redeeming and restoring planet Earth and exterminating sin and evil, in spite of human free will rejection and Satan's opposition to Christ's ministry.

In general terms the analysis has revealed in some detail what was only apparent at the surface of White's model of warfare theodicy. Sin is disobedience to God's law and its consequence is evil. It originated in heaven with the misuse of the free will of an angelic being. Though it is not part of God's purpose, God permitted Satan to advance his principles for the benefit of all intelligent beings who do not yet comprehend the true nature of sin and evil. This cosmological nature of her understanding supports her coordination of all the theological elements in her model of theodicy. Thus she presents a coherent theodicy. First, she holds that God's foreknowledge of what sin will do to His creation did not prevent Him from achieving His purpose of creating intelligent beings, but He devised a plan to solve the problem of sin and evil. Second, the formulation of the plan did not predestine any intelligent being, but God knows the extent of what the plan can accomplish; its fulfillment does not coerce the free choices of moral agents. Third, individual intelligent beings benefit from the divine plan of redemption from sin and evil when they respond to divine sovereign providence. Thus the divine solution to the problem of evil respects libertarian free will.

However, the question of this study remains. Is this model of warfare theodicy plausible? How has it dealt with the difficulties that the three traditional theodicies encountered? To answer this question, chapter 5 compares and evaluates the two models

of the warfare approach to the question of an omnipotent, omniscient, and all good God

and the existence of evil analyzed in chapters 3 and 4 of this study.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE TRINITARIAN WARFARE AND THE

GREAT CONTROVERSY THEODICIES

Introduction

The discussions in chapters 3 and 4 have sought to bring clarity to the warfare

models of Boyd and White. In this chapter, the feasibility of the warfare theodicy is

ascertained. To attain this purpose of the chapter, it is crucial to compare the two models

of the warfare theodicy to discover elements that are similar and those that differ, and to

establish the relationship between them. In addition to the comparison of the two models

of the warfare theodicy, this chapter explores whether the warfare model escapes the

difficulties regarding the three main Christian responses to the problem of evil as

discussed in chapter 2. Hence, this section is divided into two main parts: comparison

and evaluation.

Trinitarian Warfare and Great Controversy
Theodicies: A Comparison

This section of the chapter focuses on the comparison between the Trinitarian

Warfare and Great Controversy Theodicies.   The descriptive analyses of these theodicies

in chapters 3 and 4 show some similarities and differences. However, these noticeable

parallels and discrepancies may be only apparent rather than real, due to differences in

context, approach, and use of terminology. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake the

task of an appropriate analytical comparison.

<div align="center">Similarities</div>

Origin of Sin and Evil

There are similarities in the discussion of Boyd's and White's concept of the origin of sin and evil. First, both are convinced that any feasible explanation of the problem of evil must assume warfare between good and evil. They attribute the origin of sin and evil to the misuse of libertarian free will by angelic beings, which happened some time before the creation of this present Earth. In other words, they propose models of a free will theodicy in the context of warfare. Both regard the disobedience of created beings as that which led to the prehistoric warfare between good and evil.[1] Second, both rely on Gen 1-3 to explain the origin of sin and evil on planet Earth. Boyd describes a restored earth as part of God's response to His rebellious creatures, while White describes the creation of planet Earth as part of God's dealings with sin and evil. They maintain that sin and evil entered planet Earth through the misuse of the libertarian free will of human beings.[2] Both theologians regard sin and evil as an intrusion into God's established order and Satan as the prince of the rebellion.[3]

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[1]The use of the word prehistoric does not mean the event is mythological or not concerned with history. It is rather used in the sense of Boyd's usage of prehistoric. Prehistoric means an event that "lies outside what we can by ordinary means know about history, and thus outside our ordinary definition of 'history.'" Yet "it does not lie outside the sequence of events that bracket our history" (Boyd, *God at War*, 326n32).

[2]Boyd, *God at War*, 110; E. G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, 129.

[3]Boyd, *God at War*, 165, see pp 144-154 for Boyd's argument against "demonic-in-Yahweh" theory, a theory that claims God is the author of evil; E. G. White, "The Words and Works of Satan Repeated in the World," *Signs of the Times*, April 28, 1890.

Natural Evil

One of the difficult issues of the problem of evil is natural evil. Some Christian responses to the problem of evil either excuse it or deny its existence.[4] Boyd and White perceive a detailed treatment of natural evil as crucial to any acceptable Christian response to the problem of evil. Therefore, their models of warfare theodicy explain the reality of natural evil. For Boyd, the misuse of the neutral medium of relationality by the human family and Satan produce some natural evils. Similarly, White argues that natural evil originated as the result of the disobedience of the first humans and its excessiveness is caused by humans' continuous disobedience to God and Satan's activities. Neither Boyd nor White considers natural evil as an issue unrelated to moral evil. All evil, according to them, results from the misuse of free will. They also reject the generalization of natural evil as divine punishment for moral evil.

Victory over Sin and Evil

Boyd's and White's concepts of victory over sin and evil are comparable in that they discuss Christ as the ultimate resolution to the problem of sin and evil. Boyd describes the refashioned earth as God's attempt to barricade sin and evil, but due to human disobedience Christ was made the solution to restore creation and exterminate sin and evil. White similarly mentions that God, in His eternity, foreknew the failure of planet Earth, then planned, with Christ, a ransom for sin and evil. Both authors agree on the accomplishments of Christ's earthly ministry, His death, and resurrection. In addition to their emphasis on Christ's personal ministry on Earth, they acknowledge the church as

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[4]See chapter 2, the section "Three Main Theodicies."

an institution that participates in Christ's mission of saving people by manifesting

Christ's ministry to the rest of the world.

Boyd and White also recognize the work of Satan to intercept Christ's mission to

redeem the fallen world. White, more than Boyd, traces the history of the church from its

beginnings, identifying the enemy's insidious activities against the redemption and

restoration of the fallen world. But both emphasize that, in spite of the enemy's

relentless effort, he will be crushed and destroyed.[5]

<div align="center">Differences</div>

Free Will

Boyd and White acknowledge that moral agents possess a libertarian free will.

However, they understand this free will differently. Boyd ascribes self-determined

freedom to God. He asserts that God had a choice to create agents either with or without

the ability to love. God chose to create agents with the ability to participate in His love.

Since love must be chosen, libertarian free will is a metaphysical corollary of God's

decision to create agents with the ability to love.[6] He suggests that the inevitable effect

of God's decision manifests itself in humans on two levels: The first phase, which is

self-determined will, is finite, irrevocable, metaphysically probational, and its duration

and extent differ from person to person. This is because self-determined free will is

conditioned individually by our original constitutional design by the Creator, divine

influence, the agents' previous decisions, and decisions of other agents. He also makes

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[5]Boyd, *God at War*, 222-227; E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 61-78.

[6]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 53.

this level of moral agents' free will assume a presuppositional status to which all his theological elements of his theodicy must be made consistent. It seems then that, in Boyd, libertarian free will is the framework of his theodicy. For example, having established the nature of free will on the basis of divine love, Boyd defines divine foreknowledge based on his concept of free will.[7] The second phase is when our self-determined actions have determined our being.[8] For Boyd, the will is generally "intrinsically and essentially immortal and indestructible."[9]

Contrary to Boyd, White suggests that free will is neither immortal nor indestructible. There is a time limit for exercising free will in choosing between God and Satan, but she does not indicate the time limit for the free will to change from one phase to another. For her, any deformity of the will is the result of sin.[10] While God's salvation will restore human free will from its sinful conditions to God's intended purpose, free will may remain a self-determined will as long as any created intelligent beings lives. Free will is one of the non-negotiable themes in her theodicy, but she does not seek consistency of biblical concepts with free will.[11] White understands that free will is an endowment from God, in that she correlates free will with the divine preference for

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[7]Ibid., 91.

[8]Ibid., 53-55, 189.

[9]Ibid., 343.

[10]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 80.

[11]See chapter 4, the section "Free Will."

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voluntary service,[12] which emphasizes divine freedom to choose whether or not to endow His creatures with free will.

Divine Foreknowledge

Boyd and White agree that divine omniscience includes foreknowledge of the future. However, their models propose different understandings of divine foreknowledge. This is evident in their differing ways of solving the theological tension between libertarian free will and divine foreknowledge.[13] Boyd solves the theological tension by denying divine foreknowledge of actual free will future actions.[14] When explaining biblical predictions of individual future actions, he takes a Calvinist approach; God foreknows what He has predetermined and He orchestrates events to see to the fulfillment of what He has predetermined. Furthermore, God took a risk in creating, given that He lacked foreknowledge of actual future decisions of intelligent creatures.[15] Hence, the content of God's foreknowledge is what He has predetermined and the possibilities of future free will actions. As a result, according to Boyd, divine foreknowledge is exhaustive because God foreknows all possibilities, but His foreknowledge is not definite.

On the other hand, White proposes divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge. For her, foreknowledge is a divine activity performed in eternity. Its contents may have

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[12]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49.

[13]See chapter 3, the section "Divine Foreknowledge," and chapter 4, the section "Divine Foreknowledge."

[14]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 59-60.

[15]Ibid., 91.

influenced God to predestine Christ as a ransom for the human race. Thus, divine

foreknowledge and divine predestination are two related but different divine activities

performed in eternity. In her view, the contents of divine foreknowledge include

foreknowledge of all the possibilities, actual future choices of created intelligent beings,

and the actual results of His own plans. Based on this understanding of divine

foreknowledge and the divine decision to create in spite of his foreknowledge of future

free will choices and the rebellion, war, suffering, horror, and pain it will cause, it is clear

that White would agree with Boyd that God took a risk when He created. But she

believes that, in spite of divine foreknowledge of the cruelties that the human race would

inflict upon His Son, He sent Christ to redeem His creation. Thus, contrary to Boyd,

White affirms that God took the risk based on the certainty of His foreknowledge of the

outcome of His decision.[16]

Divine Sovereignty

Both Boyd and White reject the traditional understanding of divine sovereignty[17]

and opt for a concept of divine sovereignty which in their opinion is compatible with

their model of human free will and divine foreknowledge. They affirm that God's

rulership over His creation does not coerce, but rather persuades His human and angelic

creatures' free will. Nevertheless, they differ on how God achieves His purpose and the

role of prayer in divine sovereignty.

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[16]See chapter 4, the section "Divine Foreknowledge."

[17]The traditional concept of divine sovereignty is the belief that God meticulously controls every occurrence in human history. See Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 146-148.

According to Boyd, the nature of free will and prayers condition divine providence over His creation. For him, God achieves His plan by limiting the scope of some individuals' freedom, orchestrating some circumstances, and pulling individuals into His self-purposed plan.[18] According to Boyd, since God's foreknowledge of future free will decisions is not certain, prayer informs God about agents' needs and future free will choices.[19]

White acknowledges that certain things would not have happened without prayer, but prayer does not inform God. It brings individuals and/or groups of people closer to God in a manner that gives God a free hand to lead them. It is a means by which God accomplishes some of His will. She also proposes that God rules over human history through direct and indirect activities.

Sin and Evil

The origin of sin and evil

While Boyd argues that love must be freely chosen, White asserts that service to God and fellow creatures must be done voluntarily. In other words, both concepts of free will assume the possibility of saying no to God's ideal. That means that sin and evil existed as a possibility before it was actualized in God's creation. Hence, they argue that sin and evil originated as a result of misuse of free will. On the one hand, Boyd argues that sin and evil began on prehistoric earth. He integrates ancient Near Eastern literature and biblical passages to establish his explanation of the origin of sin and evil. As a result, angels, in collaboration with their subjects, prehistoric earthly creatures, misused their

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[18]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 33-48.

free will by disobeying God.[20] On the other hand, White argues that sin and evil

originated in heaven. For her, it was an angel who sought his selfish interests by

claiming the prerogatives of Christ and influenced a third of the angelic population to

follow his lead.[21] It seems to Boyd that the divine response to the rebellious creatures

took the form of battling the evil forces, refashioned the present earth from the remains of

the battle, and subjugated and domesticated monstrous creatures who survived the war.

White, by contrast, makes it clear that God could have destroyed Lucifer at the

beginning of His rebellious accusations. However, since the rest of the angels did not

understand Satan's principles, the destruction of Lucifer at the early stages of his

rebellion would have introduced fear and other intelligent creatures would have served

God out of fear. According to her, such service would have been contrary to God's

nature. Rather than destroying His rebellious creature, God permitted Lucifer to develop

his principles,[22] and created an idyllic paradise without death, disease, sin, and evil as

part of His response to Lucifer.

Natural evil

Boyd's model and White's model of sin and evil are contrasted further in that they

differ in their understanding of natural evil. Concerning the origin of natural evil, Boyd's

assertions make some natural evils inherent in nature. For example, the assertions that

(1) the present earth "is birthed as it were, in an infected incubator"; (2) God subjugated

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[19]Ibid., 211-220, 226-240.

[20]Boyd, *God at War*, 177; E. G. White, *The Truth about Angels*, 49.

[21]See chapter 4, the section "The Origin of Sin and Evil."

and domesticated the surviving potent forces of a prehistoric battle at creation;[23] and (3) the genuineness of free will intelligent creatures requires an objective environment which stands over and against them. In other words, the environment "stands over and against" the desires of free will agents.[24]

White, on the other hand, sees all natural evils as originating with the sin of moral agents.[25] She regards the imperfections in nature as acquired characteristics, as the result of human disobedience. The degeneration in the human race and deterioration in nature are due to the work of Satan and humankind's choice to follow him.

While both see the sweeping statement that natural evil is punishment for sin as ridiculous and skewed, Boyd believes Christ's death cancelled the use of natural evil as punishment, but White believes natural evil is used to occasionally punish and put a check on the spread of sin and evil. God permits Satan to inflict pain and suffering in an attempt to call the attention of the human race to the horrific nature of sin and its consequences and to stress their need to seek the Redeemer. In other words, God allows evil to befall His people for character development and to prove the loyalty of His followers.

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[22]E. G. White, "The Mystery of God."

[23]Boyd, *God at War*, 107, 98.

[24]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 425.

[25]Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, comp. Ellen G. White Estate (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970), 19.

Victory over Sin and Evil

Another disparity between Boyd's and White's concepts of sin and evil is their

discussion on divine victory over sin and evil. First, Boyd and White see the creation of

planet Earth and the provision of Christ as a Savior as God's responses to evil forces.

However, Boyd's discussion is set in the context of creation from the debris of warfare

between God and evil creatures; in other words, the beginning of this present earth is

itself altogether good, but not a pristine creation.[26] On the contrary, White's discussion is

set in the context of a good creation without sin and evil.[27]

Second, with regard to Christ as the ultimate solution to sin and evil, both Boyd

and White emphasize that Christ's earthly ministry, death, and resurrection demonstrate

Christ's victory over cosmic evil forces. However, they note that sin and evil still reign

on earth and argued that, through the church, Christ is militant against the powers of

darkness. For Boyd, the main purpose of Christ's death and resurrection is to exorcise

Satan and establish the Kingdom of God. Having accomplished this He is enthroned on

the right hand of God upon His ascension to heaven until His enemies are made His

footstool.[28] This seems to show that Christ's redemptive and restorative work of His

creation was completed with His resurrection.[29] By contrast, for White, Christ's

ascension bridges the gap between His work on the cross and His ministry as a high

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[26]Boyd, *God at War*, 106, 107.

[27]E. G. White, "The Purpose and Plan of Grace."

[28]Boyd, *God at War*, 243.

[29]Apart from Boyd's emphasis on Christ's exalted position, nothing more is said about what Christ does or what His enthronement encompasses. This may be the consequence of understanding the centrality of the atonement as the conquest of Satan.

priest. His enthronement at the right hand of the Father signifies that there is no need for another sacrifice; Christ's sacrifice is enough for the redemption of the sinful race. However, the work of salvation is not complete until the blood shed on the cross is brought into the Most Holy Place before the altar of God. Hence, according to White, Christ is not only a King, but also a High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. She describes Christ's heavenly ministry as being in two phases. During the first phase of Christ's function as the high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, He ministers on behalf of all who accept His atoning sacrifice. This phase is inextricably related to the mission of the militant church. In her opinion, the period between Christ's victorious resurrection and the extermination of sin and evil is an opportunity for human beings to reconsider their choices while the issues of the warfare become fully manifested.[30]

According to White, in 1844 Christ began His ministration of the second phase of His heavenly ministry in addition to His activities in the first phase. In the first part of this second phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary Christ investigates the deeds of all His professed followers and performs a special work of purification of the faithful. This phase ends with Christ coming for His faithful followers. In the second part of the second phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, Christ, together with the

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[30]According to White, "by shedding the blood of the Son of God, he [Satan] had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken."

"Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as

redeemed, investigates the deeds of the wicked and ends with their execution of the punishment on the wicked.

The third and most conspicuous difference in their concept of victory over sin and evil is how God will eradicate or isolate evil from or within the cosmos. Based on his conviction of the immortality of the free will, Boyd resorts to a theory that resulted from a rapprochement of eternal suffering and annihilationism. In his view, since the soul is innately immortal, free will endures eternally and both the wicked and the righteous will live eternally in separate realities.[31] The righteous live eternally with all the qualities of free will, but the wicked free will endures outside the reality of the righteous eternally; the content of their free will choices will be nothingness and they will be denied a neutral medium of relationality.[32] Thus, God leaves the wicked to their choice to separate themselves from Him. Since exercising free will is possible in the context of a neutral medium of relationality, lack of it means that the wicked will not have influence among themselves in their reality. In contrast, White regards immortality as a gift to those who are loyal to God. Therefore, she objects to universalism and eternal suffering in hell.

angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve" (E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 761).

[31]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 326, 343.

[32]"When reality becomes exhaustively defined by the triune love, the fact that certain wills choose to curve in on themselves will remain, but the content of what they choose will be nothing to all outside themselves. Only the fact of their choice has reality, for only this is consistent with God's love. They endure, to be sure, but as infinitely small points that do not interact with those who are real. Indeed, since the only real thing about these wills who say no to God's yes is their negatively defined choice, they could be real to people in the eschatological kingdom only in a way similar to the way antimatter is real to people today. They theoretically exist but are never experienced. They are beings whose entire existence is swallowed up by a hypothetical reality that

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She is convinced that all biblical passages concerning the future of the wicked suggest annihilation. Hence, she argues that the wicked will be annihilated and the earth will be purified, but the righteous will be exempted from the consuming fire.[33]

The degree of contrast between these two models of warfare theodicy requires a brief investigation into the cause of the disparity. Hence, the following discussion examines the reason for the differences between the Trinitarian Warfare and the Great Controversy theodicies.

Reason for the Differences

The above comparison of the two models of warfare theodicy shows similarities but also a substantial variety of distinctive differences between them. For an explanation for the similarities between the two theodicies, one may suggest that both models of warfare theodicy deal with the same biblical theme. Another rationale may be argued, on the basis of Boyd's comments on White and her Conflict of the Ages Series[34] and the eras in which they present their theodicies, that White's works on warfare might have

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used to be possible *but is no longer so*" (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 346, emphasis his); see pp. 347-357.

[33]See chapter 4, the section "Eradication of Sin and Evil."

[34]"Though her thinking lies somewhat outside the parameters of traditional orthodox Christianity, and though her method is highly subjectivistic and unscholarly, it should be noted that Ellen White, the founder of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, integrated a warfare perspective into the problem of evil and the doctrine of God perhaps more thoroughly than anyone else in church history" (Boyd, *God at War*, 307, endnote 44).

influenced Boyd. However, the extent to which the Conflict of the Ages Series affected Boyd could not be ascertained.[35]

Regarding the differences, one can suggest a variety of possible reasons. However, this study has identified their differing outlooks toward the place of scientific and philosophical knowledge as a fundamental cause of the differences between Trinitarian Warfare and the Great Controversy theodicies. Boyd and White affirm the ontological and epistemological status of Scripture as a revelation of God and the final arbiter of truth. However, in formulating their theodicies, they differ on how other sources influence the interpretation of Scripture.

Boyd finds that Christian beliefs are full of paradoxes; therefore he sought to harmonize them while making them appealing to the modern mind. In his opinion, theology must come to grips with the modern advances of science if it is to have an intelligible witness to the contemporary world. As a result, he proposes a dialogue between theology and science to protect Christian faith by making it intelligible to the contemporary culture. He also acknowledges that scientific knowledge is always changing, and interpreting Scripture in the light of scientific findings implies that biblical truth changes with time. He then opens theology to the contributions of the contemporary scientific mind-set, using the distinctions between theology and science to help free theology from false biblical interpretations.[36] However, in the process, he

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[35]In my e-mail correspondence with Boyd, an effort was made to ascertain the extent to which the Conflict of Ages Series may have influenced him, but he avoided the issue.

[36]Boyd clearly states that his method for his warfare theodicy is "Wesley's methodological quadrangle of scripture, reason, experience and tradition as the criteria

compromises the indispensable normativeness of Scripture by making philosophical and

scientific ideas the framework that inevitably controls the interpretation of Scripture. In

other words, he allows contemporary science to superimpose its conclusion upon

Scripture.

Similarly, White calls for a dialogue between theology and science. In her

opinion, God is revealed in His word, in Christ, and in His works of creation. She also

believes that the distinctions between theology and science help free both theology from

biblical misinterpretations and science from false scientific principles and ideologies.

Thus, theology influences science and science influences theology, which provides a

common ground of controlling beliefs and concepts. Contrary to Boyd, she makes

Scripture the framework of her warfare theodicy. It is the norm for interpreting both the

special and general revelations of God, and science serves as a resource.[37] This is evident

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for theological truth. . . . Because this is a work in philosophical theology, reason will
play a more dominant role than it would if this were a work in biblical theology" (Boyd,
Satan and the Problem of Evil, 20). Therefore, he, Boyd, melds classical theism
(influenced by Newtonian scientific philosophical principles) and neo-theism (influenced
by contemporary scientific philosophical ideologies).

[37]"God is the author of science. Scientific research opens to the mind vast fields
of thought and information, enabling us to see God in His created works. Ignorance may
try to support skepticism by appealing to science; but instead of upholding skepticism,
true science contributes fresh evidences of the wisdom and power of God. Rightly
understood, science and the written word agree, and each sheds light on the other.
Together they lead us to God by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws
through which He works" (E. G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*,
426). She believes literary sources play a role in theology. She writes, "As the moon and
the stars of our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their
teaching is true, do the world's great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of
Righteousness. Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of
the world" (idem, *Education*, 14). However, she is of the opinion that literary sources are
not to be brought to test the Bible, rather they are to be tested by the Bible (idem,
Selected Messages, 3:307-308; idem, "Be Separated," *Review and Herald*, November 20,

in her constancy in affirming the Scripture interpretation where scientific and philosophical ideas conflict with Scripture. Thus, under no circumstance does she superimpose the conclusions of science upon Scripture.

The effects of the foregoing differing approach to their theology are manifested in their models of warfare theodicy on several theological elements. Having established the nature of free will on the basis of philosophy, Boyd redefines other theological elements in light of his theory of the nature of free will. In other words, in formulating his Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy, all other elements are understood in light of his concept of libertarian free will. For White, all theological elements must be understood in light of the nature of God revealed in Christ. Certainly, Boyd's concept of free will is based on divine love; therefore, it could be said that his theological elements are understood in the light of the nature of God. However, he does not thoroughly follow biblical thinking in the interpretation of theological elements of his Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy. His concept of God is influenced by both classical theism and by process philosophy.[38] He

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1894). See Pfandl, "Ellen G White and Earth Science," 176-194; Hasel, "Ellen G. White and Creationism," 229-244.

[38]Boyd states the role that process philosophy plays in his theological thinking when he writes: "Exponents of a process world view have by and large seen it necessary to reject the Church's understand [*sic*] of God as antecedently actual and social within Godself and hence ontologically independent of the world. They have thus rejected the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. Defenders of the Church's faith, on the other hand, have seen it necessary to simply reject the process world view, believing, quite rightly, that the understanding of God as triune, and hence as being independent of the world, is central to everything Christianity is about. When this doctrine is rejected, or radically redefined, everything that is distinctly Christian about the Church's faith is compromised."

"This work is, in essence, an attempt to work out a trinitarian-process metaphysic which overcomes this impasse. It is our conviction that the fundamental vision of the process world view, especially as espoused by Charles Hartshorne, is correct. But it is our conviction as well that the scriptural and traditional understanding of God as triune and

uses his concept of God as justification for redefining theological elements, which according to him have the influence of the Greek philosophical concept of timelessness reality. Boyd is right to argue that classical theology is based on the Greek philosophical concept of timeless. But for him to base his theology on process philosophy makes his theology a servant of process philosophy and leaves him with some of the flaws found in process philosophy.

This major difference is reflected in their models of divine foreknowledge, divine sovereignty, divine predestination, origin of evil, natural evil, and eradication of sin and

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antecedently actual within Godself is true, and is, in fact, a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. But, we contend, these two views, when understood within a proper framework, do not conflict."

"Indeed, it shall be our contention that Hartshorne's a priori process metaphysics, when corrected of certain misconstrued elements, actually *requires* something like a trinitarian understanding of God to make it consistent and complete! What results, we trust, is the outline of a metaphysical system which establishes, on an a priori basis, a process review of the world which requires a trinitarian God for its completion" (Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, preface, emphasis his). However, Boyd later denies this influence by arguing that "some evangelical authors have wrongly accused open theists of being close to process thought, but in truth the two views have little in common." Among other things, process theology holds that God needs the world. He could not have existed without it. It also denies the omnipotence of God" (Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 31, 170).

Discussing open theists' denial of the influence of process philosophy on open theism, Fernando Canale remarks, "Open view theologians seem to forget that theologians usually modify the philosophical thought on which they build. For instance, classical theologians adjusted the general ontological patterns suggested by Plato and Aristotle for their theological purposes. In other words, they took Greek ontology as their basis and adjusted it to fit Christian revelation. . . . Theologians engage, then, in creative philosophical reflection, which produces the macro hermeneutical principles they will explicitly or implicitly assume when interpreting Scripture and formulating the doctrines of the church" (Fernando Canale, "Evangelical Theology and Open Theism: Toward a Biblical Understanding of the Macro Hermeneutical Principles of Theology?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12 [2001]: 30). Thus, Boyd's basis for denying the influence of process philosophy on his theology cannot be substantiated. The difference between Boyd's and Hartshorne's metaphysics does not cancel out the influence Hartshorne has on Boyd's theological thinking pattern.

evil. Thus, one can account for their major differences on the basis of their differing outlook toward the place of science in theology.

Trinitarian Warfare and Great Controversy
Theodicies: An Evaluation

The disparity revealed from the preceding comparison demands a careful evaluation of the theodicies of Gregory A. Boyd and Ellen G. White. Such an examination focuses on the contributions that each model makes to theodicy and on internal coherency and consistency of each of the two models of warfare theodicy. In addition to the internal criticism, the procedure employed to define the models, implications, and assumptions on which their respective positions seem to rest is taken into consideration. Although this section is not an exercise in biblical exegesis, exegesis is incorporated when necessary.

Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy

Boyd's contribution to theology lies in his intent to articulate Christianity to the contemporary culture in an intelligible language. He depends on comments made by Kent Knutson and Marjorie Suchocki to identify the challenges of Christian faith in a culture in which reality is understood through categories of relationship and process.[39] Relying on David Tracy, Boyd also presupposes that the change in the understanding of reality requires Christianity to "find new vehicles of expression to articulate, in a manner intelligible to its contemporary world, the revelatory truth of the Word which it has heard and continues to hear anew. The church must correlate the revelatory content which

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[39]See Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 6-7.

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[39]See Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 6-7.

grounds it with the new categories . . . which are increasingly conditioning contemporary thought."[40] Throughout his writings, Boyd displays this intent of making theological concepts understandable and acceptable to the contemporary cultural demands. He has constantly managed to be faithful to his intentions in a creative and profound way.

In his book, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, Grant R. Osborne argues that, in formulating Christian doctrine, in addition to the Scriptures, tradition, community stance, experience, and philosophy play an important role.[41] Thus, Boyd needs to be commended for incorporating all these principles in the process of formulating his model of warfare theodicy.

He emphatically renders the biblical warfare view philosophically coherent with the present war zone of our world, and maintains constancy in addressing issues relating to the problem of evil. With great communication skills and ingenuity, he creates an awareness of warfare between God and Satan among the people of his readership. It is not startling when Donald A. Carson remarks that "a great deal of his exposition of the warfare theme is insightful, helpful and interesting. Moreover, some Christians do tumble into static fatalism that they mistake for active faith, and in so far as Boyd helps them escape from such a morass, I am grateful."[42]

In a similar vein, Christopher A. Hall, in his review of *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, demonstrates his appreciation of Boyd's work by stating that

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[40]Ibid., 7.

[41]Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*: *A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 286-298.

one does not need to accept the openness model to be thankful to Boyd for deepening our awareness of the broader supernatural context of life lived between the times. The contemporary church lives in a war zone, and much of the suffering and evil that human beings experience becomes more coherent when viewed against the backdrop of Satan's continuing attempt to disrupt God's redemptive purpose.[43]

But the general positive assessment of Boyd's theodicy, in terms of its ingenuity and tenaciousness in his presentation, does not necessarily imply the correctness and soundness of every element of his theodicy. Such an evaluation calls for the task of critical examination of the coherency and the consistency of his Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy. The remainder of this section focuses on the assessment of the origin of the fall and evil, natural evil, and eradication of sin and evil as formulated by Boyd.

Origin of Sin and Evil

In discussing the difficulty in finding solutions to the problem of evil, James L. Crenshaw remarks, "Mystery certainly abounds, but it should not stifle intellectual curiosity, especially in the face of existential doubt."[44] Consequently, Boyd's effort to explain the general fact of evil, as well as particular evil occurrences, is a move in the right direction. Notwithstanding his significant contribution to iterate the early church fathers' teaching on evil angels into contemporary theology, there are several problematic aspects with his theory of the origin of the fall and evil.

Boyd coherently describes the origin of evil both in prehistoric creation and

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[42]Donald A. Carson, "Review of God, the Bible and Spiritual Warfare, by Gregory A. Boyd," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (June 1999): 258.

[43]Christopher A. Hall, "Openness Season," *Christianity Today*, February 2003, 90-91.

[44]James L. Crenshaw, *Defending God*: *Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 195.

historic earth, featuring a warfare motif. We have seen that his conception of the origin

of evil assumes a theory, restoration theory, which is different from the traditional

understanding of an originally perfect creation.[45] However, he contends that the

authenticity of the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy does not depend on the restoration

theory. He acknowledges that the traditional reading of the creation narrative is possible

to accommodate cosmic warfare,[46] but, according to him, the traditional reading of Gen 1

contradicts the findings of geologists and paleontologists about the duration and violent

nature of the earth before humans arrived on the scene. Thus, without the restoration

theory of creation, Boyd's purpose of making the Christian concept of cosmic warfare

between good and evil understandable and acceptable to the contemporary cultural

demands would be defeated. Bruce Kenneth Waltke has mentioned that the restoration

theory of creation makes sense of the role of Satan, which otherwise is a mystery.[47] As a

result, the restoration theory is of great advantage to Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy.

However, it is argued by some scholars that the biblical narrative of creation gives no

evidence of God forming planet Earth through conflict combat with sinister creatures.[48]

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[45]Boyd, *God at War*, 100-113.

[46]"I am by no means claiming that this handling of the creation-conflict stories in Scripture is the only way to handle them. Nor would I want to invest too much weight in such a speculative matter. . . . The Bible's warfare understanding of evil remains intact even if the restoration understanding of Genesis 1 is rejected and the creation-conflict passages of Scripture are taken to be completely mythological (viz., lacking a temporal reference to an actual primordial battle)" (ibid., 113).

[47]Bruce K. Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*: *An Exegetical and Theological Study of Biblical Cosmogony* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974), 20-21.

[48]David Toshio Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*: *A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005); John

Erickson argues that the restoration theory creates a lot of exegetical difficulties.[49] David Toshio Tsumura's investigation of the etymology and usages of various key terms and expressions in the biblical narrative of the creation story shows no evidence of a primordial battle between God and evil forces.[50] Furthermore, Frederick F. Bruce, in a

H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009); John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*: *A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992).

    Scholars like Sjoerd Lieuwe Bonting argue that creation from chaos was affirmed by the Christian community until the end of the second century, when Christians turned to the concept of *creatio ex-nihilo* to combat Marcion's and the Gnostics' conception of creation from pre-existing evil (Sjoerd Lieuwe Bonting, *Chaos Theology*: *A Revised Creation Theology* [Ottawa, Canada: Novalis, 2002], 14-15). Others, such as Tsumura and John R. Rice, contend that Hermann Gunkel was the first to advocate a creation narrative in the Bible as creation through combat chaotic matter (Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 2; John R. Rice, *In the Beginning . . .* : *A Verse-by-Verse Commentary on the Book of Genesis, with Detailed Studies on Creation vs. Evolution, the Flood* [Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1975], 39-40). In his article, "Influence of Babylonian Mythology upon the Biblical Creation Story," Herman Gunkel argued that the biblical story of creation is a moderated version of the Babylonian myth, the *Enuma Elish*. Consequently, Gen 1-2:4a describes creation through combat with already-existing matter (Herman Gunkel, "Influence of Babylonian Mythology Upon the Biblical Creation Story," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 28-51.

    [49]Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 407.

    [50]Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 196. Like other proponents who support the restoration theory of creation, Boyd's support for the theory is based on the expression *tōhû wābōhû*, and the words *thôm bārā* and *ʿāśâh, hāy thāh*, and *kābāš* found in Gen 1. But, with the exception of *kābāš*, Tsumura's study of the etymology and usages of these words and their associated terms in other related languages shows no evidence of evil forces, but desert and uninhabited matter in Gen 1: 1-2 which is made productive and habitable with inanimate and animate objects in Gen 1:3ff. However, Boyd may be right when he argues that the word *kābāš* connotes suppression. See *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic (BDB)* based on the lexicon of William Gesenius (1952), s.v. "כבשׁ"; John N. Oswalt, "בָּחַן," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), 1:430, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1988), s.v. "כבשׁ." On the other hand, the biblical usage presupposes a stronger party as the subject and a weaker party as the object of *kābāš*. Therefore, the use of *kābāš* in Gen 1: 28 does not necessarily imply sinister forces as the object of *kābāš*. See S. Wagner, "כבשׁ," *Theological Dictionary of the Old*

debate with P. W. Heward, points out that the appeal to Jer 4:23-26, Isa 34:11, 45:18 in support of a chaotic state in Gen 1:1-2 is "impossible on both philosophical and theological grounds."[51]

Crucial to this discussion is John Walton's analysis of Gen 1:1-2. Walton contends that the word translated *beginning* in Genesis is used to introduce a period of time. Thus, he suggests that Gen 1:1 is an introduction to the seven-day period of creation rather than a point in time before creation. This understanding of Gen 1:1 is supported with the statement that the heaven and the earth were finished in Gen 2:1. Rather than being a description of formless and empty chaos of a previously ravaged creation, Gen 1:1-2 is a description of an uninhabited condition—unnamed, not yet separated, unproductive matter. In his view, the treatment of the words *tōhû* and *bōhû* in technical literature indicates that Gen 1:1-2 conveys the idea of nonexistence—not yet functioning in an ordered system. It is true that Boyd also describes the precondition of creation as unnamed matter, but in Boyd the uninhabited matter is by virtue of divine combat with sinister creatures. Walton's view on Gen 1:1-2 contradicts Boyd's

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Testament (1984), 7:52-57. Thus, the language and literary style of Gen 1 can hardly be seen as evidence for creation from initial chaos. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 82-96.

[51]Frederick F. Bruce, "And the Earth Was Without Form and Void: An Enquiry into the Exact Meaning of Genesis 1, 2," *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 78 (1946): 13-37, quoted in Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, 24. The use of Jer 4:23-26 and Isa 34: 11 in support of the restoration theory is based on an incorrect assumption that the earlier authors borrowed from the later authors, therefore transposing the context of these passages to Gen 1. See Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 22-35. Logically, it is the later writers who borrow expressions from former writers, not vice versa.

understanding of the passage. [52] In Boyd, Gen 1:1 is a description of pre-historic earth, Gen 1:2 is an indication of a battle between God and His creatures of Gen 1:1, and Gen 1:3 ff. is refashioned from the remnant matter of the combat.

Another exegetical difficulty that arises from the use of the restoration theory of creation is the use of *chaoskampf* passages as evidence of warfare in Gen 1:2. Tsumura emphasizes that "the biblical poetic texts that are claimed to have been influenced by the *chaoskampf*–motif of the ancient Near East . . . in fact use the language of storms and floods metaphorically and have nothing to do with primordial combat."[53] Walton asserts that the principal element of the pre-creation condition, primordial sea, is personified and can be "perceived in an adversarial role." Yet, these same ancient Near Eastern literatures describe the before picture of creation as the absence of productivity of the gods. Thus, an absence of function implies that the precondition of creation is not a chaotic battle.[54] Randall W. Younker also points out that, while the biblical *chaoskampf* passages are evidence of cosmic conflict, there is no indication of such a battle in Gen 1.[55] Boyd himself acknowledges these limitations of restoration theory and suggests that it should not be raised to the level of a doctrine. His use of it in constructing warfare theodicy, in spite of his acknowledgment of the flaws, creates some inconsistency in his theodicy.

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[52]John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis*, 45-46.

[53]Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 196.

[54]John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 52.

[55]Randall W. Younker, *God's Creation*: *Exploring the Genesis Story* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1999), 8. For more discussion on the shortcomings of the restoration theory, see Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1954), 201-211.

First, Boyd's use of restoration theory with libertarian free will in establishing the origin of evil creates inconsistency. His view of libertarian free will allows that evil is a possibility. Specifically, God's purpose for creating is to have agents participate in His love. Based on logic and Scripture, Boyd shows that libertarian free will is a necessary condition for true love. Therefore, God had given agents the libertarian freedom to say yes or no to His love. Thus, free will implies potential good and evil; at the beginning of present earth's history, evil was a possibility. On the contrary, the restoration theory, according to Boyd, means that some time before this present earth, God created out of nothing. But this pristine creation became evil. God battled this evil creation and then refashioned our present earth from the remains of the battle by subjugating and domesticating the evil forces that survived the battle. Thus, evil is inherent in this present earth.[56] Sjoerd Lieuwe Bonting observes that one striking factor of reordering from a conflict chaos condition is that evil is an inherent characteristic of creation.[57] Is Boyd being consistent here when, on the one hand, he argues that evil is a potentiality and, then on the other hand, that creation is birthed in an infested incubator? Boyd may ward off this ambiguity if he should argue that the origin of evil in the prehistoric earth is the result of agents' misuse of free will. And evil existed in this present earth because it is "birthed in an infested incubator," evil matter. But as his concept of the origin of sin and evil stands now, it is inconsistent.

Second, the difficulty with his concept of the origin of evil is a twin problem that

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[56]Boyd, *God at War*, 98, 104.

[57]Bonting, *Chaos Theology*, 76.

arises when Boyd's restoration theory is analyzed in light of his concept of neo-molinism. Neo-molinism, argues Boyd, means God knows from eternity the would-counterfactuals and might-counterfactuals. Would-counterfactuals apply to free will agents on two levels: (1) *habitus infusu*—free will agents' actions flowing from a character given by God, and (2) *habitus acquirus*—character acquired by free will agents by following certain life patterns. On the former level, agents are not responsible for their actions, but they are responsible for their actions on the latter level. The essence of his argument lies in the fact that agents are responsible for the would-counterfactuals that flow from might-counterfactuals. [58] Thus, on the basis of would-counterfactuals that flow from the might-counterfactuals God could predict what an agent's action would be in a certain situation and orchestrate circumstances to make what He foreknew to happen. The impetus in Boyd's introduction of neo-molinism into his system is to avoid causal determinism. However, this approach raises a twin problem for his concept of the origin of sin and evil.

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[58]According to neo-molinism, "God knows what agents *might* do insofar as agents possess libertarian freedom. And God knows what agents *would* do insofar as they have received from God and through circumstances or acquired for themselves determinate characters. God knows both categories of counterfactuals as they pertain to every possible subject in every possible world throughout eternity" (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 425). "In so far as might might-counterfactuals are true—agents possess libertarian freedom—there is no eternal facticity. There are only possibilities of what they might or might not do. To the extent that would-counterfactuals apply to future free agents, they do so because the actions of these agents flow either from the character God has given them (*habitus infusus*), in which case they are not morally responsible for them, or from the character they will freely acquire (*habitus acquirus*) if they pursue a certain possible course of action, in which case they are responsible for them. In either case the would-counterfactuals are not ungrounded, as in classical Molinism. From all eternity God knows that if he chooses to create free agent *x*, she will have the basic characteristics of *a*, *b* and *c* (*habitus infusus*). And from all eternity God knows that if agent *x* freely follows a certain possible life-trajectory, he will become the kind of person who would do *y* in situation *z* (*habitus acquires*). The would-counterfactuals for which agent *x* is

The first part of the twin problem has to do with divine sovereignty. Given God's ability to predict as outlined above, God could have averted evil from occurring on this present earth. To put the question succinctly: Is divine sovereignty effective? Why didn't God create the kind of agents who He knew from all eternity will choose to do good in an evil environment? Why didn't God create Adam and Eve with a different set of *habitus infusu* other than He did? Why did God set agents created from evil matter to subdue evil forces? In a world in which God can retain providential control over the flow of history based on (1) His ability to know what moral agents will do in a particular circumstance if contingents of history flow a certain way; and (2) His ability to orchestrate contingent circumstances involving free moral agents, God could have refashioned a world in which His loving purposes would be always fulfilled. On the basis of the first rebellion and the result of His battle with the evil forces, God could have averted sin and evil by endowing human beings with sets of yet-to-be established character (*habitus infusu*), which when combined with might-counterfactuals human beings would be the kind of persons who will always fulfill God's purpose for His creation.

Boyd may argue that God could not have averted sin and evil from actualizing in His refashioned earth because God providentially orchestrates events in the flow of history when moral agents "*irreversibly become the decision they make*"[59] (*habitus acquires*). But, if it could be established on the basis of the biblical record of creation

morally responsible are contingent on the might-counterfactuals for which she is morally responsible" (ibid., 128).

[59]Ibid., 189.

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and the fall that Adam and Eve may have acquired character before their interaction with the serpent, which is possible,[60] then God, rather than averting, orchestrated the actualization of sin and evil. God knew and perfectly anticipated that if the world proceeded exactly as it did up to the point of the serpent's interaction with Adam and Eve, Adam and Eve would be the kind of persons who would say no to God's yes. On the basis of this knowledge and His providential control, God decided at some point to providentially ensure that the just situation would come about by orchestrating highly pressured circumstances to squeeze Adam and Eve to actualize sin and evil. If neo-molinism is true and it excludes causal determinism as Boyd projects it to be, then either God through providential control of the flow of history could have averted sin and evil, or His providential control over the flow of history by orchestrating events actualized sin and evil.

The second part of the twin problem that Boyd's concept of origin raises in the light of neo-molinism has to do with divine foreknowledge. Neo-molinism grants that God can predict the future free will choices based on the would-counterfactuals that flow

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[60]While the biblical narrative does not stipulate any specific time Satan waited after God had finished with His creation to tempt Adam and Eve, one is not far from wrong to assume that Adam and Eve may have interacted with each other and made some choices before their temptation. When one considers Adam's expression to God when Eve was brought to him, the time that elapsed between the creation of Adam and Eve and the beginning of seventh day when God rested from creating—if the seventh day is a commemoration, as it has been suggested—then it is obvious Adam and Eve had some time to interact with each other and made several choices before the adversary's appearance in the Garden of Eden. If this assumption is true, then to some extent Adam and Eve, in the context of Boyd's theory of self-determined free will, irresistibly became the decisions they made before their interaction with the serpent.

from might-counterfactuals.[61] The restoration theory also demonstrates that God battled

with evil forces and refashioned the remains of the battle. Thus, based on God's

knowledge of evil forces, the result of the battle, what He had done with the debris of the

war, and the set of *habitus infusu* He endowed Adam and Eve, He foreknew that sin and

evil will be actualized in His refashioned earth. Yet, Boyd insists that, until Adam and

Eve sinned, God's foreknowledge of evil in this world was a possibility on the basis of

his understanding of Rom 8:29. As already indicated in the analysis of Trinitarian

Warfare Theodicy in chapter 3, Boyd considers the Greek word translated *foreknowledge*

in Rom 8:29 in the customary Semitic sense of affection. Thus, he takes the passage to

mean God loved His church as a corporate whole ahead of time. Therefore, all that is

predestined and foreknown about the church applies to everyone who freely accepts

Christ. In other words, what God predestines He also foreknows exhaustively and

definitely, and it is settled. What He foreknows about future free will choices are

possibilities.[62]

While this assertion may support his claims, he must not be judged only on the

coherence of his claim, but also by the concurrence of his view with scholarship and

Paul's usage of foreknowledge. First, scholars contend that the reduction of divine

foreknowledge to possibilities stems from a wrong notion derived from Aristotle's

philosophical proposition, "that which was truly predicted at the moment in the past will

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[61]See footnote 61 of this chapter.

[62]Boyd's concept of divine foreknowledge has not gone unchallenged by scholars such as Bruce Ware, D. A. Carson, and John Piper. Boyd argues strongly against the making of causation synonymous with determinism. See Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 68-78.

of necessity take place."[63] According to Robert E. Picirilli, the "certainty of future events does not lie in their necessity but in their simple factness. They will be the way they will be . . . and God knows what they will be because he has perfect awareness, in advance, of all facts. But that knowledge per se, even though it is foreknowledge, has no more causal effect on the facts than our knowledge of certain past facts has on them."[64] In the same vein, Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski argues that the truth or falsity and necessity or contingency of a proposition are two distinct properties of the proposition. Truth or falsity is a semantic property of a proposition; "truth is not an event . . . does not enter causally into the world, and does not thereby prevent the contingency of events.

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[63]Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will," *Religious Studies* 21 (1985): 283-285; Ronald H. Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*: *An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 319. Ronald Nash argued, "The relevance of Aristotle's position for resolving the omniscience-human freedom problem should be obvious. If propositions about future, free human actions have no truth value, then they cannot be known by anyone, including an omniscient God. God's inability to know the future should not count against his omniscience, since the power to know is constrained only in cases where there is something to know. But if no propositions about future, free actions can be true, they cannot be the object of knowledge for anyone, including God. God cannot know the future because there is nothing for him to know" (Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 319). The following is Aristotle's philosophical proposition: "There would be no need to deliberate or to take trouble, on the supposition that if we should adopt a certain course, a certain result would follow, while, if we did not, the result would not follow. For a man may predict an event ten thousand years beforehand, and another may predict the reverse, in the fullness of time. . . . Wherefore, if through all time the nature of things was so constituted that a prediction about an event was true, then through all time it was necessary that that prediction should find fulfillment; and with regard to all events, circumstances have always been such that their occurrence is a matter of necessity. For that of which someone has said truly that it will be, cannot fail to take place; and of that which takes place, it was always true to say that it would be" (Aristotle, *Aristotle's Categories and Propositions*, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle [Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic Press, 1980], 113-117).

[64]Robert E. Picirilli, "Foreknowledge, Freedom, and the Future," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000): 263.

Necessity, therefore, should not be confused with truth. Furthermore, it should not be confused with certainty. Certainty is a psychological state of the knower, whereas necessity is a property of a proposition."[65] If this is correct, then Boyd's argument for divine foreknowledge of agents' future choices is invalidated.

Second, one may agree with Boyd that Paul uses foreknowledge in the customary Semitic sense of affection, if the following question could be answered: Since *agape* is usually used in the New Testament to denote God's love for sinners,[66] would it not be appropriate to assume that Paul would have used *agape*, especially when the passage is about the salvation of the human race, if he meant to say God loved ahead of time?[67] When the customary Semitic sense of affection is considered, Boyd cannot substantiate the effectiveness of his interpretation of the passage, for such understanding of the passage demands existence of the subject and the objects of the word foreloved.[68] Roger

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[65]Zagzebski, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will," 284.

[66]W. Günther and H. G. Link, "ἀγαπάω," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1971), 2:542. See William Lillie, *Studies in New Testament Ethics* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 163-181.

[67]For Paul *agapē* is electing love as indicated by "his use of *agapētos* 'the chosen one. He uses agape as the motive of election and this love comes to be predicated of Jesus Christ Himself (Gal 2:20; 2 Thess 2:13; Eph 5:2)" (Günther and Link, "ἀγαπάω," 544). "It is worth noting how regularly the term *to elect* (*eklegesthai*) serves as a synonym for God's gracious love (*agapan*) both in Paul and elsewhere in the New Testament. Luke substitutes 'elect' for 'beloved' in God's baptismal designation for his Son in the formula of the other Synoptics. And Paul, as he does in Ephesians 1:4-5 and 2:4-6, also directly associates the two terms in Romans 11:28 and 1 Thessalonians 1:4" (Donald J. Westblade, "Divine Election in the Pauline Literature," in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*: *Biblical and Practical Perspectives on Calvinism*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995], 72n19).

[68]The Hebrew word translated *know* sometimes denotes sexual intimacy; scholars often cite Gen 4:1, 19:8 and Judg 19:25, which is a rape case. It also means personal relationship without sexual connotations, Deut 34:10 and Exod 33:17. Thus, the Semitic

T. Forster and V. Paul Marston have pointed out that, explaining foreknowledge in a Semitic sense of affection implies that humans knew and reacted to God before they existed, which is not possible.[69]

Furthermore, Paul's use of divine foreknowledge and predestination in Rom 8:29 is in relation to divine activities performed before the creation of planet Earth.[70] The Greek word translated *predestination* relates to a plan made prior to the fallen race.[71] Paul's discussion demonstrates an earthly order of realization of the divine plan through calling to faith in Christ, justification by faith, and glorification. In addition, he points out that the earthly realization of the plan of salvation applies to all who love God.[72]

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sense of affection of the Hebrew word translated *know* does not always require a two-way relationship, as suggested by Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, such as in the rape case. However, in all the instances the existence of the subject and object of the word *know* is a must. See E. D. Schmitz, "γινώσκω," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1971), 2:395; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 525.

[69]Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1974), 198.

[70]Eph 1:4.

[71]In the context of Rom 8:29, Paul coordinates divine activities in favor of human agents. In these divine activities, foreknowledge appears to be first and then predestination. The Greek word *prohorizō* (predestination) in all its occurrences in the New Testament is used exclusively for a divine plan or decision (Acts 4:28; Rom 8:29, 30; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:5, 11) (Paul Jacobs and Hartmut Krienke, "προορίζω," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* [1971], 1:695-696). The apostle makes all the occurrences of *prohorizō* point to activity performed in eternity—divine plan to give Christ as a ransom for the fallen race (Acts 4:28; 1 Cor 2:7), and the process through which the fallen race will be adopted as sons and daughters of God through Christ (Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4, 5). Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 937; Canale, "Doctrine of God," 15.

[72]Paul's discussion in Eph 1:9-10 demonstrates that while the plan for the salvation of the human race was conceived in eternity, before the foundation of the world, it was not implemented until creation was actualized. This implies that the process—

Thus, the decision in Rom 8:29 is God's proposed destiny[73] for the human race, rather

than a prior, unalterable selection of some people unto salvation.[74] Logically, divine

foreknowledge, which precedes divine predestination in the passage, is also eternal

activity. The Greek word *proginōskō* means to perceive or recognize something or a

person in advance.[75] The meaning carries the notion of the object providing the content

of what is to be known. [76] Taking into account the influence of the Old Testament word,

yāda', on the New Testament usage of *proginōskō*, divine foreknowledge is not

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called, justified, and glorified (Rom 8:30), through which those foreknown become conformed to the image of Christ—takes place in human history.

[73]William W. Klein, *The New Chosen People*: *A Corporate View of Election* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 185. Some of the biblical authors refer to the divinely conceived and determined plan as the divine plan of salvation; purpose (Rom 8:28), mystery (Eph 3:9); and hidden wisdom of God (1 Cor 2:7).

[74]See Forster and Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History*, 203-205; Andrzej Gieniusz, *Romans 8:18-30*: *Suffering Does Not Thwart the Future Glory* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), 266-267.

[75]The Greek words *pronoeō* and *proginōskō* are translated foreknowledge. The former word means knowledge obtained by reasoning, thus, the subject always determines the content of the knowledge and imposes it on reality, and the latter word means knowledge obtained by perceiving or recognizing, which means the object is active and the subject passive. Thus, Paul's choice of *proginōskō* in discussing divine foreknowledge is purposeful. *Proginōskō* occurs five times, two times referring to human knowledge acquired on the basis of information given or revelation received (Acts 26:5; 2 Pet 3:17); two times (Rom 8:29, 11:2) God is the subject and humans are the object; and in 1 Pet 1:20 Christ is the object. The noun *proginōsis* occurs two times (Acts 2:23, 1 Pet 1:2). In the first text, Christ is the object and in the second passage humans are the object. See Paul Jacobs and Hartmut Krienke, "προγινώσκω," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1971), 1:693-694.

[76]The persons who are foreknown in Rom 8:29 are the "object of the verb 'foreknew' and they are the object without any qualification or further characterization" (John Murray, "Foreknew, Foreknowledge," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* [1975], 2:591; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996]; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 533).

speculative knowledge, which may be inadequate, half correct, or false.[77] It is "grasping

the full reality and nature of the object under consideration";[78] it is exhaustive and

definite knowledge of His creation. Also helpful in elucidating the reality that God

foreknows future free will choices is James's remark at the Jerusalem Council. "Known

to God from eternity are all His works."[79] If God's works, in this context the works of

salvation, are a divine response to human sinfulness, He must of necessity foreknow the

free will choices of sinners. In other words, from eternity God foreknows all

possibilities, libertarian free will choices, and the results of His works of salvation. In

summary, the Greek words translated *predestination* and *foreknowledge* suggests that: (1)

though foreknowledge and predestination are divine activities performed in eternity, their

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[77]*yāda'* is used to connote a variety of meanings: to discern, to recognize, learning to distinguish, to know good and evil, for sexual intimacy (as mentioned in footnote 68), acquaintance with a person. Thus, the Hebrew word *yāda'* is fundamentally relational knowing. In such a relational knowing, factual knowledge of the other person is crucial, otherwise it is not a relational knowing. Thus, when God is the subject of *yāda'*, His factual knowledge of the object known is implied. Boyd may be right to understand foreknowledge in Rom 8:29 in the customary Semitic sense of affection. *yāda'* sometimes denotes sexual intimacy. Scholars often cite Gen 4:1, 19:8, and Judg 19:25, which are rape cases. It also means personal relationship without sexual connotations (Deut 34:10 and Exod 33:17). Thus, the Semitic sense of affection of the Hebrew word translated "know" does not always require a two-way relationship, as suggested by some scholars, such as in the rape case. However, in all the instances where the *yāda'* connotes affection, the existence of the subject and object of the word *yāda'* is a must. Thus, Boyd's characterization of foreknowledge as a customary Semitic sense of affection does not support his interpretation. See Schmitz, "γινώσκω," 2:395; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 525; Forster and Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History*, 198. According to Jack P. Lewis, when God is the subject of *yāda'*, it refers to God's knowledge of the life of a particular human being before the conception of that individual. See Jack P. Lewis, "יָדַע," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), 1:366.

[78]Schmitz, "γινώσκω," 393. See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 525.

[79]Acts 15:18.

contents are not the same; (2) the content of divine foreknowledge cannot be predictions from deductions from past and presents events; and (3) the content of divine foreknowledge cannot be only possibilities of future free will choices, but rather exhaustive and definite.

Based on the above discussion of Paul's use of divine foreknowledge and predestination in Rom 8:29, Boyd's assertion has far-reaching theological implications. On the one hand, a tenable question that arises from Boyd's assertion, as posed by Roland Nash, is, "How can God know what He is going to do in the future, when God's own future acts are a response to future human free actions that He cannot know?"[80] Obviously, Boyd's position is in difficulty. For God to predetermine and foreknow His own plan or unilaterally intervene in human events, He must, of necessity, first know exactly what He is responding to. Since Boyd's position makes no distinction between the contents of the two divine activities, we cannot avoid concluding that his position, as it stands now, is inconsistent and collapses into the traditional view of a prior unalterable divine predetermination of events. Thus, God not only foreknew evil before it was actualized, but He also knew it was inevitable because He determined it. On the other hand, Boyd can neither affirm divine foreknowledge on the basis of God's own plan or as predictions from deduction from past and present events nor make the content possibilities. Such arguments are a denial of the biblical concept of foreknowledge and predestination.[81]

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[80]Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 320.

[81]The effect of Boyd's concept of divine foreknowledge is discussed later in the evaluation under the subsection "Natural Evil."

While Boyd's concept of the origin of evil is designed to absolve God from the responsibility for evil in the world, the difficulties mentioned make the absolution impossible. This is the case because Boyd intends to present openness theodicy, yet for the most part of his explanation he is trapped in classical theism—his concept of divine foreknowledge is grounded in predestination,[82] leaving his theory of the origin of sin and evil in a paradoxical situation.

Certainly, the use of restoration theory with other theological elements of the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy creates some difficulties. Boyd seems to recognize this by his shift from a refashioned earth to a local creation, based on John Sailhamer's exposition of

the Genesis account of creation. In his book, *Genesis Unbound*, Sailhamer argues that the creation narrative is a local creation. According to him, Gen 1:1 refers to the creation of the entire functioning universe, including the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens and the plants and animals on earth. He asserts that Gen 1:2ff. is a description of God preparing the land as a place where human kind can dwell—the land promised to

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[82]Boyd, like the Calvinists, argues that divine foreknowledge is grounded in predestination or foreordination (John M. Frame, *No Other God*: *A Response to the Open Theism* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001], 77; Roy, *How Much Does God Foreknow?*, 82-83). Some go so far to equate divine foreknowledge with election. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 533; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 1:317-318; Frederick F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*: *An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 177; Rudolf Bultmann, "προγινώσκω, πρόγυωσις," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1964), 1:715. In other words, divine foreknowledge is equivalent to divine predetermination.

Abraham and his descendants. [83] Boyd concedes precedence to Sailhamer's idea as "an intriguing interpretation of Genesis 1 as historical narrative that avoids conflict with the scientific account of the world."[84] Boyd correctly understands Sailhamer's exposition of Gen 1:1-2. However, his submission to Sailhamer's idea of a local creation is not satisfactory. If Boyd acknowledges that, in Sailhamer, *tōhû wabōhû* means non-violent chaos,[85] and if he agrees that "man was put into the garden 'to worship and obey,'"[86] then there is a sense in which Boyd defers to Sailhamer's exposition of Gen 1:1-2. But for Boyd to avow a local creation in the "midst of a planet seized and corrupted by hostile cosmic forces"[87] does not ease the tension between his concept of creation and other theological elements of his Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy. On the contrary, the application of Sailhamer's exposition of Gen 1:1-2 to his warfare motif reinforces the tension, because in this local creation Adam and Eve awoke to evil forces that were not domesticated or subjected.

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[83]Sailhamer claims that Gen 1:1 refers to the creation of the entire functioning universe, including the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, and the plants and animals on earth. He goes on to argue that Gen 1:2 onwards describes God preparing a land for man and woman to inhabit—the same land promised to Abraham and his descendants and the same land given to the Israelites after their wandering in the desert. John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), 14, 47-58.

[84]Gregory A. Boyd, "Evolution as Cosmic Warfare: A Biblical Perspective on Satan and 'Natural Evil'," in *Creation Made Free*: *Open Theology Engaging Science*, ed. Thomas Jay Oord (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 141.

[85]Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 63-66.

[86]Ibid., 76.

[87]Boyd, "Evolution as Cosmic Warfare," 144.

Natural Evil

The evaluation of Boyd's Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy was begun by examining

his concept of the origin of evil and sin. It was noted that there are inconsistencies in

Boyd's explanation of the origin of sin and evil. In this section, the assessment

continuous by including his theory of natural evil. The subject of concern is whether his

concept of natural evil is consistent with other aspects of his theodicy.

The analysis of natural evil in Boyd's theodicy revealed that his concept of

natural evil makes no distinction between moral and natural evils and assumes

imperfections in nature.[88] However, the source of evil does not lie in the imperfections in

nature, but the misuse of an agent's free will. Boyd's strategy is to establish, on the one

hand, that God did not create historical planet Earth as perfect, as the classical tradition

claims, and, on the other hand, to exonerate Him. But his effort creates inconsistency in

his theory.

He asserts that nature has no will to oppose God,[89] and yet he claims that nature's

initial response to Adam, its caretaker, was not to immediately be subject to Adam's

wishes.[90] He also insists that humans were created to subdue the sinister characteristics

of creation.[91] Hence, it is difficult for one to understand how Boyd can argue for

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[88]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 279, 282-83.

[89]Ibid., 283.

[90]Ibid., 258.

[91]According to Boyd, "the term *kābaš* usually suggests the suppression, the
conquering or enslavement of hostile forces." He continues, "If, however, what we have
in Genesis 1 is a creation that is good, but that is following *Enuma Elish* and other
primitive accounts, fashioned out of a battle-torn chaotic abyss and that, as such, must
continually be controlled . . . then this command [to subdue the earth] begins to make

imperfections and limitations in nature, and yet assume that the impersonal and unbending characteristics of nature are not actualized evil.

Furthermore, the combination of Boyd's views on free will and natural evil turns his arguments against him and creates a problem for his theodicy, metaphysical evil. First, he argues that freedom of choice "requires that the alternatives under consideration be viable alternatives,"[92] which means the alternatives must be of the same status in nature. Consequently, both the perfect and imperfect characteristics of creation must be either actualized or potentialized. Second, he maintains that, with the exception of their excessiveness, catastrophic and horrifying features of nature are necessary requirements of the neutral medium of relationality.[93] It is readily apparent that his stand is contradictory, and makes God the efficient cause of metaphysical evils.

Boyd's view on natural evil simultaneously collapses into Augustine's and Hick's concepts of natural evil. His theory assumes Augustine's aesthetic principle with his admission that birth deformities that flow from the design of God are natural and beautiful.[94] Like Hick, Boyd's concept of neutral medium of relationality makes what he claims to be imperfections in nature the *sine qua non* for moral responsibility.[95] Based on these assertions, some evils, including animal suffering, are necessary for God to achieve His teleological and aesthetic purposes. Hence, these imperfections (which God created

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sense. Humans in this case are charged with carrying on God's creational work of bringing order to chaos" (Boyd, *God at War*, 106).

[92]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 258.

[93]Ibid., 306.

[94]Ibid., 194.

[95]Ibid.

purposefully), although experienced as evil, fit perfectly in God's design, making metaphysical evil necessary but not genuine, lacking the qualities of moral and/or natural evils.[96]

Philosophically, one basic difficulty rising from metaphysical evil serving aesthetical and teleological purposes is the dysteleological nature and/or gratuitousness of evil.[97] Boyd's appraisal of Augustine's aesthetical principle and Hick's soul-making theodicy shows his awareness of the inadequacy of both theodicies in explaining the excessiveness and dysteleological nature of evil. Therefore, he appears to respond to gratuitous evil with his concept of the irrevocable free will of demonic forces. He writes, "But if we accept that there are spiritual agents who can influence the objective world just as humans can, then we can begin to understand how nature could become hostile to God's purposes, even though it has no will of its own. In the hands of free agents, human or angelic, our neutral medium of relationality can become either a gift of love or a weapon of war."[98] It is agreeable that, for the most part, evils in the world are influenced by demonic forces. As a result, Boyd's assertion absolves him from the issue of

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[96]Arguing against making evil illusive, Stephen J. Vicchio points out that it goes against the biblical view of evil, for the Bible presents evil as real. Stephen J. Vicchio, *The Voice from the Whirlwind: The Problem of Evil and the Modern World* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1989), 117-119. See also Hywel D. Lewis, *Philosophy of Religion* (London: The English Universities Press, 1965), 309.

[97]For some decades, excessive evil has been an issue against the divine existence. This philosophical argument is technically termed the evidential problem of evil. That is, the amount and kinds of evil we observe are evidence against the existence of God.

[98]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 283-284, see also 291.

gratuitous evil.[99] But such a claim does not dissolve the inconsistency in his argument.
The way out of this paradox is for Boyd to argue that the imperfections in nature are
actualized inherent evil and the misuse of moral agents' free will, and demonic forces are
responsible for its excessiveness.

Another difficulty that demands attention has to do with Boyd's understanding of
how God deals with particular evil occurrences. Boyd contends that God exhaustively
knows all the possibilities of future free will decisions, hence, He does all He can to stop
particular evils from occurring. If one looks at the heinous state of the world and the
proposition that God does all He can to stop evil occurrences, then God is not doing well
enough in this aspect—an issue which Boyd himself recognizes; he claims that it is
because of the nature of agents' free will. Among other things, if the possibility of saying
no to God's yes necessarily correlates with the possibility of saying yes to God's love[100]
means that each increase in the possibility of saying yes to God's love entails an
increased possibility of saying no to God's love. Then, with the current situation of the
world, God is overmatched by human rebellion. Boyd appears to argue that the nature of
free will is the cause of the difficulties with God and the occurrence of particular evil.

[99]Boyd's introduction of demonic forces into his system helps him refrain from
making inscrutable and excessive evils teleologically worthy. The criticism against
theodicies that make excessive evil necessary for divine teleological benefits is that God
does not need such evils in order to achieve His purpose. See Hospers, *An Introduction to
Philosophical Analysis*, 464-465; Vicchio, *The Voice from the Whirlwind*, 102-143.

[100]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 54.

However, it is his theory of God's foreknowledge of future free will decisions that seems

to cause the greater part of the problem.[101]

For the most part, the biblical passages that Boyd uses in defense of his

understanding of God's foreknowledge of future free will decisions are passages

describing divine works and ways in human history.[102] An explanation of two divine

activities, divine testing[103] and repenting,[104] may be helpful in substantiating this point.

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[101]Boyd bases his argument of divine knowledge of future free will choices on biblical passages dealing with divine interaction in human history. I agree with Boyd that exegesis on a text-by-text basis is helpful in evaluating his use of Scripture; although such an attempt is beyond this study, divine testing and repentance will be taken into consideration, for the sake of objectivity. See Steven C. Roy's *How Much Does God Know?*

[102]See, for example, God expresses frustration (Ezek 22:30-31; Exod 4:10-15; Num 11:1-2); God tests (Gen 3; Gen 22:12; Deut 8:2; Ps 95:10-11); God speaks in conditional terms (Matt 20:25-28; Exod 13:17); God confronts the unexpected (Isa 5; Jer 3:19-20); God regrets (Gen 6:6; 1 Sam 13:13; 15:10, 35); God changes His mind (Jer 18; 1 Chr 21:15; 2 Kgs 20:1); Hastening the Lord's return (2 Pet 3:9-12; Mark 13:32). Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 53-87; idem, "The Open-Theism View," 23-36. These passages are demonstrations of how God relates to the fallen race in an attempt to win them back to Himself. Consequently, they are evidence that God has not predetermined human free will and that the future is partly opened. However, they do not deal with divine foreknowledge.

[103]The Hebrew words בָּחַן (*bāchan*), חָקַר (*chāqar*), צָרַף (*+āraph*), and נָסָה (*nāsāh*) are synonymous and are usually translated "prove," "examine," "test," and "try." *Bāchan* connotes examining to determine essential qualities or attaining knowledge intuitively or intellectually. Twenty-two of its occurrences refer to God trying the hearts of His people (Jer 17:10; 11:20; 12:3; 1 Chr 29:17). The qal form of *chāqar*, with God as the subject and humans as the object, is translated "search," such as God searches the heart and thoughts of a person (Jer 17:10; Pss 139:1, 23; 44:21; Job 13:9; 28:27). Its niphal form expresses the notion of immeasurable, unfathomable (Job 5:9; 9:10; 11:7; 36:26; Ps 145:3; Isa 40:28). *+āraph* and *nāsāh* emphasize the practical aspects of testing. *+āraph* connotes the refining process; 11 occurrences are references to God's judgment on and purification from sin (Isa 1:25; Jer 6:27-30; Ezek 22:18-22) and removal of sin and wickedness from His people (Jer 9:7; Isa 48:10). *Nāsāh* is the word used in most of Boyd's and White's references to God's testing and finding out. Unlike *bāchan*, which connotes trying for the purpose of attaining intellectual knowledge, *nāsāh* focuses on the

Having analyzed two main passages (Gen 18:21; Gen 22:1, 12) that describe God as one who tests,[105] Robert B. Chisholm contends that the contexts of the passages establish that God veils His omniscience and reveals Himself as one who lacks full knowledge in order to create a dynamic relationship between Him and His servants and allows human response to play a role in how the future unfolds. Commenting on Gen 22, John Piper, Bruce Ware, and Norman Geisler cogently argue that the passage demonstrates that God experiences what He foreknew eternally in human history.[106]

practical aspect of testing, either human or divine testing. The purpose of divine *nāsāh* is more of a demonstration of a possessed knowledge rather than God learning to know the hearts and behavior of His people. Thus, Gen 22:1 is a testing to demonstrate how a faithful servant of God relates to God; Deut 8:2,16 testing the Israelites to acknowledge divine discipline; Exod 20:18-20 testing to direct Israel to experience God, Deut 13:3,4; Judg 2:22, 3:4; 2 Chr 32:31. F. J. Helfmeyer, "נָסָה," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1998), 9:443-445; M. Tsevat, "בָּחַן," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1975), 2:69-71; idem, "חָקַר," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1986), 5:148-150; John N. Oswalt, "בָּחַן," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), 1:100; Herbert Wolf, "חָקַר," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), 1:318; Marvin R. Wilson, "נָסָה," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), 2:581; John E. Hartley, "צָרַף," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), 2:777-778.

[104]The Hebrew word "נָחַם" has different shades of meaning, but common to all meanings is an attempt to influence a situation. Its occurrence is mostly in the niphal and hithpael forms. These forms are usually translated "regret," "to be comforted," "relent from a course underway," and "changing of mind." When God is the subject of these forms, He does or does not respond to human actions. See H. Simian-Yofre, "נָחַם," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1998), 9:340-355; Marvin R. Wilson, "נָחַם," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), 2:570-571; Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Does God 'Change His Mind'?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (1995): 388-389.

[105]According to Chisholm, in Gen 18 God presents Himself as a judge, and a fair and just judge examines the evidence and then rewards accordingly. In Gen 22 "God contextualized his self-revelation to Abraham . . . within the relation, metaphorical framework of a covenant Lord" (Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Anatomy of an Anthropomorphism: Does God Discover Facts?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 [2007]: 8, 9, 13).

[106]According to John Piper, "If God knows what will come to pass, does that mean that all testings *in history* are pointless? I don't think so. God has not created the

Discussing divine repentance, Chisholm points out that God deals with His

creatures in terms of decrees and announcements. He explains that each decree has

"clear contextual indicators that the declaration is unconditional. The statement that God

will not change His mind, made in tandem with a synonymous expression, formally

marks the divine proclamation as a decree."[107] Furthermore, concerning divine

announcements, he asserts that "God can and often does retract announcements." In

every case where God retracts His announcement, He had not decreed a course of action.

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world just to be known in terms of what would be if tests were given. He created the world to be actualized in history. That is, he wills not just to foreknow, but to know by observation and experience. That is the point of creating a real world, rather than just knowing one that might be. Therefore may not God truly know what Abraham is going to do, and yet want to externalize that in a test that enables him to it by observation, not just prognostication?" (John Piper, "Answering Greg Boyd's Openness of God Texts," Ondoctrine.com, www.ondoctrine.com/2pip1201.htm [accessed October 20, 2009]). From Norman Geisler's perspective, "there is nothing here [in the passage] about God's desire to *learn* anything. Rather, God wanted to prove something. . . . What God knew by *cognition*, he desired to show by *demonstration*. By passing the test, Abraham demonstrated what God already knew: namely that he feared God" (Norman L. Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man?* [Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997], 88). For Bruce Ware, "Scripture does not lead us to think of God as unchangeable in every respect. . . . Importantly, God is changeable *in relationship* with his creation, particularly with human and angelic moral creatures he has made to live in relationship with him. In this relational mutability, God does not change in his essential nature, purposes, will knowledge or wisdom; but he does interact with his people in the experiences of their lives as these unfold in time. God actually enters into relationship with his people, while knowing from eternity all that they will face. Therefore, when God observes Abraham bind his son to the altar he has crafted and raise his knife to plunge it into his body, God literally sees and experiences in this moment what he has known from eternity. When the angel of the LORD utters the statement, 'for now I know that you fear God,' *this expresses the idea that 'in the experience of this action, I (God) am witnessing Abraham demonstrate dramatically and afresh that he fears me, and I find this both pleasing and acceptable in my sight'*" (Bruce Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000], 73-74), his emphasis.

[107]Chisholm, "Does God 'Change His Mind'?" 395-396.

Rather, "He chose to wait patiently hoping His warnings might bring people to their senses and make judgment unnecessary."[108] Roy goes a step further when concluding his discussion on divine repentance; he points out that divine repentance is God responding to human actions. "God's repentance does not necessarily imply a lack of foreknowledge on his part. Nor does it imply any admission of mistake on the part of God. . . . Admittedly, it is difficult from our human perspective to conceive of genuine repentance coexisting with exhaustive foreknowledge. . . . We must not understand the repentance of God in any way that diminishes or minimizes his foreknowledge of free human decisions."[109]

Each of these comments on divine testing and repenting openly or covertly points to divine activity in human history; thus both those who hold to divine atemporality (classical theists) and divine temporality (open theists, specifically Boyd) agree that testing and repenting demonstrate divine relation with His creatures.[110] Divine testing

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[108]Ibid., 399.

[109]Roy, *How Much Does God Foreknow?* 144, 176.

[110]Although both camps of evangelical theologians (classical and open theists) agree that the passages concerning divine testing and repenting are dealing with divine activities in human history, yet they differ on their concept of divine foreknowledge. Discussing the controversy between the open view of God and classical theism Canale writes: "Would a more complete analysis of the biblical evidence help evangelical theologians overcome this controversy? I personally do not think so. Our brief reference to the way each party deals with the biblical evidence suggests that the cause for disagreement lies somewhere else. Both parties use the same biblical evidence . . . to provide different views of the same theological issues. . . . My conviction is that more biblical evidence will not move the parties to accept each other's point of view or lead to a new theological position that is grounded on the hermeneutical nature of the process through which the evidence is handled. Our analysis of biblical evidence is never a 'neutral' process of discovery yielding the 'objective meaning that everyone will understand in the same way. On the contrary, the interpretive process is always

and repenting are God's works, and His ways in human history are for the purpose of creating an environment that fosters a dynamic relationship between an Infinite Creator and His finite creatures and allows intellectual beings to relate to Him on a personal basis, thus allowing humans to function intelligently in relating to Him.[111]

Hence, Boyd's definition of the content of divine foreknowledge on the basis of passages that describe God's works and ways in human history is due to his failure to make a distinction between divine activities performed before creation and in human history. At the background of Boyd's failure to establish a distinction between divine activities performed in eternity and in human history is his concept of divine temporality. In his opinion, God expresses His immutable necessary actuality in a contingent mode.[112]

conditioned by hermeneutical presuppositions that may be defined in various ways. Thus, the micro and meso hermeneutical levels where the controversy between classical and open theisms takes place is [sic] conditioned by the deeper and foundational macro hermeneutical level" (Canale, "Evangelical Theology and Open Theism," 23-24).

[111]Köhler comes to the same conclusion when he states that "to describe God in terms of human characteristics is not to humanize Him. . . . Rather the purpose of anthropomorphisms is to make God accessible to man. They hold open the door for encounter and controversy between God's will and man's will. They represent God as person. They avoid the error of presenting God as a careless and soulless abstract Idea or fixed Principle standing over against man like a strong silent battlement. God is personal. . . . Through the anthropomorphisms God stands before man as the personal and living God" (Ludwig Köhler, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. A. S. Todd [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957], 24-25).

[112]Boyd states that God is above this created time, but he is not clear on the nature of eternity. However, one can easily infer that Boyd assumes eternity is temporal not timeless. He writes, God is temporal—"an eternally on-going event, an event which is dynamic and open" (Boyd, *Trinity and Process*, 224-253, 386). For certain, he believes God is "immanent within the flow of the temporal process, and who thus faces the future largely as an unsettled matter. It is not, in other words, only the creatures of God who change with the flow of time. God too (within limits) changes as this One adapts Godself to new situations." Ibid., 314. Contrariwise, he insists that God's "'now' encompasses the 'now' of every point in space, but he is not bound to measure the successive 'nows' the

However, he failed to acknowledge the differences between eternity and created time.[113]

The implication is that God's temporality is identical to human temporality. This

conclusion arises from the nature of Boyd's perception of how God experiences His

creation. Consequently, His knowledge of the future free will choices consists of

possibilities only.[114] The effect of this understanding of God's foreknowledge of the

future choices of intelligent beings in relation to the problem of evil is that God is unable

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way any finite creature would"; and He does not measure time against "any physical
constant" (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 142).

[113]See for example, Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian
Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press,
1964), 37-68.

[114]The Psalmist's (Ps 139) declaration of divine foreknowledge of future free
choices of intelligent beings is denied by Boyd. He argues that Ps 139 is poetry and
cannot be used as proof of divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge of future free will
choices. While I agree with Boyd that the passage does not imply God has predetermined
everything about the Psalmist, I disagree with him on the issue that the passage cannot
be used to resolve metaphysical disputes regarding the nature of the future. According to
Osborne, "modern critics . . . argue against theological content and prefer to think of the
'world' portrayed in the Psalm. Yet it is also true that biblical poetry expressed the
deepest dimensions of the faith of ancient Israel, especially the view of God. In fact,
theology is central to biblical poetry" (Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 186).
Consequently, considering Ps 139 in light of poetical hermeneutical principles, the
passage is highly theological. First, vv. 1-6 reveal divine omniscience, vv. 7-12
demonstrate divine omnipresence, vv. 13-18 divine omnipotence and, finally, vv. 19-24
declare the holiness of God. Second, v. 16 points to the fact that God knew David before
he was formed, thus the omniscience includes divine foreknowledge. Third, the use of
chāqar, *yāda'* and *da'at* in vv. 1-6 indicates that divine foreknowledge is a relational
knowing; future free will choices are future facts not knowledge of possibilities about
David. "The language of the Psalm does not mean that God, being ignorant, must remove
His ignorance by investigation. It means, rather, that God possesses full knowledge of
David" (Edward J. Young, *Psalm 139*: *Devotional and Expository Study* [London:
Banner of Truth of Trust, 1965], 15-16).

to stop any particular evil from occurring because such evils are "known only when incarnated and experienced concretely."[115] This means God does nothing of importance to stop particular evils,[116] and "only *after* the event . . . can God begin to bring good out of evil acts."[117]

There may be answers to the above-mentioned issue in Boyd's understanding of divine sovereignty. First, by appealing to divine ability to accurately predict, he may

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[115]Boyd, *God at War*, 34.

[116]Clearly, for Boyd, God knows "each series of possibilities, *as though there were no alternative possibilities*" (Boyd, "Christian Love and Academic Dialogue," 235, emphasis his), which means God actually does something to stop radical evil. But this emphasis has its own weakness. Paul Kjoss Helseth's evaluation of open theism, in general, and Boyd, in particular, on particular evils is worth mentioning. According to him, affirmation of divine foreknowledge of future free decisions as possibilities and willingness to act unilaterally in human affairs when it serves his purposes "raises questions about the love of God that are far more serious than any of the questions that can be directed against compatibilists. Why? Because when push comes to shove people suffer in the openness view neither because the free will of wicked agents is 'irrevocable,' nor because their suffering was ordained for a greater good, but rather because God simply was not inclined to intervene at a particular point in the historical past or present. . . . It follows that the God of Open Theism . . . is an arbitrary being. Because particular evils cannot be accounted for solely by appealing to the free will of wicked moral agents, for the genuine freedom that is presumed to be the ultimate source of evil is precisely what is overridden by the unilateral activity of God when he so desires. . . .without an exhaustive plan that determines which particular evils will be tolerated and which ones will not God's toleration of one particular evil and not another becomes arbitrary. To put it differently, without an 'overarching divine purpose' and plan that established when his intervening mercies will be extended and when they will be withheld, his extension of those mercies becomes subject to the vicissitudes of the moment, and suffering . . . becomes truly pointless" (Paul Kjoss Helseth, "On Divine Ambivalence: Open Theism and the Problem of Particular Evils," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 [2001]: 509-510).

[117]Ron Highfield, "The Problem with the 'Problem of Evil': A Response to Gregory Boyd's Open Theist Solution," *Restoration Quarterly* 45 (2003): 173.

argue that, based on the past and present characters of the agents that may be involved in particular evil occurrence, God can predict and prevent some evil occurrences.[118] Second, by appealing to the variables that condition the quality of free will, he may argue that God may intervene as He sees fit. According to him, God created agents with libertarian free will and then binds Himself with a noncoercive covenant to honor the gift of libertarian free will. The extent and the duration of each libertarian free will may vary from agent to agent but God commits himself to His noncoercive covenant. However, when an agent goes beyond the parameters of the given libertarian free will, God is under no obligation to refrain from intervening on an agent's libertarian free will. His intervention may appear arbitrary; however, the apparent arbitrariness of God's interaction with the world is not due to lack of power; it is because the quality of freedom, the scope and duration of God's covenant of noncoercion toward a given agent, is unknowable. In other words, because God chose to create agents with the potential to love, He could not guarantee that all particular evil occurrences would be prevented. Thus, God's intervention in any particular evil or lack of it is out of His own integrity and the complexity of the kind of world God has created.[119] While it is correct to insist on divine ability to predict future choices and divine intervention, in Boyd's system both points create difficulties that need to be pointed out.

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[118]See chapter 3, the section "Unconditional Prophecies."

[119]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 191-206, 210-219.

Boyd's neo-molinism[120] approach to divine sovereignty over His intelligent creatures is what Paul Kjoss Helseth describes as "Divine Coercion."[121] We may recall that, in explaining how God predicts the future of individuals, Boyd employs Josiah (1 Kgs 13:1-2) and Cyrus (Isa 45:1) to explain divine foreknowledge of individuals before they were born, and Peter's denial (Matt 26:34) and Judas's betrayal (John 6:64) to explain how God foreknows an individual's character. For Boyd, God foreknows individuals by setting "strict parameters around the parents' freedom in naming these individuals" and restricts "the scope of freedom these individuals could exercise *as it pertained to particular foreordained activities*."[122] If we grant this understanding of divine foreknowledge, some questions emerge. How did God put strict parameters around parents' free will centuries before the parents were born? If, within the parameters, the parents have the freedom to choose among alternatives, how did God foreknow the exact names that these parents would choose for their babies? Should Boyd agree with other scholars that the prophecy about Cyrus is a *vaticinium post eventum*, why did God give a sign of the truthfulness of the prophet's message to the king? I agree with Boyd that the prophecy about Cyrus falls under a portion of the book of Isaiah that deals with God's declaration of His sovereign activities to redeem His people. Thus, it is

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[120]See footnote 61 of this chapter.

[121]Helseth argues that openness theologians' emphasis on divine influence accomplishes divine purposes "only because they are willing to sanction a form of compatibilism that, ironically, regards compatibilistically free acts as coerced or determined acts for which the acting agent is morally responsible" (Paul Kjoss Helseth, "Neo-Molinism: A Traditional Openness Rapprochement," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7 [2003]: 61).

[122]Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 34, emphasis his.

clear that Cyrus is appointed by God (Isa 45:1). It is also a biblical truth that those who

are appointed by God for some specific purpose have the choice to reject the call (Acts

26:19; Luke 7:30; 2 Pet 3:9). Consequently, in the context of Boyd's system, for God to

name Cyrus and his actions requires what Boyd classifies as a divine orchestration of

circumstances.

The idea of God orchestrating events leads into Boyd's second explanation of

how God foreknows and predicts the future of individuals. Boyd is right to assert that it

is God who determines His plans and not individuals. However, to argue that God

foreknew and predicted Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal, based on their character and

divine knowledge of all future variables, creates inconsistency in his system. As Steven

C. Roy observes, "If . . . Peter's decision to deny Christ was 'certain,' given his character

and the circumstances he was in, then his was not a free decision in the libertarian sense.

And if the presence of libertarian freedom is the necessary prerequisite for genuine moral

responsibility, Peter's 'non-free' decision was one he was not morally responsible for."[123]

This is a significant difficulty for Boyd, because for God to orchestrate circumstances

surrounding Peter's denial, which includes human free will, He must restrict and/or

overturn free will decisions on many occasions. This implies that divine predictions

about individuals centuries before they were born require many restrictions and/or

overturning of both good and evil events, including free will choices. Divine

orchestration, according to Boyd, requires past and present events to know individuals'

character and then the future variables to lead to the fulfillment of prediction. This

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[123]Roy, *How Much Does God Foreknow?* 100.

process has to continue backward into history probably to the beginning of human history or beyond for predictions such as Cyrus and Josiah. This leads to causal determinism of every event in history, a different scenario from Boyd's occasional divine intervention, partly opened future, and biblical description of divine foreknowledge and predestination.[124]

It becomes clear that not only Boyd's concept of neo-molinism sustains Helseth's criticism, but also his adoption of an indeterministic view of contemporary physics.[125] His argument from chance (intersection of independent causal chain that produces consequences which produce random events that each may result in numerous events infinitely),[126] combined with the concept of complex constellation leads to a coercive situation. James S. Wiseman contends that the idea that God intervenes within indeterminate scope "require[s] that God be envisioned as some kind of micro-managing ultra-supercomputer, literally 'governing' or 'determining' an unfathomable number of

[124]In William Lane Craig's opinion, Boyd reverts to Calvinist determinism to account for divine providence ("A Middle-Knowledge Response," in *Divine Foreknowledge*: *Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy [Downers Grover, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001], 58-59). Other scholars believe open theism undermines confidence in divine sovereignty. See Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man*? 145; Jason A. Nicholls, "Openness and Inerrancy: Can They Be Compatible?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 629-649.

[125]John C. Beckman, reacting to Boyd, points out that "chaotic systems are physically deterministic. They are unpredictable to finite creatures, but God can exhaustively calculate their definite future behavior if He has exhaustive definite knowledge of the inputs and infinite calculating precision." He continues, "Unpredictability of chaotic systems does not imply an open future. The unpredictability due to chaos is epistemological rather than ontological. It is due to creaturely limitations and does not apply to God" (John C. Beckman, "Quantum Mechanics, Chaos Physics and the Open View of God," *Philosophia Christi* 4 [2002]: 208, 210).

[126]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 136-142, 418.

events on the smallest conceivable scale throughout the entire universe."[127] Thus, Boyd

makes God responsible for natural evils. Imagine that four armed men walked into a

nearby bank. One chained the security personnel of the bank and took over the position

of guarding the door to the bank, another took control of the customers and cashiers,

another one took over the registers, and another guarded the two offices in the bank. Two

men in one of the offices who made attempts to call 911 were shot dead. The armed men

stopped their operations and took off upon hearing the approach of sirens. On their way

of escape they shot everything and everyone who hindered their escape. By the time

some of the armed men were arrested they had killed and wounded many people. In an

indeterministic world such as Boyd describes, God only intervenes when an agent

oversteps the boundaries of a given libertarian free will or exhausts the given libertarian

free will. In light of this scenario, which of the agents overstepped boundaries or

exhausted the given libertarian free will? We may not know the answer because the

extent and duration of the freedom of the people involved are not known, according to

Boyd. Whichever way one looks at the scenario, God intervenes in an event only when

the event fits into His plan; therefore, He has a reason for every event in which He does

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[127]James S. Wiseman, in evaluating approaches to divine action in human history, argues that "commenting on the quantum based argument, Clayton has written that Robert J. Russell, who has influenced the thought of Murphy and others, 'has been a leading advocate of the view that God could intervene supernaturally within the scope of quantum indeterminacy. Given billions and billions of such minute intervention . . . God might be able to effect significant changes on the macroscopic level.' My only reservation with this statement is that the phrase 'billions and billions' is actually a gross understatement, given that at least this many quantum events take place every few seconds within a single person's brain or within a cubic centimeter of any material object" (James A. Wiseman, *Theology and Modern Science*: *Quest for Coherence* [New York: Continuum International, 2002], 124).

or does not intervene.[128] Thus, a single divine intervention in a world such as described by Boyd produces multifaceted and incessant good and evil effects.[129] To this end, the important question is: To what extent does divine providential control of the flow of history maximize good without maximizing evil? While Boyd recognizes that evils are the result of the misuse of the free will of moral beings, his treatment of natural evil fails to place significant importance on that affirmation. For, in the words of Helseth, "the genuine freedom that is presumed to be the ultimate source of evil is precisely what is overridden by the unilateral activity of God when he so desires."[130] Thus, Boyd's position turns God into a coercive, ambivalent, and arbitrary Being who makes a non-coercive covenant, but achieves His purpose through coercion.[131] It follows from the foregoing evaluation that Boyd's concept of natural evil, like his theory of the origin of sin and evil, contains conflicting elements.

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[128]David P. Hunt, in a response to Boyd's concept of divine foreknowledge, comes to the same conclusion. According to him, "the idea that God becomes aware of contingent events only as they happen . . . is supposed to make God's failure to prevent horrendous evil somehow more comprehensible. . . . The open theist's God, despite his precognitive impairment, has perfect knowledge of what is going on *now*; in the case of Boyd's kidnapped child, he has sufficient knowledge . . . to stop a crime in progress, to rescue the victim and so on. . . . I just don't see how Boyd's answer would differ from the 'he has a good sovereign reason'" ("A Simple-Foreknowledge Response," 53).

[129]In discussing Gen 45:5 and 50:20, Boyd agrees with compatibilists that God ordains evil actions for greater good, but adds that this cannot be generalized. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 396.

[130]Helseth, "On Divine Ambivalence: Open Theism and the Problem of Particular Evils," 510.

[131]"He may in fact temporarily orchestrate matters such that people's resolve is strengthened so that they act in congruity with their evil character (instead of acting otherwise for ulterior motives), for in this instance the evil they intended would play into God's design, despite the fact that it is in and of itself evil" (Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 389).

While Boyd's Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy encounters inconsistency and incoherency on the evidential level of the problem of evil, it appears to fare well on the logical problem of evil. In chapter 2 it was shown that the atheists' greatest problem with theism is the logical problem of evil. In Mackie's reflection on this issue, he mentions that an adequate solution to the problem of evil must give up at least one of the four Christian propositions—omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, and God and evil exist.[132] Among his suggestions of things that can be done to avert the logical problem of evil is to argue that "there are limits to what an omnipotent thing can do."[133] Mackie identifies an important solution to the problem of evil to be that which ascribes evil to independent actions of human beings";[134] however, its feasibility lies in redefining omnipotence.[135] Boyd's discussion of omnipotence in terms of logical possibilities and impossibilities and his emphasis on the free will of moral agents, in a good measure, conform to Mackie's position for a solution to the logical problem of evil. Hence, the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy rebuts the logical problem of evil.[136] However, the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy's rebuttal of the logical problem of evil raises a question about its plausibility as a Christian response to the problem of evil.

According to Mackie, a solution that "explicitly maintains all the constituent

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[132]Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 201.

[133]Ibid.

[134]Ibid., 208.

[135]Ibid., 212.

[136]Boyd argues that omnipotence means God has the power to do everything with the exception of what is *logically impossible*. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 53.

propositions" (the proposition is the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God and the existence of evil), "but implicitly rejects at least one of them in the course of the argument that explains away the problem of evil" is fallacious.[137] Reflecting on this concern in connection with Boyd's eviscerated version of divine foreknowledge, which is a modification of the proposition of omniscience, the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy falls into the group of theodicies that Mackie classifies as fallacious solutions to the problem of evil.

The appraisal of Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is not complete without evaluating Boyd's concept of the eradication of evil. Thus, the following section evaluates Boyd's concept of the divine extermination of sin and evil.

Eradication of Sin and Evil

Virtually every theologian who searches for an explanation of the problem of evil affirms that God will eradicate sin and evil. The debate among them has to do with how God will exterminate sin and evil without infringing on agents' free will. As noted in the analysis of the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy, Boyd's approach tends to bridge annihilationism and eternal torment. However, his theory is not without difficulties.

Paul K. Jewett mentions that contemporary objections to annihilation and everlasting torment of retribution are based on the claim that God's nature is love.[138] The

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[137]Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 202.

[138]Paul K. Jewett, "Eschatology," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (1976), 2:354.

same can be said about Boyd's rapprochement of the two views.[139] We may recall from the analysis of Boyd's self-determined free will theory that to endow moral agents with free will is the metaphysical idea associated with God's decision to create a world that can participate in His love.[140] Boyd's construal of the punishment of the wicked on the basis of divine love and the nature of free will is a preservation of the wicked will in a separate reality from the reality of the righteous will, because the soul is immortal.[141] While there is an inescapable emphasis on divine love for sinners, it appears Boyd falls short in appealing to only divine love in this matter. As Jewett has pointed out, "Love without justice is sentimental."[142] While Boyd objects to universalism and describes it as unscriptural,[143] his own preference for divine love leads to a theory in which both the righteous and wicked will live eternally in different realities separated from each other. Thus, the wicked will die, but the soul will live in a different reality from the reality of the righteous.

The fact remains that his rapprochement construal does not guarantee a complete destruction of evil for at least two reasons. First, in a real way Boyd's description of prehistoric victory over evil forces does not encourage hope in the ultimate divine victory over evil. His concept of retribution separates good from evil in the same manner as the

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[139]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 326.

[140]Ibid., 51.

[141] Ibid., 326.

[142] Jewett, "Eschatology," 354.

[143]Boyd conscientiously makes a difference between the realities of the wicked and righteous. However, both kinds of wills live on to eternity anyway.

prehistoric warfare barricaded evil into a separate reality.[144] On the other hand, granting

Boyd's concept of self-determined free will changing to compatibility free will at the

close of probation and the wicked will becoming self-closed, the probability of evil

resurfacing in the utopian world is very slim. One then assumes that, since the

individual's choice for either God or Satan is established, there is no need for a neutral

medium of relationality. But in describing the punishment of the wicked, Boyd points

out that the absence of an objective-share reality is part of the punishment of the wicked.

Consequently, there will be a neutral medium of relationality in God's established

kingdom. The metaphysical requirement for any neutral medium of relationality,

according to Boyd, is ungodliness in nature. Second, though the reality of the wicked

will be hypothetical to the righteous, as Boyd points out, their eternal existence rebuts the

cosmic significance of Christ's victory over evil and there is no assurance of a morally

secured future universe.

In spite of all the difficulties mentioned in association with the Trinitarian

Warfare Theodicy, the degree of conceptual constancy with which Boyd remains true to

his own fundamental principles of theological understanding is remarkable. His

philosophical and scientific rigor in constructing a Christian response to the problem of

evil makes the relationship between biblical materials and philosophical and scientific

materials in doing theology a defining issue.

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[144]See above for the similarities between Boyd's and E. G. White's concepts of
"Victory over Sin and Evil."

White is overlooked in the history of Christian theology, yet her theological

orientation is one of the watershed moments in the history of Christian theology.[145]

White breaks from the regular way of doing theology[146] to emphasize *sola scriptura*,

which includes *tota scriptura*[147] and *prima Scriptura*.[148] But extra-biblical materials also

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[145]Fritz Guy acknowledges White's contribution to Christian theology when he writes, "Ellen White has contributed not only to the distinctiveness of Adventist thinking within the larger Christian tradition but also, and just as significantly, to the continuity of Adventist thinking with historic Christian theology. The importance of this formative theological influence can hardly be overestimated: apart from the uniquely influential contribution of Ellen White, Adventist theology would not—indeed, could not—be what it is" (Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically*: *Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999], 123).

[146]Boyd, *God at War*, 307, endnote 44. In his study of theological systems in the history of the theology of Christianity, E. Edward Zinke concludes that "what seems to be at the heart of the various methods we have been studying is the common characteristic that there is basic continuity between the natural and religious worlds, and that it is possible either to start from or to work within the frame work of the natural world in the process of characterizing theology. The natural world is understood variously within the realm of theoretical reason or within the realm of the empirical experiences from the point of view of what is a priori within the human subject. Religion finds itself in conformity with the resulting concept of the universe and is thus built in harmony with that concept. Theology is thus made to be part of the human disciplines. It operates in ways similar to those of other disciplines. To varying degrees Scripture has an impact upon theological method, but it does not create the basic framework out of which theology operates" (E. Edward Zinke, "A Conservative Approach to Theology," *Ministry*, October 1977, 24J).

[147]I acknowledge that the cry *sola scriptura* of the Reformation rejected any imposition of external concepts and methods upon Scripture; however, White goes beyond making the Bible a normative authority by emphasizing how to obtain the biblical norms without neglecting any aspect of the Bible. She writes: "The Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. And these principles may be understood by all. No one with a spirit to appreciate its teaching can read a single passage from the Bible without gaining from it some helpful thought. But the most valuable teaching of the Bible is not to be gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discerned by the hasty or careless reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface,

serve as resources without superimposing external principles, methods, or resources on biblical truth.[149] Perhaps Herbert E. Douglass is right when he mentions that White's organizing principle (the great controversy theme) "transcends the tension, paradoxes, and antinomies of conventional philosophy and theology."[150]

From another perspective, White's approach to theology as a defining moment in the history of Christian thought can be seen in the elegant and coherent manner in which she encapsulates all the great biblical themes under the great controversy theme, thereby assigning all the biblical themes great importance, creating awareness of the importance of human moral conduct, and making the credibility of God the central issue in human history. Thus, her explanation of the problem of evil, based on Scripture, is an alternative to theological systems based on external philosophical principles and methods, which are inadequate answers to life's questions.[151]

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and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort. The truths that go to make up the great whole must be searched out and gathered up, 'here a little, and there a little,' Isa 28:10" (E. G. White, *Education*, 123).

[148]E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:29.

[149]E. G. White, "Be Separated." "When you search the Scriptures with an earnest desire to learn the truth, God will breathe His Spirit into your heart and impress your mind with the light of His word. The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another. By comparing scriptures referring to the same subjects, you will see beauty and harmony of which you have never dreamed. There is no other book whose perusal strengthens and enlarges, elevates and ennobles the mind, as does the perusal of this Book of books. Its study imparts new vigor to the mind, which is thus brought in contact with subjects requiring earnest thought, and is drawn out in prayer to God for power to comprehend the truths revealed. If the mind is left to deal with commonplace subjects, instead of deep and difficult problems, it will become narrowed down to the standard of the matter which it contemplates and will finally lose its power of expansion" (E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:499).

[150]Douglass, *The Messenger of the Lord*, 260.

[151]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 522, 525; idem, *The Desire of Ages*, 478.

Fritz Guy points out that White draws attention to certain scriptural themes which are otherwise undervalued or overlooked in the history of Christian thought; among these themes is the warfare concept as a solution to the problem of evil.[152] This seems to designate White as one who comprehensively articulates the warfare motif. Not only did she expound on the warfare worldview, but she reintroduced it into a world awakening from the slumber of deism—a worldview that interpreted evil and the devil as outdated mythology. Boyd eloquently accentuates White's contribution to the history of Christian theology this way: "Ellen White . . . integrated a warfare perspective into the problem of evil and the doctrine of God perhaps more thoroughly than anyone else in church history."[153]

Besides White's contribution to the history of Christian theology, her organizing principle plays a formative role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. According to Guy, White's "theological inspiration of Adventist community" sets a "theological agenda by directing its continuing attention to the subjects that might otherwise have been ignored or misunderstood by Adventists."[154]

The elegance with which White presents her arguments and her contribution to theology does not necessarily indicate the plausibility of her explanation of the problem of evil. Such an assessment depends entirely on the internal consistency and coherency

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[152]Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 122.

[153]Boyd, *God at War*, 307, endnote 44.

[154]From a logical, theological, and historical perspective, Guy contends that White's writings are not the final authority of Adventist doctrines, but rather shape the characteristics of Adventist theology (Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 126).

of her model of warfare theodicy. The rest of this section engages in this task by critically examining the origin of sin and evil, natural evil, and the eradication of sin and evil, as formulated by White.

Origin of Sin and Evil

It was evident in the analysis of the Great Controversy Theodicy that White attributes the origin of sin and evil to rebellious angels and then to Adam and Eve. She draws on biblical passages to establish the reality of angels, divine sovereignty over them, and the harmony that existed before the rebellion.[155] Based on Isaiah's song against the king of Babylon (Isa 14:12-15) and Ezekiel's oracle against the prince of Tyre (Ezek 28:11-19),[156] she identifies the originator of sin and evil and describes how it began. She also uses the literal reading of Gen 1-3 as the basis for her understanding of the creation of the earth and how it became infested with sin and evil.[157] But developments in science and accompanying metaphysical changes have challenged this understanding of the origin of sin and evil.

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[155]Based on passages such as Job 38:7; Pss 8:5; 103:19-21; Heb 12:22; Matt 28:3; 4; and Ezek1:14, she draws the conclusion that the reality of the existence of created heavenly beings and the sovereignty of God over them prior to the creation of the earth is an unquestionable fact. Relying on the great commandment to love God and fellow humans (Mark 12:30-31), she presupposes this commandment to be the foundation of God's government over the entire universe. She then perceives that, when the commandment of God is observed, peace and tranquility ensue. As a result, harmony existed between the created heavenly beings and their Creator and among the creatures before the intrusion of sin. See chapter 4, the section "Origin of Sin and Evil."

[156]E. G White, *The Great Controversy*, 493-495.

[157]See Chapter 4, the section "Creation."

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the classical interpretation of Satan as the

first rebellious angel of Isa 14:12-15 and Ezek 28:11-19 was challenged. With the

availability of critical methods and comparative materials, some biblical theologians

rejected the Satan view for the mythological view. They argued that the passages are

replicas of the myths of the ancient Near Eastern cultures; therefore they have nothing to

do with the origin of sin or Satan.[158]

In his study of the biblical passages in view of the light of alleged origins and

parallel materials of the ancient Near Eastern cultures and the biblical content, Jose M.

Bertoluci has argued strongly that, although there are similarities in motifs and imagery

between the two biblical passages and ancient world cultures, the biblical passages are

unique compositions making use of widely known ancient cultures.[159] According to him,

no myth of *Hele ben Shahar* (Lucifer, son of the morning) or guardian cherub with so

many details, such as in Isaiah's song and Ezekiel's oracle, has been found.[160]

Furthermore, he contends that there are no substantial elements in the passages to relate

the figure to a reasonable immediate historical figure.[161] The events of the two passages

transcend the earthly realm and show tension between the earthly and cosmic dimension

and a struggle between good and evil. Bertoluci explains that the Satan view is supported

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[158]See Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*: *A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 38-42.

[159]Bertoluci, "The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy between God and Evil," 279, see chapter 4, the section "Origin of Sin and Evil," footnote 132.

[160]Ibid., 144.

[161]Ibid., 186-187, 270.

by the language, the literary structure (chiastic and typology), the immediate and larger context of the passages and the Bible as a whole, and the prophets' awareness of the existence of heavenly beings. He writes, "God, through his prophets, chose the expressions, *King of Babylon* and *King of Tyre* to portray the being who was the originator of evil and propelling force behind every effort to disturb order in God's universe."[162]

Griffin, who rejects a literal view of Satan, argues that "taken as a mythological formulation . . . the idea of a demonic power of universal scope expresses a deep truth, one that the church in our time needs to make central to its understanding of its mission. This is the idea that human civilization, and thereby each of us within it, is now under subjugation to demonic power."[163]

A literal understanding of the Genesis account of creation and the fall of humans, such as held by White, is rejected by some scholars because it is regarded as inconsistent with the scientific records of earth's history. The desire to defend the goodness of God in the midst of evil and the eagerness to harmonize the scientific discoveries with the biblical narrative of the beginnings has generated various theories of the origin of sin and evil on planet Earth.[164]

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[162]Ibid., 303.

[163]David Ray Griffin, *The Two Great Truths: A New Synthesis of Scientific Naturalism and Christian Faith* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 34.

[164]Ibid.; Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine**, and Human*, enlarged ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

Jon D. Levenson has argued strongly that the literal reading of the creation narrative creates inconsistency, and such inconsistency is resolved when creation is perceived as out of circumscribed chaos.[165] Logically, the doctrine of the fall is also rejected. According to Arthur Peacocke, "the traditional interpretation of the third chapter of *Genesis* that there was a historical 'Fall,' an action by our human progenitors that is the explanation of biological death, has to be rejected. . . . There was no golden age, no perfect past, no individuals, 'Adam' or 'Eve' from whom all human beings have descended and declined and who were perfect in their relationships and behavior."[166] In spite of these arguments, White's literal understanding of creation and the fall of humans in explaining the origin of sin and evil may prove weighty in light of advocates and statements from some opponents of a literal reading of Gen 1-3.

Richard M. Davidson has pointed out that, in the reading of Gen 1:1-2, there is the possible openness to "no gap" and "passive gap" theories, but there is no indication of a chaotic condition.[167] As already mentioned, Walton argues that Gen 1:1-2 is a nonfunctional material that was originated by God at some point, and Gen 1:3ff. as functional creation in Gen1:3ff.[168] Both authors describe Gen 1:1-2 as uninhabited waste with no life, including birds, animals, vegetation, and no predation. Accordingly, the ecological imbalance, death, and animal suffering are the result of the fall described in Gen 3.

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[165]Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*.

[166]Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, 222-223.

[167]Richard M. Davidson, "The Biblical Account of Origins," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14 (2003): 4-43.

John Polkinghorne and David Griffin reject the literal and straightforward understanding of the fall, but they claim that, although the story is a myth, it carries deep truth about the human condition.[169] In an attempt to reiterate the importance of the literal understanding of the fall of Adam and Eve, Walter Rauschenbusch maintains that, although lost to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the biblical story of the fall of Adam and Eve is rich in significance.[170]

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[168]John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 44.

[169]John Polkinghorne, in his attempt to reconcile the fall with scientific thought, writes, "The marvelously subtle story of Genesis 3 is not altogether inhospitable (under its mode of mythic discourse) to the accommodation of these [scientific] insights. . . . The fundamental aspect of the Fall is the moral act of the rebellious refusal of creaturely status, the desire 'to be like God' (Genesis 3.5). How that came about we do not know. It is clearly present in us today, transmitted culturally and even, conceivably, partly genetically" (John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology* [Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991], 100). David Griffin makes a similar remark when he writes, "Although the world is essentially good and although human beings lived for a long time in what would, compared with later conditions, be recalled as a state of paradise, human existence did, only a few thousand years ago with the rise of civilization, suffer a fall into an alienated state. In this alienated sate, the relative harmony of previous human communities was replaced by a mode of existence involving war, patriarchy, slavery, destruction of the environment, and a division between the rich and the poor, with the former oppressing the latter" (Griffin, *The Two Great Truths*, 34).

[170]In his defense of the doctrine of the original sin against scholars like Lyman Abbott (who claimed the "fall is not an historic act of disobedience by the parents of our race in some prehistoric age, through which a sinful nature has descended or been imparted to all their descendants. It is the conscious and deliberate descent of the individual soul from the vantage ground of a higher life to the life of the animal from which he had been uplifted" (Lyman Abbott, *The Evolution of Christianity* [New York: Doubleday, 1894], 227), Walter Rauschenbusch wrote, "It is one of the few attempts of individualistic theology to get a solidaristic view of its field work. This doctrine views the race as a great unity, descended from a single head, and knit together through all ages by unity of origin and blood. This natural unity is the basis and carrier for the transmission and universality of sin" (Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* [New York: Abingdon Press, 1917], 57-58).

From the above comments of scholars who reject and those who affirm the literal

reading of Ezek 28:11-19 and Isa 14:12-15, creation, and the fall, White's concept of the

origin of sin and evil, on the one hand, is consistent and coherent.[171] In her dialogue with

scientific discoveries of the nineteenth century, she refutes the idea that the earth slowly

evolved from chaos and that creation came about as a result of natural cause. However,

in all these discussions she never used the term "*ex nihilo*" or "out of nothing." Even in

her exposition on creation these terms are absent, though she affirms the traditional

understanding of creation. But, in her comparison of the Creator and human artist, she

points out that the artist depends on materials already prepared for his/her work, but the

Creator "was not beholden to preexistent substance or matter."[172]

In spite of the significance of the literal understanding of creation mentioned

above, Griffin maintains that it incriminates God of unnecessary evils.[173] While the issue

of unnecessary evils will be discussed in the next section, it is important, at this point, to

note that a coherent concept of the origin of sin and evil means a reliance on the biblical

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[171]Discussing the relationship between the fall in Gen 3 and Ezek 28, Joseph
Blenkinsopp argues that, although both passages describe different events, they point to
deviation from the original purpose of creation and the corruption of an intelligent
creature. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching
and Preaching, vol. 13 (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 125.

[172]Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald,
1982), 340.

[173]Griffin argues that the traditional understanding of the creation story, which
suggests *creatio ex nihilo*, implies that God "can unilaterally bring a world that is just like
ours except for being free of at least most of those things that we normally consider
unnecessary evils, such as cancer, earthquakes, hurricanes, nuclear weapons, rape,
murder, and genocide" (Griffin, "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," 115).
More will be said on what Griffin considers as unnecessary evils in White when I
evaluate her concept of natural evil.

narrative of creation, the fall of Satan, and the fall of humans. Evidently, White's view of

the origin of sin and evil has far-reaching theological implications that set her model of

warfare theodicy apart from other Christian explanations of the problem of evil. Her use

of biblical narrative as the basis for her understanding of the origin of sin and evil is a

reflection of her historical view of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The effect of this

is the affirmation of the primacy of Scripture on the issue of origins.[174] According to

William R. Stoeger, theology and philosophy can affect natural sciences positively and

vice versa. However, he recognizes that natural science is burdened with limitations.

Having listed the limitations of natural science (among the list is the ultimate question

about origin),[175] he reflects, "philosophy and theology cannot deal adequately with some

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[174]Discussing the literal week of creation, White writes, "When professedly scientific men treat upon these subjects from a merely human point of view, they will assuredly come to wrong conclusions. . . . Those who leave the word of God, and seek to account for His created works upon scientific principles, are drifting. . . . The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to trace the relations of science and revelation" (E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 113). Geological theories of the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century were void of any theological basis. For instance, the father of modern geology, Charles Lyell, rejected all geological theories which could be reconciled with a literal week of creation. According to Livingston, Lyell "no longer saw nature proclaiming the glory of God but witnessing to a blind, inexorable development, heedless of human values, destroying everything that could not compete in the unending struggle for life" (Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 251). See also Leonard Brand, "The Integration of Faith and Science," *Perspective Digest* 12 (2007): 5.

[175]Stoeger lists the limitations of natural sciences as follows: "They cannot deal with ultimate questions, for example, why there is something rather than nothing, or why there is this type of order rather than some other type of order. . . . They therefore cannot deal with ultimate origins such as the ultimate origin of the regularities, relationships and processes we discover in reality. . . . They cannot deal directly with values, or with what endows our lives with value, orientation and meaning. . . . They cannot deal with events or situations which are particular, and therefore cannot be subsumed under a general law. . . . They cannot deal with personal relationships as such. . . . They are not equipped to deal directly or critically with experiences, data, or patterns which are claimed or

of these categories either. But they have the methods both to explore the terrain involved and to focus our critical reflection on recognizing what it is that transcends our understanding and its importance for values and meaning."[176]

Stoeger's reflection coheres with White's insistence on making the biblical narratives on origins weightier than the natural science worldview. Her argument is that nature is the creation of God and it reveals something about God. However, nature marred by the curse of sin "can bear but an imperfect testimony regarding the Creator"; and human beings, whose reasoning power is darkened by sin, can "no longer discern the character of God in the works of His hand." On the other hand, the Bible is the inspired word of God, a clearer revelation of the personality and character of God.[177] On this understanding of nature, humans, and the Bible, she believes that the "Bible is not to be tested by men's ideas of science but science is to be brought to the test of the *unerring standard*."[178]

Though White believes there can be harmony between faith and science, she encourages that theologians must not adjust theological concepts to naturalistic world views and human philosophies that contradict the Bible, but allow such views to

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perceived to be of divine revelation, or with issues relating to intimations of transcendence" (William R. Stoeger S. J., "Evolution, God, and Natural Evil," in *Can Nature Be Evil or Evil Natural?* ed. Cornel W. Toit [Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 2006], 29-30).

[176]Ibid., 30.

[177]E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:256. For a detailed discussion on White's view on the inspiration of the Bible, see Peter M. van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 53-57.

challenge an interpretation that leads to a conscientious study of the Scriptures, and vice versa, particularly on the origin of sin and evil. This is evident in her emphasis on the biblical description of the origin of sin and evil in spite of scientific discoveries that render the biblical account invalid.

In spite of the logical consistency of her theory of the origin of the sin and evil, some questions are left unanswered in light of her concepts of divine foreknowledge and sovereignty. The analysis established that, in White, divine foreknowledge is exhaustive and definite. In his research for his forthcoming book,[179] Boyd claims to have uncovered the reason why some scholars argue for exhaustive definite foreknowledge. According to his findings, exhaustive definite foreknowledge is argued on the basis of the erroneous Platonic principle that considers knowing as acting on something.[180]

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[178]Ellen G. White, "Science and Revelation," *Signs of the Times*, March 13, 1884, 1 (emphasis added).

[179]Boyd says that his forthcoming book, *The Myth of the Blueprint*, is due to be published by InterVarsity Press by 2011 or 2012. It is the promised third volume in the Satan and Evil series.

[180]"First, Plato argued that we see not by light entering our eyes (as we now know is the case) but by light proceeding out of our eyes (Timaeus 45b). For Plato, seeing is an active, not a passive, process. Since knowledge was considered to be a kind of seeing, Plato also construed knowing as acting on something rather than being acted upon (Sophist 248-49). I've discovered that this mistaken view of seeing and knowing is picked up and defended by a host of Hellenistic philosophers. (As an aside, Jesus seems to have capitalized on this mistaken view of eyesight to illustrate a point [Mt 6:22; Lk 11:34])."
"Second, several Neoplatonistic philosophers (Iamblichus, Proclus and Ammonius) used this theory of eyesight and knowing to explain how the gods can foreknow future free actions. They argued that the nature of divine knowledge is determined not by what is known but by the nature of the knower. Since they assumed the gods were absolutely unchanging, they concluded that the gods knew things in an absolutely unchanging manner, despite the fact that the reality the gods know is in fact perpetually changing. This allowed them to affirm that the future partly consisted of

While this may be true with other models of divine foreknowledge, such as the

Calvinist model, the same cannot be said about White's position. Her conceptualization

of divine foreknowledge appears to be different from these other views. I have noted

that, for White, God foreknows not by imposing His ideas on an object by predestining

the cause of action the object must take, but the object providing what is to be known

about it.[181] Since, according to White, this activity took place prior to the existence of

creatures, it is not analogical to human perceptual knowledge or other faculties, such as

deductive and inductive reasoning and intuition.[182] While her model posits some faculty

that is unknown to humans, it enables her to affirm divine exhaustive definite

foreknowledge and agents' free will without suggesting fatalism or limiting one at the

expense of the other. According to Boyd, the affirmation of such a model of divine

foreknowledge posits that "from all eternity he has seen what was coming. . . . And he

can even foresee the suffering, the unending plight of the damned. . . . But he cannot do

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indefinite (aoristos) truths (viz. open possibilities) while nevertheless insisting that the gods knew the future in an exhaustively definite, unchanging way."

"The view is, I'm convinced, completely incoherent. But one can understand how these philosophers arrived at it in light of their mistaken assumptions about seeing and knowing as wholly active processes. What the gods see when they look at the future conforms to the unchanging nature of the gods rather than the changing nature of the future they see. Through the influence of Augustine and especially Boethius (who explicitly espoused the ancient view of seeing and knowing and repeated some of the Neoplatonic arguments), this way of "reconciling" foreknowledge and free will quickly established itself as the dominant view in the Christian tradition" (Boyd, "An Ancient Philosophical Mistake in the Debate about Open Theism," Christus Victor Ministries, http://www.gregboyd.org/blog (accessed October 1, 2008).

[181]See chapter 3, section "Content of Divine Foreknowledge."

[182]The Psalmist's realization of God's knowledge of man makes mention of the fact that God's foreknowledge is perceptual activity performed in eternity. "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days

anything ahead of time to avoid them." Thus, the difficult question that arises from White's concept of the origin of sin and evil in relation to divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge is why God created Lucifer, who He foreknew would rebel against Him. Why didn't God alter the creation of Lucifer to avert sin and evil?

White argues that God could have destroyed Lucifer at the beginning of his insinuation. In this sense, God had alternative ways of dealing with Lucifer's accusations against His government. But God chose to allow Lucifer to live and respond to his insinuation. As evidence in the analysis of the great controversy, White's model of divine foreknowledge requires that divine sovereignty must be providential. Hence, rather than conceiving omnipotence in terms of logical possibilities and impossibilities,[183] she dwells on the nature of God, who He is, and what He is, so that omnipotence means God is the source, the ground, and the possessor of all the power there is. He acts within His rational and moral nature. Thus, omnipotence is seen as God's ability to call the worlds into existence and sustain them, and to react to the challenges of His enemies without making intelligent beings automatons or silencing them.[184] From this perspective, one may be inclined to assume God would have chosen to create the earth with radically different material which would block Lucifer from interacting with planet

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fashioned for me, when *as yet there were* none of them" (Ps 139:16). He also indicates that God's cognitive activity is a mystery to him (Ps 139:6).

[183]Some scholars have pointed out that discussing divine omnipotence in the context of contradictions, such as can God create rock so heavy that He cannot lift it, does not belong to a serious discourse on divine omnipotence. See Addison H. Leitch, "Omnipotence," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (1975), 4:530; Alan Cairns, ed., "Omnipotence," *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, SC: Emerald House Group, 1988), 253.

Earth. God could have set intelligent beings who are superior to angels as stewards of the earth. But God chose a lower form of intelligent creatures, the human race, as stewards of the earth. It is true that White mentions that planet Earth is part of God's response to Lucifer's assault on His character. It is also evidence that her understanding of the difference between angels and humans has to do with the glory and power and not their intelligence and/or free will.[185] Thus, God would not have been true to His nature had He chosen creatures with superior intelligence and/or free will to angels as stewards of the earth. Although these are justified reasons for why God did not choose creatures superior to angels to be stewards of the earth, they do not answer the question, Why did God choose human beings who He foreknew would yield to Lucifer's deception as stewards of the earth and not some creatures who could have withstood Lucifer's deception? According to Nancey Murphy, such questions "call for a blank slate with regard to our general knowledge reality. . . . They are beyond our capacity fully to imagine them. Without even being able to picture the situation, we are entirely unable to form a judgment as to whether it is possible at all. . . . They are not just unanswerable but . . . imponderable because we do not even know what would be involved in trying to answer them."[186] Hence, the consistency and coherency of an explanation of the origin of sin

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[184]E. G.White, *Christ's Object Lesson*, 63, 64; idem, "Love Not the World," *Review and Herald*, February 2, 1897; ibid., *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49.

[185]E. G.White, *The Great Controversy*, 511-512.

[186]Nancey Murphy, "Science and the Problem of Evil: Suffering as a By-Product of a Finely Tuned Cosmos," in *Physics and Cosmology*: *Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Natural Evil*, ed. Nancey Murphy, Robert John Russell, and William R. Stoeger, S. J. (Vatican City State and Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2007), 1:150-151.

and evil do not suggest that all the philosophical questions pertaining to the origin of sin and evil and the nature of God are answered.

The evaluation of the Great Controversy Theodicy, thus far, has demonstrated the internal consistency and coherency within White's concept of the origin of sin and evil; it has shown that White's concept of the origin of sin and evil leaves some questions unanswered. The next section extends the evaluation of the great controversy to natural evils.

Natural Evil

I noted in the previous section that the evaluation of White's concept of the origin of sin and evil raises the question of natural evil in its various forms. The issue is whether White's literal reading of creation and the fall of humans adequately explains the forms of evil that are not the result of human violation.

Stoeger describes the difficulty in affirming the literal understanding of creation and the fall in light of natural evil when he argues that, if the reality of human freedom (ability to respond to God and to other creatures with love and commitment, leading to eventual personal and social communion with God) is accepted, there are no complaints about moral evil.[187] According to his reasoning, the misuse of an angel (Lucifer) or human freedom is a tenable explanation of moral evil; however, attributing natural evil to misuse of free will "poses nearly insuperable scientific and theological problems – much

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[187]William R. Stoeger, "The Problem of Evil: The Context of a Resolution," in *Can Nature Be Evil or Evil Nature? Science-and-Religion View on Suffering and Evil,* ed. Cornel W. Toit (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 2006), 2.

more serious than the problem it claims to solve."[188] Thus, White's concept of the origin

of sin and evil adequately and consistently deals with moral evil. However, it encounters

difficulties, according to Stoeger's critique on the issue of natural events, such as "mass

extinctions, pervasive transience, upheavals, catastrophes, deaths, disappearances,

etcetera which have marked the history of the universe and of the world."[189]

In White, creation not only means creation was not made from preexistent

substance, but it also implies that, while creation cannot be equated with God, nothing

made is intrinsically evil. I have also noted that it is fundamental to her understanding of

the fall that ungodly characteristics or imperfections in nature developed with the

disobedience of the human race. In other words, the whole of creation has been affected

by the sin of humanity. Consequently, the whole host of natural evil directly or remotely

results from the disobedience to the laws of God and/or human actions.[190]

White's understanding of natural evil appears to be in disagreement with the

belief that evils in nature are the result of the laws that govern nature.[191] According to

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[188]Ibid., 2-3. See William Hasker, *The Triumph of God Over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 104.

[189]Stoeger, "The Problem of Evil," 3.

[190]See chapter 4, the section "Natural Evil as a Consequence of Laws of Nature."

[191]An overwhelming number of scholars appeal to evolution theory and physics to explain what is classified as natural evil. For them, natural evils and innocent sufferings are a necessary by-product of the conditions of a finely tuned cosmos to obtain in order that there may be intelligent beings. See Arthur Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science: The Bampton Lectures 1978* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); Richard W. Kropf, *Evil and Evolution* (Rutherford, NJ: Associated University Press, 1984); Holmes Rolston III, *Science and Religion*: *A Critical Survey* (New York: Random House, 1987); Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Cornel Toit, ed., *Can Nature Be Evil or Evil Nature? Science-and-Religion View on Suffering and Evil* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 2005); Nancey Murphy and

Don Howard, blaming nature or the laws of nature for natural evils is an evasion of

responsibility. He explains that "with the progress of science, ever more of the blame for

much of the suffering previously deemed a consequence of natural evil will have to be

accorded to human action or the lack thereof."[192] Howard's comment seems to show that

not only does White maintain constancy in relying on Scriptures in addressing issues of

origins, but also science agrees with her concept of natural evil. However, this does not

necessarily mean her theodicy is coherent in its entirety. There is, therefore, the need to

subject natural evil in White to further evaluation in lieu of some issues that Marilyn

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others, eds., *Physics and Cosmology*: *Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Natural Evil* (Vatican City State and Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2007). Some of these scholars recognize that science offers a far-off future that is bleak; therefore, for a complete explanation of natural evil in the context of natural sciences they suggest a robust *eschaton* on the basis of biblical eschatology. For example, after investigating several literatures on the explanation of natural evil in the context of evolution theory, Christopher Southgate observes that the approaches make the issue of natural evil more complex. According to him, such explanations of natural evil encounter ontological and teleological difficulties. Therefore, he proposes that an adequate theodicy in the light of Darwinism must incorporate a soteriology that emphasizes that "(a) God does not abandon the victims of evolution and (b) humans have a calling, stemming from the transformative power of Christ's action on the cross, to participate in the healing of the world" (Christopher Southgate, "God and Evolutionary Evil: Theodicy in the Light of Darwinism," *Zygon* 37 [2002]: 817). This article is developed into Southgate's *The Groaning of Creation*: *God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). While I share Southgate's passion for redemptive eschatology, eschatology does deal with the ontological and teleological difficulties of evolution theodicy. The cross does not absolve a good and loving God from initiating such a horrendous process. If, according to evolution theodicy, everything is evolving upward and getting better, neither the cross nor healing is necessary. Intervening with the cross to redeem the process suggests that God was ignorant about what the process entailed when He initiated it. Other difficulties can be mentioned, but ultimately the issue at hand has to do with whether an explanation of natural evil in the light of Darwinism portrays the seriousness of sin and evil and the importance of Christ and the cross.

[192]Don Howard, "Physics as Theodicy," 329.

McCord Adams raises against free will theodicies such as the Great Controversy Theodicy.

First, Adams contends that "the dignity of human nature and self-determining action" in free will theodicies, such as White's, "are taken to be so great as to outweigh or defeat evil side effects or means." However, she points out from observation that "human history is riddled with horrendous evil"; humans find it easy to cause evil, and their ability to cause evil exceeds their ability to experience them and power to understand them.[193] Hence, she concludes that "free fall theodicies, so far from denying human vulnerability to horrors, make it an aspect of the primordial human condition."[194] Second, Adams's argument against free fall theodicies has to do with responsibility. According to her, the shifting of responsibility for evil from God to humans fails on the grounds that the human inability to experience evil in the same degree as they cause evil means they cannot bear full responsibility for evil and do not control the features of human nature and the environment.[195]

Reflecting on the difficulties mentioned by Adams in the light of White's understanding of the free fall, a few points come to mind. Her model of warfare theodicy rebuts criticisms that Adams raises against theodicies that point to the misuse of free will as the origination of sin and evil. It was evident in my analysis of the Great Controversy Theodicy that White believes that the first humans were liable to being affected by Satan,

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[193]Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evil and the Goodness of God*, 36.

[194]Ibid., 38.

[195]Ibid., 38-39.

but she does not agree that they were entrenched in horrors of evil. Their character was not biased to evil and they had angels as their instructors. In spite of the provision made for them, they obeyed Satan and drew the whole progeny and its environment into decay.[196] It was also noted that, while creation was not restored, the discerning properties of free will, which were lost through disobedience, were restored to every human creature through prevenient grace.[197] However, Adams observes that "we human beings start life ignorant, weak, and helpless, psychologically so lacking in a self-concept as to be incapable of decisions. We learn to "construct a picture of the world, ourselves, and other people only with difficulty over a long period of time and under the extensive influence of other nonideal choosers."[198] White's concept of prevenient grace does not deny that human beings are developmental creatures nor does it affirm that human beings' immature beginnings[199] mean every human being reaches adulthood in a state of impaired free will. Rather, prevenient grace, in White, is analogous to a mother nurturing her newborn until the child can make decisions on his or her own. Thus, prevenient grace awakens human beings to recognize the gap the human beings' disobedience has created between them and God, and their need for God.[200]

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[196]See chapter 4, the section "Creation."

[197]See chapter 4, the section "Nature of Free Will."

[198]Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evil and the Goodness of God*, 37.

[199]Immature beginnings refers to the human state at the start of life as described by Adams.

[200]The idea of nurturing an infant from birth to the stage a child is mature enough to construct the world as a place containing the big powerful authority figure who holds it accountable for obedience and disobedience with rewards and punishment as a model of divine prevenient grace is borrowed from Julian of Norwich's exposition on God's love

According to Terrence W. Tilley, when free will is understood in a libertarian sense, an affirmation of prevenient grace is necessary to dissolve the compatibility issues between contracausal actions and default of free will flowing from the first human parents. However, if prevenient "grace were said to 'strengthen' the will of some, but not others," questions of inconsistency would arise regarding free will and divine sovereignty.[201] Logically, to avoid such difficulties arising from affirming prevenient grace and divine sovereignty, prevenient grace must necessarily extend to all fallen human beings and have the potential to illuminate the mind and be resistible. This is "evangelical synergism" by virtue of Arminius's exposition on soteriology.[202]

White seems to emphasize the universality and human ability to resist prevenient grace. However, some issues are unresolved in White when considering the illuminating aspect of prevenient grace. Her discussion of the many facets of prevenient grace— convicting, calling, enlightening, and enabling—does not include all humans. First, individuals who are born with severe mental retardation, persons who live a long life yet their mental capacity falls below the threshold of consciousness are not subjects of prevenient grace because they are mentally retarded and are without consciousness of sin.

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for sinners (Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Clifton Wolters [London: Penguin Books, 1966]).

[201]Terrence W. Tilley, "Towards a Creativity Defense of Belief in God in the Face of Evil," in *Physics and Cosmology*: *Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Natural Evil*, vol. 1, ed. Nancey Murphy, Robert John Russell, and William R. Stoeger (Vatican City State and Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2007), 201-202.

[202]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 470-472.

However, according to White, they will be saved.[203] Second, White makes it clear that

little children are "not subjects of grace," do not "experience the cleansing power of the

blood of Jesus."[204] Thus, little children do not experience the illuminating power of the

prevenient grace when they die prematurely. Indeed, on these two counts, White's

concept of prevenient grace's ability to unbind the fallen free will, though universal, is

not experienced by all humans who ever lived. In her discussion on the resurrection of

little children, she indicates that unruly children will not be saved.[205] In White's system,

there is no post-mortem world in which these unruly children will have the opportunity to

experience the illuminative power of prevenient grace. Thus, she does not show how

prevenient grace (the first step in salvation) is or is not initiated in the process of

condemning the unruly little children who die before they reach the age of making their

own decision.[206] Thus, if people such as mentally retarded and infants are without

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[203]In a letter to Sister Brown, White writes, "In regard to the case of A, you see
him as he now is and deplore his simplicity. He is without the consciousness of sin. The
grace of God will remove all this hereditary, transmitted imbecility, and he will have an
inheritance among the saints in light. To you the Lord has given reason. A is a child as far
as the capacity of reason is concerned; but he has the submission and obedience of a
child" (E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 8:210).

[204]Ellen G. White, "Duty of Parents to Their Children," *Review and Herald*,
September 19, 1854, 6.

[205]Ibid.; idem, *Selected Message*, 3:314.

[206]The faith of the believing parents covers their little infants who die
prematurely; however, unruly children of believing parents will not be saved. It seems
that little infants whose parents are believers are saved based on how their parents
brought them up. White states: "Parents stand in the place of God to their children and
they will have to render an account, whether they have been faithful to the little few
committed to their trust. Parents, some of you are rearing children to be cut down by the
destroying angel, unless you speedily change your course, and be faithful to them. God
cannot cover iniquity, even in children. He cannot love unruly children who manifest
passion, and he cannot save them in the time of trouble" (E. G. White, "Duty of Parents

consciousness of sin and for that matter are not subjects of prevenient grace, how are the unruly infants condemned to death eternal?

Although her concept of prevenient grace leaves some questions unanswered, the combination of a literal understanding of creation and the fall, libertarian free will, and prevenient grace in White has far-reaching theological implications which set her on a path of proposing a plausible free will theodicy in the context of warfare. First, even though her system grants that fallen humans begin immaturely, before everyone (excluding severely mentally retarded persons) decides the path to take, the individual has the ability to choose either good or evil and the ability to experience evil and to cause evil. Second, the imbalance between human ability to experience evil and cause evil is evidence that humans after the fall are born with evil propensities and they persist in resisting prevenient grace and all other forms of grace made available to humankind.[207] Third, because of human beings' immature beginnings and prevenient grace, responsibility for evil is shared by God, Satan, and all other intelligent creatures who play

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to Their Children," 6). "Whether all the children of unbelieving parents will be saved we cannot tell, because God has not made known His purpose in regard to this matter, and we had better leave it where God has left it and dwell upon subjects made plain in His Word. This is a most delicate subject. Many unbelieving parents manage their children with greater wisdom than many of those who claim to be children of God. They take much pains with their children, to make them kind, courteous, unselfish and to teach them to obey, and in this the unbelieving show greater wisdom than those parents who have the great light of truth but whose works do not in any wise correspond with their faith" (E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:315).

[207]White uses Solomon as an example of what persistent disobedience to God causes when she wrote, "As he cast off his allegiance to God, he lost the mastery of himself. His moral efficiency was gone. His fine sensibilities became blunted, his conscience seared" (E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 57).

a role in the cosmic conflict.[208] In this way, the Great Controversy Theodicy is freed

from the twin-anthropodicy criticisms; there is neither purely negative assessment nor

justification of the human race in the Great Controversy Theodicy.[209]

Another issue that Adams raises against the free will explanation of the problem

of evil has to do with divine punishment. According to her, "retribution is a matter of

proportion," but the "notion of proportionate return demanded by the *lex talionis* . . .

breaks down in ordinary cases where numbers are large." However, in the case of evils

that "we cause but unavoidably lack the capacity to experience," proportionate return

loses its definition from the *kind.* Citing "an eye for an eye," she argues that, even in a

case where retribution is balanced, it does not serve justice. In other words, "to return

horror for horror does not erase but doubles the individual's participation in horrors—

first as victim, then as the one whose injury occasions another's prima facie ruin."

Consequently, Adams observes that retribution for evil does not "vindicate Divine

goodness to perpetrators of horrors in the sense of guaranteeing each perpetrator a life

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[208]White questions parents, "Will you suffer your children to be lost through your neglect? Unfaithful parents, their blood will be upon you, and is not your salvation doubtful with the blood of your children upon you? Children that might have been saved had you filled your place, and done your duty as faithful parents should" (E. G. White, "Duty of Parents to Their Children," 5).

[209]Crenshaw argues that "regardless of the theodicy that we choose, one thing seems certain. Both God and humankind present problems. Theodicy therefore has a twin-anthropodicy. Any attempt to justify human conduct must confront evidence of evil every bit as horrendous as the evil we would see on the part of God. Evidence that men and women are fundamentally flawed is irrefutable. . . . Still, a purely negative assessment of the human community, like a straight verdict of guilt for the deity, must be judged myopic in light of the redeeming goodness of a few" (Crenshaw, *Defending God*, 195).

that is a great good to him/her on the whole and a life in which participation in horrors is defeated within the context of the individual's life." It multiplies evil's victories.[210]

White's views on evils as punishment for sin, proving loyalty, and character development seem to ward off Adams's third point. Her view of divine sovereign activities in human history after the fall, which begins with prevenient grace, continues in the form of the ministry of Christ and the Holy Spirit in whoever chooses God. Her argument describes God as a moral governor and recognizes a gap between humans and God which can be closed through divine sovereign activities and human cooperation. On this interpretation of the gap between God and humans, she notes that God's nurturing process may include pain and suffering that is necessary because of fallen human conditions.[211] Therefore, her system sees evil as punishing and curbing sin, proving loyalty and character development as a restorative process for victims as well as perpetrators of evil. However, the restorative benefits affect the individuals who respond to divine nurturing embraces no matter the immensity of the suffering and pain associated with the process may be.

White's view on divine permission for evil in an individual's life as a restorative process raises two potential problems for her theodicy. First, it seems to put her concept

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[210]Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evil and the Goodness of God*, 40-42.

[211]Adams argues that focusing on moral categories levels "divine-human agency under the rubric 'morally responsible person,' into viewing God and rational creatures as 'near enough' peers not only to be networked by mutual rights and obligations, but also to make urgent the concern that significant causal input from God might threaten creaturely autonomy" (Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evil and the Goodness of God*, 103). On the contrary, White's idea of a moral governor and His sovereign activities and her recognition of the differences between God and fallen human beings make God a

of hell at risk of disintegrating. More will be said about her concept of hell in the next section. For now, it suffices to observe that, in White, the divine reason for punishing sin is different from His purpose for hell.

Second, it seems to enforce the issue of the gratuity of evil.[212] White claims that God has a purpose for our good when He permits evil in our lives, yet there appears to be gratuity of evil in the world.[213] That is to say, the "compatibility of God and the apparent pointlessness of much evil is questionable."[214] Discussing the gratuity of evil, Michael L. Peterson argues that it is not a logical problem. According to him, "What is being argued is a probabilistic conclusion based on an assessment of evidence in light of one's moral values, ontological commitments, and so on." Hence, what is needed is a theodicy that shows "why apparently meaningless evil is not really meaningless and thus that we are intellectually responsible in holding to the existence of a providential God."[215]

In the light of Peterson's understanding of the requirements of the question of the gratuity of evil, White's treatment of gratuitous evil may be more convincing than scholars who, according to Peterson, respond to argument from the apparent gratuity of

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personal being who, based on His nature, draws the fallen human race to Himself by using methods that do not coerce, but enable and empower.

[212]E. H. Madden and P. H. Hare argue that "if God is unlimited in power and goodness, why is there so much *prima facie* gratuitous evil in the world? If he is unlimited in power he should be able to remove unnecessary evil, and if he is unlimited in goodness he should want to remove it; but he does not. Apparently he is limited either in power or goodness, or does not exist at all" (Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God*, 3).

[213]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 126.

[214]Michael L. Peterson, "Christian Theism and the Problem of Evil," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978): 45.

[215]Ibid.

evil by "calling it hopelessly inconclusive or purely emotional since it lacks deductive certainty"[216] on two accounts. First, White clearly says that "every trial is weighed and measured by the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is not beyond man's ability to endure through the grace given unto him. 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'"[217] When these measures are received in faith, it will be a blessing.[218] Obviously, White's position is that evils that God permits seem pointless when humans deny His divine embrace. Second, she writes, "For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he [Satan] must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question."[219]

Given these two reasons the question is: Are proving principles of good and evil worth the quantity, intensity, and gratuitousness of evil we see around us? Evidence in the analysis of the Great Controversy Theodicy is that White claims that evil is sometimes used as part of the process for character development because of human rebellion. But the world is more a dangerous ally than a lesson book. How do catastrophes fit into the claim that God's permission for evil is to ensure progress in character development? Hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, etc., kill, ruin, and destroy

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[216]Ibid., 41-42.

[217]E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 12:81.

[218]E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 10.

[219]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 42.

people more than progress individual character. Are character development, proving loyalty, and curbing sin worth the price? White may respond that, in the context of the great controversy, God may not bring good from all evil occurrences. Should He turn every evil occurrence to good, He will defeat His purpose. On the one hand, the effectiveness of His actions in the great controversy cannot be proven until the end of the conflict when all the issues of evil are revealed before all intelligent beings. On the other hand, His foreknowledge of sin and evil and His ability to eradicate it and all its effects at the end of the conflict are the preconditions of divine permission to allow evil to unfurl itself to its utmost.[220] In other words, for White, only a God who has the power to fight and overcome His enemy and right all wrongs that the conflict may cause will allow the enemy to introduce an open confrontation and develop his principles.

Since White claims a biblical explanation to the problem of evil, it has become necessary to subject her Great Controversy Theodicy to further evaluation on the basis of biblical responses to the problem of evil. James L. Crenshaw investigates the response of authors of the books of the Bible to the problem of evil. Crenshaw discovers that the Bible provides various answers to the problem of evil. He categorizes his discovery into three parts: The first category is named "Spreading the Blame Around." Under this group, Crenshaw discusses approaches that consider life's anomalies as divine testing for the loyalty of His people. But, he also discovers, in one of the testing scenarios, that a rival figure, Satan, emerges to take responsibility for the test.[221] The second

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[220]E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 22.

[221]Crenshaw, *Defending God*, 55-71.

classification, "Redefining God," identifies responses that see evil as the result of the misuse of human free will, divine punishment for failure to obey covenant stipulations, and divine willingness to forgive, and evil as a means of divine pedagogy.[222] The final category, "Shifting to the Human Scene," deals with explanations that do not blame or defend God for the problem of evil. Rather, they emphasize absorbing suffering and faithful living in the midst of unanswered questions pertaining to the problem of evil. The problem of evil is concealed in unfathomable mystery due to divine hiddenness resulting from human disobedience and limitation in grasping the divine nature and governance over His creation.[223] Crenshaw discovers that innocent suffering is seen as benefiting the wicked; however, evil is also seen as temporary with the confidence that heaven awaits the faithful.[224]

Crenshaw's findings from the study of biblical responses to the problem of evil resonate with White's explanation of natural evil.[225] However, Crenshaw and other

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[222]Ibid., 75-131.

[223]Ibid., 135-175.

[224]For similar findings and a more detailed discussion, see Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor, eds., *Theodicy in the World of the Bible* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003).

[225]I discovered that White suggests that her explanation of the problem of evil is based on the Bible and not just the book of Revelation. She points out that her Great Controversy concept sheds light on the origin and final disposition of sin (E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, xii, 492). Her discussion on the time of trouble deals with Satan's activities against God's people and Divine activities against Satan and his cohorts. Her discussion of Rev 16 credits God with judgment on the wicked. Finally, the problem of evil, depending on one's approach, questions God's goodness, power, and knowledge. On the basis of this premise, it is possible to argue that White may not be repeating the exact events in the book of Revelation, but her Great Controversy theory does not differ from the book of Revelation's description of what will transpire on earth before the kingdom of God is established.

scholarly writers on theodicy have proven that none of the various responses in and of themselves are completely adequate. [226] According to Crenshaw, the theodicies under "Spreading the Blame Around," are flawed in their quasi-nature, "the recognition that in the final analysis the biblical deity has ultimate power over the lesser being."[227] Despite the legitimacy of the "Redefining God" explanations, they are inadequate responses in the face of debilitating suffering and evil in excess. These approaches to the problem of evil suggest there is vulnerability in the deity. Consequently, there is the risk that "the possibility that the reason for religious allegiance has at the same time been jettisoned."[228] Even the responses under the "Shifting to the Human Scene" cannot be "deemed entirely satisfactory—first, because it necessitated an anthropodicy and, second, because it could offer only partial explanations for moral evil."[229]

White's Great Controversy Theodicy seems to have circumvented these limitations. Her description of the different ways in which God interacts with His creation is evidence that God responds to every particular evil occurrence differently. Furthermore, one thing to be noted about the Great Controversy Theodicy is that it does not focus on one of the above-mentioned approaches as a general explanation to every evil occurrence, which seems to be the cause of the limitations raised against each approach. Hence, her theodicy does not face the difficulty of inadequacy of any of the

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[226]See Dewi Z. Philips, *The Problem of Evil and The Problem of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 22-109; Crenshaw, *Defending God*, 194-195; Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 242-292.

[227]Crenshaw, *Defending God*, 194.

[228]Ibid.

[229]Ibid.

approaches described above. The structural effect of this is a coherent explanation of the problem of evil, which may partly depend on how she correlates the theological elements, divine foreknowledge, free will, and divine sovereignty, underlying her Great Controversy Theodicy. While some questions are unresolved, evidence remains that the Great Controversy Theodicy wards off philosophical and theological inconsistencies that come as baggage with the traditional understanding of the divine nature and the problem of evil and contemporary accentuation of the agents' free will and the problem of evil.

The first two sections of the evaluation of the Great Controversy Theodicy considered White's concepts of the origin of sin and evil and natural evil. The following section evaluates her theory of the eradication of sin and evil.

Eradication of Sin and Evil

Thus far, the evaluation of the Great Controversy Theodicy has focused on the origin of sin and evil and particular evil occurrences. The purpose of this section is to evaluate the consistency and coherency of White's concept of the eradication of sin and evil with other aspects of her Great Controversy Theodicy.

An area that requires the attention of Christian philosophers and theologians, according to Adams, is evil and the problem of hell. Adams points out that the atheist criticism of theism has refined the discussion of evil on their terms, and Christian philosophers' and theologians' response to such criticism within the confines of "secular value parsimony" has led to the neglect of discussing theism's dark side—hell. According to Adams, to defend the logical compatibility of the coexistence of God and evil while "holding a closeted belief that some created persons will be consigned to hell

forever is at best incongruous and at worst disingenuous."[230] She observes that

annihilation and conditional immortality, coupled with free will, has an advantage over

the classical concept of hell.[231] However, she points out that annihilation with a strong

concept of agents' freedom implies that God can neither "achieve the optimal overall

good without sacrificing the welfare of some individual persons" nor "redeem all

personal evil: some of the wicked He can only quarantine or destroy."[232]

The foregoing criticism raised by Adams applies to White's understanding of

divine eradication of sin and evil. However, whether we point to the compatibility of the

coexistence of God and hell or God's inability to obtain overall good without destroying

sinners, White's concept of divine extermination of sin and evil is coherent with other

aspects of the Great Controversy Theodicy. In *The Many Faces of Evil*, John S. Feinberg

observes that

> if one couples the free will defense with annihilation and/or conditional
> immortality, one can argue that the punishment of annihilation is just, because a
> person freely chooses this destiny herself. She freely decides that she doesn't want
> reconciliation to God and eternal fellowship with him. If the sinner is clear about the
> results of her decision on this matter and then, using libertarian free will, chooses to

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[230]Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for
Christians," in *God and the Problem of Evil*, ed. William L. Rowe (Malden, MA:
Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 282-283. An omnipotent and omnibenevolent God, and
pragmatically a God who condemns some of His creatures to hell, could not be an
appropriate object of standard Christian worship (ibid., 283). For critics' arguments on
this issue, the problem of evil, and the problem of hell, see Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*,
396-444.

[231]In her opinion, the concept of annihilation avoids "the claim that God has
subjected created persons to cruel and/or unusual punishment by extending their life span
into an eternity of horrendous suffering" (ibid., 303).

[232]Ibid., 304.

reject God, then a case can be made that this is a just punishment and hence God is exonerated; the problem is indeed solved.[233]

White's conception of free will and divine activities in history creates consistency in her reflection on the divine eradication of evil. For example, she emphasizes that God has created a moral world and He interacts with it on moral grounds. Therefore, free human agents have the opportunity to identify themselves with God and escape the eternal consequences of sin and evil. The failure to identify with God, in spite of His longsuffering and love towards the human race, leads to condemnation of self. Thus, for White, annihilation does not appear to be evidence against the existence of God or question the appropriateness of worshipping God. It is rather evidence of a Being who requires service and relationship on a voluntary basis.[234]

Although White's affirmation of annihilation is logically consistent with her system of thought, yet it poses some questions. According to Feinberg, the concept of annihilation of the wicked does not do justice to some biblical passages. He explains that Luke 16:19-31 portrays the wicked dead as consciously suffering. If annihilation is accepted, in the light of judgment in Rev 20:11-15 what happens to the material parts of the dead and how will God bring those parts back to life for judgment? In other words, although the concept of the annihilation of the wicked rebuts the logical problem of hell, that in itself is not a good reason to affirm it.[235]

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[233]Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 425-426.

[234]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33.

[235]Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 425-426. See Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 336, for a similar argument raised by Boyd against the concept of annihilation.

White maintains the coherency of annihilation with the biblical passages on death by arguing that the idea of eternal conscious suffering of the wicked is unbiblical. She asserts that "upon the fundamental error of natural immortality rests the doctrine of consciousness in death—a doctrine, like eternal torment, opposed to the teachings of the scriptures, to the dictates of reason and to our feeling of humanity."[236] She contends that the Bible describes the dead as unconscious; as such, affirmation of conscious suffering of the wicked after physical death is a denial of the biblical teaching of resurrection and judgment.[237] Obviously, White's position on the issue implies that her interpretation of Luke 16:19-31 is contrary to Feinberg's understanding.[238] She clearly states that Christ used the parable to convey that "it is impossible for men to secure the salvation of the soul after death"[239] rather than to teach eternal conscious suffering of the wicked in hell.

With regard to the question of what happens to the material parts of the dead and how God will bring those parts to life, White's manner of conceptualizing human beings

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[236]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 545.

[237]She uses the following biblical passages as the basis of her argument against conscious suffering of the wicked at death: Eccl 9:5, 6, 10; Isa 38:18, 19; Pss 6:5; 115:17; Acts 2:29, 34; 1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4:13-18; John 14:2, 3; Acts 17:31; Jude 6, 14, 15; Rev 20:12; Matt 25:21,41. ibid., 546-550.

[238]"In this parable Christ was meeting the people on their own ground. The doctrine of a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection was held by many of those who were listening to Christ's words. The Saviour knew of their ideas, and He framed His parable so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions. He held up before His hearers a mirror wherein they might see themselves in their true relation to God. He used the prevailing opinion to convey the idea He wished to make prominent to all--that no man is valued for his possessions; for all he has belongs to him only as lent by the Lord. A misuse of these gifts will place him below the poorest and most afflicted man who loves God and trusts in Him" (E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 263).

[239]Ibid.

as animated bodies[240] implies that she affirms the biblical teaching that the body returns

to the dust and the spirit returns to the Giver at death.[241] Her description of the

resurrection depicts that the wicked dead will be resurrected with the same character and

mortal body.[242] But, for White, the human mind cannot research into what has not been

revealed;[243] therefore, how God will bring the corruptible materials back to life for

judgment is beyond human reasoning. The practical effect of the foregoing discussion on

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[240]"The Lord created man out of the dust of the earth. He made Adam a partaker of His life, His nature. There was breathed into him the breath of the Almighty, and he became a living soul" (E. G. White, "Training for Heaven," *Manuscript Release*, 10:326). "In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, breathing, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were put in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the perceptions of the mind--all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Jesus Christ a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power" (E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:264).

[241]Ellen G. White, "Lessons from the Life of Solomon—No. 21, 'Godly Sorrow Worketh Repentance,'" *Review and Herald*, February 8, 1906.

[242]"In the resurrection every man will have his own character. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the same individuality of features, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him. . . . The natural substance in the grain that decays is never raised as before, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him. A much finer material will compose the human body, for it is a new creation, a new birth. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (E. G. White, "1 Corinthians," *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953-57], 6:1093). While the righteous receive incorruptible bodies because they will live for eternity, it seems right to conceive that, in White, the wicked who are resurrected to receive judgment, eternal death, will come out from the grave with the same personality and corruptible body they had before death.

[243]E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:279.

White's concept of annihilation is that it is internally consistent and coherent with biblical passages on death and resurrection. However, her concept of the second death raises another concern. White claims that, at the third advent of Christ after the millennium,[244] all the wicked dead since the beginning of human history, including those put to death at the second advent of Christ, will be resurrected only to be destroyed by fire. The concern here is not about the kind of reward the wicked receive, but rather the idea of God raising the wicked from death just to annihilate them by fire afterward is a moral dilemma. Is the first death not enough to eradicate sin and evil and sinners? This is why Feinberg poses the question: Have proponents proven annihilation by fire to be a just punishment by God?[245] The idea of controversy between good and evil, in White, is evidence that the works of God cannot be proven just or unjust until the end of the controversy, when all the issues of the conflict are revealed before every creature, then shall the justice of God stand fully vindicated.

Richard Rice also raises other issues about White's concept of how the controversy between good and evil will end. According to Rice, the central issue of the great controversy, "whether the creatures perceive that God deserves to reign," rebuts the "force of dualistic objection," but it "raises some questions of its own." [246] He observes that the central issue puts God on trial, and the idea presupposes that God is evaluated by some independent standard. In his opinion, to judge God against some independent

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[244]See chapter 4, the section "Eradication of Sin and Evil."

[245]Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 426.

[246]Richard Rice, "The Great Controversy and the Problem of Evil," 53.

standard of goodness is questionable because of God's ontological status. "We cannot determine if God is trustworthy unless we assume that God is trustworthy." According to him, "even if we grant the possibility of impartially investigating God's trustworthiness, we have to wonder just why it takes the onlooking universe so long to see that."[247]

The foregoing issues raised the question of the coherency and plausibility of the Great Controversy Theodicy. It appears White's description of God on trial demonstrates consistency and coherency within the Great Controversy Theodicy. First, her depiction of God on trial is based on eschatological prophecies in the Bible, specifically the book of Revelation. Thus, the idea of God on trial is not off course, but on course with Scripture.

Second, White's portrayal of God on trial does not presuppose some independent standard by which God is judged. Her conception of divine permission for Satan to make his principle known to the universe puts the warfare between good and evil in a context of an accusatory trial,[248] a trial in which both God and Satan have the chance to present the strengths of their own principles, as well as the weakness of the opposition. Thus, the evidences gathered are not examined in light of an independent standard, but in light of the standard on which the controversy developed. As rightly pointed out by Rice, the

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[247]Ibid. "The fact that God is the creator, however, means that God is involved in every aspect of reality. There is evidence to examine only because divine power sustains it. Our minds work the way they do because God has designed them that way. As a result, every claim to know something implicitly expresses confidence in God. It rests on the presupposition that God is trustworthy. Yet this is precisely what is at stake in the great controversy" (ibid.).

[248]Adversarial trial "is used to adjudicate guilt or innocence. The assumption is that the truth is more likely to emerge from the open contest arguments with a judge as a neutral referee and as the arbiter of the law" (Allard Ringnalda, "Inquisitorial or Adversarial? The Role of the Scottish Prosecutor and Special Defences," *Utrecht Law Review* 6 [2010]: 123).

fundamental issue of White's model of the warfare theodicy is "God's character."[249] She further explains that "the character of God is expressed in His law."[250] Hence, the law of God is the standard by which God will be judged. Are the evidences provided in accordance with what God claims to be? Are the evidences supportive of Satan's accusations against God? Did God provide all the necessary elements needed for His creatures to live in accordance to His governance? This is why White writes,

> Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan's own works have condemned him. God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created.[251]

Third, the Great Controversy Theodicy assures that the results of the trial will not only be consensual but also free from bias because actions of moral agents are not caused by anything extrinsic to the self. White's model of free will and the origin of sin rebut the concern over the objectivity of creatures' assessment. The overall perception of the problem of evil as a conflict between God and Satan presupposes that, though God is the Creator and Sustainer of His creation, God does not control His intelligent creatures and not every one of them sees Him as trustworthy. Otherwise, the problem of evil does not exist. In addition, her conceptualization shows that the ontological status of God and Satan influences the decision-making process; however, they do not cause the decision

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[249]Richard Rice, "The Great Controversy and the Problem of Evil," 51.

[250]E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 391.

[251]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 670-671.

itself. Since nothing external to oneself is a determining factor of a decision, it is possible that decisions that individuals reach by the end of the controversy between good and evil will be objective. Thus, the result that will be reached in assessing the character of God and Satan will be an objective one.

Fourth, in the abstract to his article "Adversarial and Inquisitorial Trial Models of Civil Procedure," John A. Jolowicz points out that, in an accusatory trial, "the freedom accorded to the parties to conduct their litigation as they choose can lead to high cost, to delay, and to other troubles."[252] Much more high costs, delays, and other troubles ensue in controversies such as depicted by White between good and evil, a controversy in which God decides to work in love and Satan decides to work in disguise.

The second issue that Rice raises concerns White's concept of a morally secure universe at the end of the controversy between God and Satan. He points out that White's description of the end of the conflict between good and evil shifts the "premises of rebellion from perversity to ignorance."[253] He argues, "if sin is a matter of ignorance, we have a basis for confidence in the ultimate security of the universe, but we cannot explain Lucifer's heavenly revolt. On the other hand, if sin is essentially an act of perversity, then we can identify Lucifer's rebellion, but we have no guarantee that some other being will not make an irrational . . . decision to rebel against God in the future."[254]

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[252]John Jolowicz, Abstract of "Adversarial and Inquistorial Model of Civil Procedure," Cambridge Journals, http://www.journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract (accessed November 3, 2010).

[253]Richard Rice, "The Great Controversy and Problem of Evil," 53.

[254]Ibid.

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The idea of origin of sin and evil in White's discussion of the problem of evil

seems to dissipate the concerns of Rice. In her description of Satan's rebellion, it is

unambiguous that the angels took sides upon the inception of Satan's rebellion. Taking

sides, though Lucifer's principles were not fully developed, suggests that the angels who

joined Satan in his rebellion knew they were being perverse. The actions of the angels

loyal to God indicate that to some degree they knew the consequences of opposing God's

Law.[255] Again her discussion of the interactions between Lucifer through a medium, the

serpent, and Eve and between God and Adam and Eve implies that the first parents knew

Satan's principles are perverse to God's commands placed before them. Hence,

intelligent beings are not oblivious to sin and evil. In these two instances, Lucifer's

rebellion in heaven and his deception of the first parents, White points out that Satan uses

"sophistry and fraud to secure his objects."[256] Furthermore, she argues that Satan

continuously masquerades himself, mingles truth with falsehood, insinuate doubts

concerning the law of God to develop his principles. Thus, while Satan knows what he is

doing and what he hopes to achieve, his followers and all other intelligent beings who are

loyal to God lack the knowledge of the "true nature and tendency" of Satan's

principles.[257] Therefore, White's claim, that all evidence that accumulates will support

God's love and expose the absurdity of sin,[258] does not change the definition of sin from

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[255]E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39-41.

[256]Ibid., 37, 40, 41, and 53.

[257]Ibid., 41.White, on the basis of Gen 2:17 and 3, understands that the disobedience of our first parents is coming to know evil (E. G. White, *Education*, 23-27).

[258]"The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to

perversity to ignorance. It is rather a natural response that comes after Satan's disguise is unveiled and his lies made open to all intelligent beings.

Thus, the Great Controversy Theodicy explains sin as an act of perversity, but also emphasizes a morally secure universe at the end of the conflict between God and Satan. First, White tells us that intelligent creatures will always possess free will because God prefers voluntarily service. Her concept of free will assumes that the possibility to obey God correlates with the possibility to disobey God. Second, we need to recall that the analysis of the Great Controversy Theodicy claims that, by the end of Christ's ministry in heaven, the character of all the followers of Christ will have been sanctified. Therefore, they face Satan's final afflictions without Christ's intercessory ministry. The point being made here is that, in the new earth, all intelligent creatures will be endowed with free will, which means that, though sin has been eradicated there will be the possibility of disobeying God. However, the character of all the intelligent creatures will have been developed and their corruptible bodies will have been changed to incorruptible in a way that they will always choose to voluntarily serve God and fellow creatures in love. Hence, on philosophical grounds, the great controversy provides us with results that seem to ensure the moral security of the future universe. But the certainty of the moral security of the future universe cannot be proven on philosophical grounds, since philosophy is limited in ascertaining future events.

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angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. Never will evil again be manifest" (E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 504).

The Great Controversy Theodicy wards off the issues concerning God on trial and the moral security of the future universe raised by Rice. But the question of the plausibility of the Great Controversy Theodicy must await chapter 6.

While White's writing style does not reflect theological jargon, it demonstrates the simplicity of her ideas and neither constitutes an inconsistency in her presentation nor distribution of her thought; and in this sense it can be seen as strength in the propagation of her ideas. With regard to theodicy, she has shown that one's understanding of the problem of evil significantly shapes and influences one's theology.

This chapter began with a comparison and contrast between the trinitarian warfare and great controversy models of warfare theodicy. Then it evaluated each model. The next chapter gives the summary of the findings and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the feasibility of warfare

theodicy as set forth in the writings of Gregory A. Boyd and Ellen G. White, the most

extensive presentations of the warfare model in the twenty-first and nineteenth centuries

respectively. Another goal of this research has been to identify how the two models of

warfare theodicy relate to each other. Chapter 1 introduced the problem of the Christian

approach to the problem of evil. It also described the historical background to the

problem, its beginnings, features, and progress. It is in this context that Gregory A. Boyd

and Ellen G. White present their models of warfare theodicy as Christian responses to the

problem of evil.

In pursuit of the closely related goals, chapter 2 described three main Christian

explanations of the problem of evil from the perspectives of Augustine, John Hick, and

Process theology. The chapter also surveyed criticism of these theodicies; they were

found to be inadequate responses to the problem of evil.

In chapters 3 and 4, I analyzed Boyd's and White's models of warfare theodicy.

These sections have shown that the Trinitarian Warfare and the Great Controversy

models of warfare theodicy (1) make the right understanding of free will, divine

foreknowledge, and divine sovereignty necessary for establishing an acceptable Christian

explanation to the problem of evil; (2) show that sin and evil originated before human history; (3) do not separate natural and moral evils; (4) identify Christ as the absolute solution to particular evil occurrences, as well as evil in general; and (5) indicate that sin and evil will be vanquished at the end of the warfare between good and evil.

In chapter 5, the warfare theodicy was evaluated. First, the two models that were analyzed in chapters 3 and 4 were compared. It was discovered that the models share some common theological elements, but also have sharp and substantial differences. Second, due to the striking divergence between the Trinitarian Warfare and the Great Controversy Theodicies, the reason for the difference was established and the two models of the warfare theodicy were subjected to further evaluation in terms of internal coherency and consistency.

In this final chapter, a brief summary of key findings has been given. As I bing this research to a close, it is essential again to ask the questions that were posed at the beginning of this study: Are the trinitarian warfare and the great controversy models of warfare theodicy contradictory or complementary to each other? How does the warfare approach deal with the tensions associated with Augustine's, Hick's, and Process theodicies? Is warfare theodicy a feasible Christian response to the problem of sin and evil?

Conclusion

In different ways, the trinitarian and the great controversy models of warfare theodicy make great contributions to the plethora of materials on the problem of evil, specifically free will theodicies. However, the study concludes that the authors' differing outlooks on the use of science in theology has led to the substantial differences in their

models of warfare theodicy. Their models may be related due to the similarities resulting from the fact that they address the same issues and the influence that White's work might have had on Boyd. But, given the degree of the differences that exist between them, they are two distinctive models of warfare theodicy.

Concerning the question of the feasibility of the warfare theodicy, the Trinitarian Warfare and the Great Controversy Theodicies have made a useful contribution towards a satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil. Boyd's Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is a notable attempt to bring the warfare concept to bear in a contemporary scientific worldview. The Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy resolves the trilemma or logical problem of evil (omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God and the existence of evil) at the expense of divine foreknowledge and power. Although the warfare concept has long existed among Christians, few have gone to the extent of making it the framework of their theology. White has done this by thoroughly integrating the warfare concept into the problem of evil and the doctrine of God thereby drawing attention to the warfare concept which otherwise is overlooked in the history of Christian thought.

Extremely important is that the two models of warfare theodicy are attempts to help people who tumble into fatalism and mistake it for an active faith escape from such confusion. The attitude of accepting all evil occurrences as God's plan through which He accomplishes His eternal purpose for His creation is discouraged, and participation in the ongoing war against the devil and his emissaries and all forms of evil is encouraged. They create an awareness of the supernatural realm and make suffering and evil become more coherent when viewed against the backdrop of an ongoing battle between God and

Satan. They recognize the full implication of the reality of sin and evil, which will ultimately be overcome in the eschatological long run by God.

The contributions of the two models of warfare theodicy are clearly invaluable. But two points are especially helpful in drawing an objective conclusion about the feasibility of a Christian response to the problem of evil.

First, the evaluation of Augustine's, Hick's, and Process theodicies in chapter 2 is helpful. Critical analysis of these theodicies shows that the presuppositions employed by each of these theodicies to develop a Christian response to the problem of evil are either founded on scientific discoveries or philosophical principles, or traditional beliefs. It was also evident that each of these theodicies encounters internal difficulties, which make the theodicies inadequate Christian responses to the problem of evil. As demonstrated in chapter 2, each of the three theodicies makes evil an inevitable consequence of free will or the necessary means to greater good, does not provide a workable plan that gives assurance of victory of good over evil, and cannot reconcile an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God and the existence of sin and evil without making God the cause of evil. Hence, it was concluded that an adequate Christian response to the problem of evil must have three characteristics: (1) it must not explain away evil; (2) it must provide an eschatology that gives assurance of a complete victory over sin and evil, and (3) it must respond to the problem of evil without making God the cause of evil.

Second, Feinberg points out that a theological system may not solve all the problems of evil, but it must be internally coherent and espouse plausible views. Rice

also emphasizes that "[a] philosophical position must be coherent as well as plausible."[1] In other words, while an acceptable Christian response may not deal with all the issues pertaining to the co-existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenelovent God and sin and evil, it must, of necessity, be internally coherent and consistent and plausible.

From these perspectives, the study concludes that the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy, in its current state, is a less satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil, whereas the Great Controversy Theodicy is a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil. This conclusion to the study is based on four main reasons.

The first reason for such a conclusion on the viability of the two models of warfare theodicy has to do with how well the two models avoid the difficulties that the Augustine, Hick, and Process theodicies encountered. Like these three types of theodicy, the Trinitarian Warfare and the Great Controversy Theodicies do not solve all the issues involved with the theological/philosophical problem of evil. In fact, Boyd emphasizes that the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is not without difficulties, but it is a more plausible answer to the question: "How are we to conceive of an all-powerful God creating beings who to some degree possess the power to thwart his will, and thus against whom he must genuinely battle if he is to accomplish his will?"[2] While White alleges that the Great Controversy Theodicy is a biblical explanation of the problem of evil, she does not claim that it answers all questions that arise in the face of evil. In her view, Satan works in disguise; evidently, the issues of the conflict between God and Satan are shrouded in

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[1]Richard Rice, "The Great Controversy and the Problem of Evil," 52.

[2]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 16.

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mystery. Hence, some of the issues of the problem of evil are not understood by intelligent beings. However, according to White, all issues that seem to disorient the minds of intelligent creatures will be unveiled when the books are opened and "the working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan's own works have condemned him. God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated."[3] But concerning the three characteristics of an adequate Christian response to the problem of evil, the study has identified three points about the two models of warfare theodicy that contribute to the conclusion: The Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is a less satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil and the Great Controversy Theodicy is a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil.

1. The Trinitarian Warfare model of warfare theodicy explains away some evils. Boyd's assertion that some ungodly characteristics of nature are a metaphysical consequence of God's decision effectively makes some evils necessary for and inherent in a divine teleological purpose—a world in which creatures respond to His love.[4] Though these inherently ungodly characteristics are experienced as evil, they are considered genuine evil only when Satan uses them against the human race; the inherent ungodly characteristics become genuine evil when they are horrific and catastrophic.

White allows that God directs some evils for the purpose of helping humans reach their divinely intended ideal. However, evil would not have been used in achieving this

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[3]E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 670.

[4]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 306.

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goal had it not been chosen by the human race.[5] Thus, inasmuch as an experience or an event is ungodly, it is not necessary.

2. As a response to the problem of evil, Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy fails to provide hope for the complete destruction of evil. The Christian concept of salvation is God's deliverance of His creation from sin and evil (moral, natural and social evils, physical illness, and the spiritual consequences of sinful behavior) including a restoration to His intended purpose (a world without sin, death, and without all kinds of pain and suffering).[6] But in the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy, this Christian understanding of salvation dissolves. Boyd maintains that in the restored creation, ungodly characteristics in nature are necessary for free will to be genuine.[7] In other words, he redefines salvation as God's deliverance of His creation from sin and evil (moral, natural, and social evils) and a restoration to his intended purpose (a world without sin, evil, and death but with ungodly characteristics in nature). In addition, he argues that the wicked soul endures eternally with a limited free will, without a neutral medium of relationality and nothingness as the content of their choices, in a different reality separated from the reality of the righteous.[8] Hence, Boyd's theory of how God will exterminate sin and evil does

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[5]See chapter 4, the section "Natural Evil."

[6]Ivan T. Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 271-313; William T. Arnold, "Salvation," *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 701-703; Gary W. Light, "Salvation," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1153-1155.

[7]See chapter 3, the section "Eradication of Sin and Evil."

[8]Ibid.

not provide assurance of a complete victory over sin and evil. It is not certain that the inherently ungodly characteristics in the restored creation or the barricaded wicked wills will remain benign or confined.[9]

Although, in White, the certainty of the moral security of a future world without sin and evil cannot be proven on philosophical grounds, the eradication of sin and evil by annihilation shows a greater likelihood of victory over evil. Putting aside the questions about the divine method of destroying sin and evil, it seems that we can be confident in the promises of God, who, without theological predetermination, foreknows actual free will choices of creatures and has plans to meet the consequences of all the choices that moral beings have made and will make.[10] Thus, for White, evil became part of the process of developing character because of the human race's initial misuse of free will. Once the battle is over, evil is exterminated.

3. The Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is unable to reconcile evil and the existence of God without making Him the originator of ungodly characteristics in nature.[11] God purposefully put the ungodly characteristics in nature in order for intelligent beings to be morally responsible.

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[9]Boyd argues that a self-determined will eventually change to a determined will, but he insists that one of the qualities of the reality of free will is a neutral medium of relationality. For Boyd, the metaphysical requirement of a neutral medium is that ungodly qualities remain inherent in creation. See Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 425.

[10]Chapter 4, the section "Contents of Divine Foreknowledge."

[11]Chapter 5, the section "Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy."

While White's concept of free will underlying the Great Controversy Theodicy assumes the possibility of disobeying God's law of love, God did not bring forth a creation characterized by ungodly features.

Thus, the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy, as it stands now, encounters the same difficulties that the three main Christian responses to the problem of evil encountered. On the other hand, the Great Controversy Theodicy wards off these difficulties, maintaining internal coherency and consistency in its explanation of the problem of evil.

The second reason for the conclusion reached—Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is a less satisfactory Christian response to the problem evil and the Great Controversy Theodicy is a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil—is an issue of methodology. As a Christian response to the problem of evil, Boyd's Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy fails to maintain the normative status of Scripture in his arguments. Boyd asserts that the elements of Wesley's methodological quadrangle must be held in tension, ensuring that no one element is elevated above the others; however, the Scripture is the final arbiter of theological truth.[12] Thus the subsequent analysis of Boyd's theodicy revealed that, among other things, his agenda for formulating a Christian explanation of the problem of evil is to make the biblical motif of warfare reconcile with contemporary scientific discoveries. In his effort to harmonize Scripture with radiometric dating of the earth, fossilized sequence, and prehumanoid animal suffering, Boyd reconstructs the account of creation in a way that it tells a story wherein the present earth is created after a battle of God with chaos, the formidable enemy. While he argues that stories about

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[12]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 22.

Tiamat, Leviathan, or Yamm could be seen as erroneous, he insists that they express a

profound truth. Therefore, they could be appropriated into the inspired canon if it is

made clear that Yahweh defeated these enemies and restored order to the cosmos. Thus

the ancient Near Eastern traditions of the creation account are the standard of his

reconstruction.[13] Such a move, however, would undermine the normative role of

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[13]In Boyd's opinion, in "the Genesis account, the 'waters have been not only neutralized, but demythologized and even depersonalized. Perhaps as a means of emphasizing God's complete sovereignty in creation . . . and perhaps in order to express unambiguously the altogether novel conviction that the physical world is in and of itself 'good,' the author presents the many 'gods' of this Near Eastern neighbor as strictly natural phenomena."

"Hence the 'deep' that in *Enuma Elish* was represented as the evil Tiamat is here simply water. Far from battling it, Yahweh's 'Spirit' . . . simply 'sweeps' or 'hovers' over it. . . . So too, the stars, moon and sun, which Babylonian and Canaanite literature viewed as enslaved rebel gods, are here simply things that Yahweh has created. . . . The expanse, the earth and human beings, far from being carved out of the bodies of defeated gods, are simply spoken into existence by God with the rest of creation. . . . In creating the world, according to this author, Yahweh has no competitors."

"Not all Old Testament passages demythologize water in this fashion, however. Some texts follow the pagan Near Eastern traditions more closely and express the conviction that while the creation itself is good, something in the foundational structure of the cosmos exhibits hostility toward Yahweh. While God created the world under a 'cosmic covenant' of peace . . . this primordial covenant has been broken, and the creation itself has fallen into a state of war. . . . To express this breach of covenant and its ensuing war in the context of ancient Near Eastern culture meant talking about personified hostile waters."

"From this perspective, the mythological Mesopotamian and Canaanite stories about Tiamat, Leviathan or Yamm could be seen as erroneous, but not altogether erroneous. Insofar as they express the conviction that something about the cosmic environment of the earth . . . was, and still is, hostile toward Yahweh and toward humanity, the biblical authors could understand these stories to express a profound truth. Insofar as they expressed this truth, this dissolution of the cosmic covenant, they could be appropriated into the inspired canon, so long as it was made clear that Yahweh, not the divine heroes of the surrounding cultures, defeated these foes and restored order to the cosmos" (Boyd, *God at War*, 84-85).

Discussing the idea that biblical authors' used concepts and symbols of their day to express their thought, Noel Weeks states (in relation to Gen 1-11): "When it is said that God employed symbols common in that day is it meant that both the symbol and what is symbolized were already known or that only the symbol was known with a

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Scripture. Boyd transposes the meaning and/or the context of later passages (Isa 34:11,

45:18; Jer 4:23) unto Gen 1:2;[14] he then identifies a similar background of ancient Near

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completely different connotation? The distinction is an important one. For this argument to be convincing the former must be the case. Otherwise one is saying that God gave the symbol a completely new meaning. And if he did that we are no longer dealing with symbols common at the time, but with new symbols. Then the necessity of interpreting them against the Near Eastern cultural background is removed. Whether there is any ultimate relationship" [*sic*] between biblical and Babylonian accounts as we now have them they belong to different ideological worlds. The symbols are not the same because the ideology is different. The goddess Tiamat defeated in a war by the god Marduk, if she may be called a 'symbol'; must be seen as symbol within the context of Babylonian polytheism whereas the creation of heaven and earth belongs within the context of biblical thought. It is meaningless to say that God used the same symbol but changed its meaning. It is then no longer the same symbol" (Noel Weeks, "The Hermeneutical Problem of Genesis 1-11," *Themelios* 4 [1978]: 14-15).

Gerhard F. Hasel also discusses the similarities and differences of some terms and motifs (*tĕhôm*, separation of heaven and earth, creation by word, creation and function of the luminaries, the purpose of man's creation, and the order of creation) in Gen 1 over against similar or related terms and motifs in ancient Near Eastern cosmologies for the purpose of discovering the relationship between them. He concludes his discussion by stating that the "examination of crucial terms and motifs in the cosmology of Gn1 in comparison with ancient Near Eastern analogues indicates a sharply antimythical polemic. With a great many safeguards he employs certain terms and motifs, partly taken from his ideologically incompatible predecessors and partly chosen in contrast to comparable concepts in ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, and fills them in his own usage with new meaning consonant with his aim and world-view. Genesis cosmology as presented in Gen 1:1-2:4a appears thus basically different from the mythological cosmologies of the ancient Near East. It represents not only a 'complete break' with the ancient Near Eastern mythological cosmologies but represents a parting of the spiritual ways which meant an undermining of the prevailing mythological cosmologies. This was brought about by the conscious and deliberate antimythical polemic that runs as a red thread through the entire Gn cosmology. The antimythical polemic has its roots in the Hebrew understanding of reality which is fundamentally opposed to the mythological one" (Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 [1972]: 20).

[14]According to Noel Weeks, "If we take the theory of evolution as established and modify our interpretation of Genesis accordingly, then we introduce a problem for the doctrine of Scripture. It is nonsense to speak of the unique and total authority of Scripture at the same time as we change our interpretation of Scripture to accord with theories drawn from outside Scripture. Hence evangelicals have tended to seek for principles within Scripture itself which will allow them to interpret Genesis in a way that is compatible with evolution" (Weeks, "The Hermeneutical Problem of Genesis 1-11," 13).

Eastern accounts of creation in the Genesis account of creation which leads to his affirmation of the restoration theory of creation. Thus, Scripture is interpreted in the light of contemporary science.[15] However, this approach of harmonizing Scripture and science makes the Mesopotamian accounts original accounts of creation and compromises the uniqueness of the biblical account of creation.[16] As already pointed out, Boyd also makes quantum physics take a constitutive role in determining Christian doctrine, such as divine foreknowledge.[17] Thus, the proposal to make Scripture the final arbiter of theological truth is oversimplified. Some scholars, like Boyd, value the support science can lend to theology, yet they are concerned about making science take a constitutive role in determining Christian doctrines.[18] This is why Gregory R. Peterson

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[15]"Whatever truth is to be found in physics, cosmology, psychology, sociology, biology, anthropology, and so on is God's truth and can only help us credibly proclaim the truth of God's Word to the world. . . . In this light, it is important to recognize that this century has witnessed a revolution in all of these fields of learning in terms of how we see the world. We have been shifting from a static to a thoroughly dynamic understanding of reality. . . . There is no reason for theology to resist the paradigmatic shift occurring in our culture. On the contrary, there are actually good grounds for embracing and celebrating much of it" (Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 107-109).

[16]Weeks writes, "As in the case of evolutionary theory there is a problem created by the fact that much work in the ancient Near Eastern field specifically excludes God's activity. Hence the ideology and concepts of Israel must be considered as derived from its neighbours. As long as this view is prevalent the uniqueness of biblical thought is depreciated and denied" (Weeks, "The Hermeneutical Problem of Genesis 1-11," 15).

[17]See chapter 3, the section "Conditional Prophecy," and chapter 5, the section "Reason for the Difference."

[18]John Polkinghorne, "Physical Process, Quantum Events, and Divine Agency," in *Quantum Mechanics*: *Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, ed. Robert John Russell, Philip Clayton, Kirk Wegter-McNelly, and John Polkinghorne (Vatican City State and Berkeley, CA: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2001), 181-190; Philip Clayton, "Tracing the Lines: Constraint and Freedom in the Movement from Quantum Physics to Theology," in *Quantum Mechanics*: *Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 212-234; Robert John Russell, "Divine Action

argues that "science is not metaphysics, and to reify any particular scientific theory is to deny the empirical character of science itself";[19] particularly, the use of physics in establishing a specific view of divine providence and human freedom due to unresolved problems in the field.[20] Relying on William Pollard, the one who first initiated how quantum mechanics might relate to the issue of divine action, Polkinghorne asserts that "we must await further scientific advance before more adequate metaphysical conjecture can be made."[21]

From a scientific point of view, one would have assumed that Boyd would restrain himself from establishing his theological concepts on the basis of contemporary scientific discoveries. The fact, however, that a close examination of his Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy has shown that his affirmation of the biblical concept of free will objects to biblical assertion of divine foreknowledge of future free will choices led to the conclusion that other presuppositions must be at work in his thinking that determine the

and Quantum Mechanics: A Fresh Assessment," in *Quantum Mechanics*: *Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 293-328; Thomas F. Tracy, "Creation, Providence, and Quantum Chance," in *Quantum Mechanics*: *Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 235-258. Jeffrey Koperski shows concern for science playing a consitive role in establishing Christian doctrine when he writes, "Chaos coupled to quantum mechanics proves to be a shaky foundation for models of divine agency" (Jeffrey Koperski, "God, Chaos, and the Quantum Dice," *Zygon* 35 [2000]: 545); "It is unnecessary to think of God trying to change the course of events by keeping within the limits of quantum indeterminacy" (Peter E. Hodgon, "God's Action in the World: The Relevance of Quantum Mechanics," *Zygon* 35 [2000]: 514).

[19]Gregory R. Peterson, "God, Determinism, and Action: Perspectives from Physics," *Zygon* 35 (2000): 884.

[20]Polkinghorne, "Physical Process, Quantum Events, and Divine Agency," 188-190." See Tracy, "Creation, Providence, and Quantum Chance."

[21]Polkinghorne, "Physical Process, Quantum Events, and Divine Agency," 190.

selection and interpretation of biblical materials. To the extent that Boyd illogically

believes that former biblical authors borrowed concepts from later biblical authors, he

groups all the biblical evidence of a God-world relationship, especially divine

relationship to free will creatures as dynamic. Taking the language of these passages as

univocal, Boyd establishes that God's relationship to free will creatures is the same as the

intra-relationship within the Godhead. Thus, before creation the only necessary reality

God knows and loves is Godself.[22] God is temporal; He sees the past and present

exhaustively and the future as a realm of possibilities. In other words, he uses passages

about divine relationship to His creation to oppose the biblical description of divine

exhaustive definite foreknowledge of the future free choices, all in an attempt to adjust

Christian dogmatic structure to the growing paradigmatic shift taking place in our

contemporary culture. It is reasonable that Scripture itself should be allowed to dissolve

the tensions between its affirmations. It seems Boyd's decision to use contemporary

scientific discoveries and process philosophy to dissolve the tension between biblical

affirmation of libertarian free will and exhaustive definite knowledge of future free will

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[22]While he takes biblical passages that described divine actions in humans at face
value, he suggests a sympathetic reading of passages such as Jer 3:6-7, 19-20; 7:31;
32:35; Isa 1:1-5; Ezek 12:2. According to him, there is "no compelling reason not to take
this language at face value. But only a most unsympathetic reading of Jeremiah's and
Isaiah's language . . . would conclude that this language entails that God holds false
beliefs. . . . When God says he 'thought' or 'expected' something would take place that
did not take place, he is simply reflecting his perfect knowledge of probabilities. When
the improbable happens, as sometimes is the case with free agents, God genuinely says he
'thought' or 'expected' the more probable would happen. Because God is infinitely
intelligent, we cannot conceive of God being altogether shocked, as though he did not
perfectly anticipate and prepare for this very improbability. . . . But relative to the
probabilities of the situation, the outcome was surprising" (Boyd, "Christian Love and
Academic Dialogue," 237). Furthermore, Boyd treats biblical passages using phrases of

choice leads to inconsistency and incoherency in his system. Therefore, his advocacy of a dialogue between theology and science appears to prevent Scripture from taking the normative role in determining Christian doctrine. Hence, Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy appears to be a less satisfactory Christian explanation to the problem of evil.

It may be argued in favor of Boyd that his work is philosophical theology and not biblical theology. Philosophical theology employs philosophical resources to exam doctrines of Christian faith. In other words, philosophy does not play a constitutive role in determining Christian doctrines, rather it is used as a means of defending Christian doctrines; the reverse defeats the purpose of philosophical theology and subordinates theology to philosophy. Hence, Boyd does not need to subordinate Scripture to philosophy and scientific discoveries in order for him to reach his purpose of making biblical warfare meaningful to the contemporary scientific mind-set.

On the other hand, it was evident in the analysis of the Great Controversy Theodicy that White calls for a dialogue between theology and science. In fact, she encourages harmonization of science with Scripture, but discourages any harmonization that will compromise biblical models and/or make science take precedence over Scripture. She recommends a diligent and intentional study in situations where there is disparity between Scripture and science. In other words, science and Scripture must be held in tension, taking care that science is not elevated over Scripture. Thus, human philosophical principles only aid in expressing the biblical truth, but do not take a constitutive role in determining Christian doctrines. In theory and in practice, White upholds the primacy and normative role of Scripture. Evidently, in the context of the

body parts for God as figurative and/or poetic, but those with emotional phrases are

scientific worldview—views of origins put forth in human philosophy, she affirms the viability of Scripture, making the Great Controversy Theodicy a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil.

The third reason for the conclusion reached—the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is a less satisfactory response to the problem of evil and the Great Controversy Theodicy is a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil—is Boyd's and White's models of divine foreknowledge, which are a corollary to the methodologies employed in the Trinitarian Warfare and Great Controversy Theodicies. Associated with Boyd's aim to make the biblical motif of warfare intelligible to the contemporary scientific worldview is his purpose to dissolve tension from all Christian doctrines that are held in contradiction to each other. He contends that, while the "Scripture may lead us to accept *paradoxes* . . . it never requires that we accept *contradictions*, which are devoid of meaning."[23] Consequently, Boyd anticipates that every consensual theologian will hermeneutically work to dissolve the proposed contradiction that exists between affirming libertarian free will and divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge. He seeks consistency of the alleged logical contradiction that exists in affirming divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge and libertarian free will with his established model of free will,[24] which is an interpretation of Scripture in the light of contemporary scientific discoveries and philosophy. As a results, Boyd rejects divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge of

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considered literally.

[23]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 21 (emphasis his).

[24]See chapter 3, the section "Free Will."

future libertarian free will actions for divine foreknowledge of future as a realm of possibilities. Thus he limits the content of divine foreknowledge of future free will actions to possibilities.

However, the problem of evil is considered crucial for theists because of their claim that God is omnipotent, omniscient (includes exhaustive definite foreknowledge), and omnibenevolent.[25] Therefore, any attempt to reject or eviscerate these doctrines in the process of explaining the theoretical and/or practical aspects of the problem of evil dismisses the reality of the problem of evil and does not give a response to the problem. As Adams points out, discussing the problem of evil in the context of the logical compatibility of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence "risks irrelevance and equivocation"[26] because it results in theories that compete with respect to coherency, clarity, and explanatory power to the detriment of expressing the educational and the spiritual significance of Scripture. Thus, the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy cannot be considered as a more satisfactory Christian explanation of the problem of evil.

On the contrary, the Great Controversy Theodicy may be considered a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil. It seems that White's familiarity with the despondent and desperate result of focusing on the logical incompatibility of an omnipotent, omniscient, infinite, and omnibenevolent God and the existence of evil may have contributed to her search for biblical evidences for a satisfactory response to the

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[25]Daniel Howard-Snyder, "God, Evil, and Suffering," in *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed. Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 78-81.

[26]Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evil and the Goodness of God*, 205.

problem of evil.[27] For this reason, the Great Controversy Theodicy is an attempt to make

Scripture as practical as possible in considering the problem of evil. Scripture, for her, is

given for the human reasoning powers to search it. However, underlying its simplicity

are rhetorical paradoxes which can be understood only with the help of the Holy Spirit.[28]

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[27]"To many minds the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. Here is a mystery of which they find no explanation. And in their uncertainty and doubt they are blinded to truths plainly revealed in God's word and essential to salvation. There are those who, in their inquiries concerning the existence of sin, endeavor to search into that which God has never revealed; hence they find no solution of their difficulties; and such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and cavil seize upon this as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ. Others, however, fail of a satisfactory understanding of the great problem of evil, from the fact that tradition and misinterpretation have obscured the teaching of the Bible concerning the character of God, the nature of His government, and the principles of His dealing with sin" (E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 492).

[28]"The idea that certain portions of the Bible cannot be understood has led to neglect of some of its most important truths. The fact needs to be emphasized, and often repeated, that the mysteries of the Bible are not such because God has sought to conceal truth, but because our own weakness or ignorance makes us incapable of comprehending or appropriating truth. The limitation is not in His purpose, but in our capacity. Of those very portions of Scripture often passed by as impossible to be understood, God desires us to understand as much as our minds are capable of receiving" (E. G. White, *Education*, 170). On the basis of Deut 29:29, White contends that Scripture is the revelation of God Himself. Hence, in this context, the mysteries are not to be taken as hidden or secret; rather they should be understood as difficult to understand or explain. For this reason, I use the term rhetorical paradoxes—an out of the ordinary juxtaposition of different ideas for the purpose of challenging human reason to search diligently and intentionally. Thus, her idea is neither suggesting that the Bible contains truths that are contradictory at the human level but from God's perspective the biblical truths in question are self-consistent, nor supporting the ideas of theologians like Vernon C. Grounds who argues that the Bible "logically requires defiance of logic at crucial junctures," and D. A. Carson who points out that "there are no rational, logical solutions to the sovereignty-responsibility tension" (Vernon C. Grounds, "The Postulate of Paradox" [paper delivered at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting in March, 1978] and D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1981], quoted in David Basinger, "Biblical Paradox: Does Revelation Challenge Logic?" *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 30 [1987]: 211). White writes, "God desires man to exercise his

"The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the nature of God; but the effort will be fruitless. This problem has not been given to us to solve. No human mind can comprehend God. Let not finite man attempt to interpret Him. Let none indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion."[29] This is already evident in White as she avows divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge, libertarian free will, and divine sovereignty. Indeed, while her treatment does not resolve the alleged contradiction between exhaustive definite foreknowledge and libertarian free will, she refused to reinterpret Scripture to satisfy human reason. What this means is that, borrowing the words of David Basinger, "we as humans do not have all the pieces of the puzzle."[30] How God foreknows future free will choices without causing them has not been revealed. Therefore, she affirms divine exhaustive definite foreknowledge and libertarian free will,

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reasoning powers; and the study of the Bible will strengthen and elevate the mind as no other study can. Yet we are to beware of deifying reason, which is subject to the weakness and infirmity of humanity" (E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 109). "If it were possible for created beings to attain to a full understanding of God and His works, then, having reached this point, there would be for them no further discovery of truth, no growth in knowledge, no further development of mind or heart. God would no longer be supreme; and man, having reached the limit of knowledge and attainment, would cease to advance. . . . God intends that even in this life the truths of His word shall be ever unfolding to His people. There is only one way in which this knowledge can be obtained. We can attain to an understanding of God's word only through the illumination of that Spirit by which the word was given" (ibid.).

[29]E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:279. She is not advocating that human reason cannot discern matters of faith; rather it is carnal and stupid when it asserts itself above Scripture and/or in searching within things about God that have not been revealed to humanity. When human reasoning asserts itself above Scripture, it puts the entire tenor of Scripture into the array of inconsistencies and incoherencies when it pursues this path.

[30]Basinger, "Biblical Paradox: Does Revelation Challenge Logic?" 210.

leaving them in tension without allowing either one to cancel out the other. Consequently, White's Great Controversy Theodicy seems to be a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil.

The fourth reason for the conclusion reached—the Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is a less satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil and the Great Controversy Theodicy is a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil—has to do with the problem of a long-term applicability of the two models of warfare theodicy. It is assumed that theological concepts must be expressed in the context of their historical milieu; however, the biblical truth they express must be universal.[31] It appears to me that the Triniatrian Warfare Theodicy fails to meet this requirement, as it rejects the biblical model of divine foreknowledge to hold to the contemporary scientific concepts. If time renders these contemporary scientific theories invalid, as in the case of the issue over

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[31]Osadolor Imasogie has argued that "theology, if it is authentic, must participate in universality." He continues, "It is only as theology responds to the existential needs of a people within the specific cultural and historical milieu of their self-understanding that the universal of it can be enhanced and enriched" (Osadolor Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* [Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1983], 19, 20). A theological system must serve two needs: "the statement of the truth of the Christian message and interpretation of this truth for every generation. Theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received" (Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* [New York: Harper and Row, 1967], 3). Erickson also defines theology as "that discipline which strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily on the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life." He continues, "Theology must also be contemporary. While it treats timeless issues, it must use language, concepts, and thought forms that make some sense in the context of the present time" (Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 23).

geocentric and heliocentric theories of the cosmos, Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy also

becomes irrelevant.[32] Thus, Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is exposed to

obsolescence.[33] So long as the Scripture stand against all odds, as it has proven to, the

Great Controversy Theodicy remains a relevant Christian explanation of the problem of

evil at all times. Thus, the relevancy of the two models in any era makes the Trinitarian

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[32]When modern science discovered overwhelming evidence for the heliocentric
theory of the cosmic, the theological geocentric concept derived on the basis of the
biblical story of creation and Aristotle's view of the earth—borrowed from Alexandrian
astronomer Ptolemy in the 2nd century--became invalid. As a result, people lost
confidence in the Christian faith. Gregory R. Peterson, commenting on the objection of
determinism on the basis of quantum mechanics, writes, "Polkinghorne rejects a
deterministic interpretation because the implications are so philosophically and
theologically unpleasant. . . .We now know that determinism of the Newtownian sort is
dead, and the apparent indeterminism of quantum mechanics has been embraced
precisely because it seems to deliver us from Newton's grand machine. But if that is the
only lesson we have learned, then we have learned the wrong one; for the primary
mistake is to grant the achievements of science in any given period the final say on this
issue at all. . . . In both cases the reasons given for both determinism and indeterminism
are only partially informed by the science itself" (Gregory R. Peterson, "God,
Determinism, and Action," 884); "If we cast our theological lot with a particular
interpretation, we take the risk that new developments in physics or in the philosophy of
physics will significantly undercut our theological constructions. . . . The particular
interpretive approach one favors should not be presented as the conclusion to be drawn
from quantum mechanics. . . . Proposals about the theological relevance of quantum
theory should be regarded as tentative and provisional hypotheses that reflect the current
uncertainty of the relevant science and the extraordinary difficulty of interpreting it"
(Thomas F. Tracy, "Divine Action and Quantum Theory," *Zygon* 35 [2000]: 896).

[33]John B. Cobb, Jr., may have caught a glimpse of the repercussions of doing
theology with human philosophical principles as the supplier of major tenets in his study
of contemporary theology. He explains that the content, form of affirmation,
intelligibility, and acceptance of Christian faith of each theological thinker are
philosophically informed. However, he observes that, in an age where no one
philosophical idea claims ascendancy, the difficulty in employing philosophical
principles as the framework for a theological system is apparent (John B. Cobb, Jr.,
Living Options in Protestant Theology: *A Survey of Methods* [Philadelphia: Westminster
Press, 1962], 121).

Warfare Theodicy a less satisfactory and the Great Controversy Theodicy a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil.

Recommendations

The conclusion that the Great Controversy Theodicy is a more satisfactory Christian response to the problem of evil does not end the discussion on the subject. The frequencies of natural disasters and the magnitude of crimes pose diverse existential challenges that seem to make the problem of evil one of the crucial theological issues. Thus, there will be ongoing discussion on the problem of evil.

Closely related to the idea of the problem of evil being one of the crucial theological issues is scholarly expositions on the problem of evil. Expositions on the problem of evil are mostly restricted to responding to the atheists' arguments against God, the compatibility of the co-existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God and evil. Thus, theological discussions on the problem of evil have turned into defensive apologetic pieces that allow atheists to define the discussion of the problem of evil on their own terms. While the issue raised by the atheists cannot be ignored, theologians' use of human criticism to address the issue has led to theories that modify biblical truth, partial responses to the problem of evil that go beyond themselves, and ultimately relegate the practical issues of the problem of evil to the pastoral domain. But, Christian faith does not warrant such a divorce between theoretical and practical issues, for it is within the practical issues of the problem of evil that the theoretical issues arise. Thus, focusing on either the theoretical or the practical issues is not a comprehensive Christian approach to the problem of evil. While it is the responsibility of theologians and philosophical theologians to convince atheists and skeptics of the

existence of a good God in the face of contemporaneous crimes and disasters, it is not

within their power to convert them with logical abstractions. Granted, this opens the door

for a study or development of a contemporary Christian approach to the problem of evil

that combines both the theoretical and practical issues. This recourse allows Christian

discourse on the problem of evil to focus on the reality of the evils humankind faces,

sustains faith in the context of suffering, eliminates inconsistency, curbs the insensitivity

of Christian discussions on the problem of evil toward victims of sin and evil, and avoids

the generalization of a single approach, such as evil as punishment for sin and as an

explanation of every evil occurrence.

We have seen that Augustine's, Hick's, and Process theodicies are attempts to

respond to the problem of evil in the context of their historical milieu. However, their

attempts have resulted in inconsistent and incoherent theories and/or compromise of the

Scriptural perspective. Boyd's Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy is an attempt to

communicate the biblical concept of warfare in the context of contemporary scientific

worldview, non-substantial dynamic categories. But, his attempt also yields an

inconsistent and incoherent model of warfare theodicy and compromises the normative

role of Scripture. White's Great Controversy Theodicy is also a notable response to the

problem of evil in the context of the scientific worldview of her era, but her effort yields

a consistent model of warfare theodicy and maintains the normative role of Scripture. All

these proponents of these theodicies and many other scholars believe in a dialogue

between theology and science. The challenge that is before us is precisely this: What is

the praxis for communicating biblical truth in the context of any scientific worldview

without compromising Scripture? Are there universal presuppositions which one brings

to hermeneutics when communicating biblical truth in any scientific worldview? This dissertation has not addressed these questions. But, it seems appropriate to challenge theology to develop universal presuppositions which one brings to hermeneutics when communicating biblical truth in the context of any scientific worldview. It is in this sense that the Great Controversy theme may serve as a catalyst.

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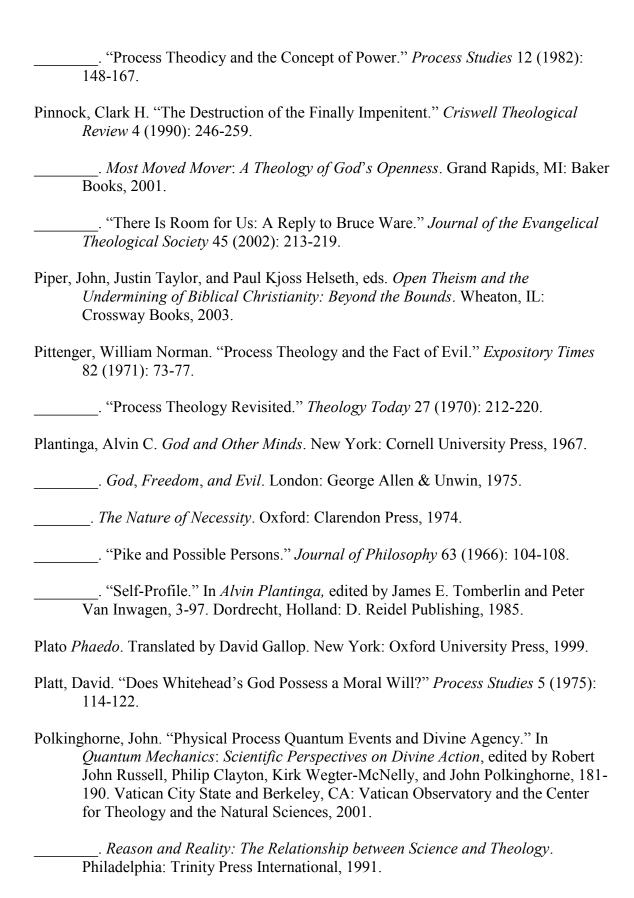Locke, John. *A Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Roger Woolhouse. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.

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