

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL
ANGLICAN AND BAPTIST PERSPECTIVES

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF WALES

October 2002

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This dissertation is an original work and no portion of it has been submitted in support of any application for any other degree to any University, College or Institute.

At Trinity Western University I completed a smaller thesis on the same general topic and have used some of the same authors for reference. However, no portion of that work was used in this thesis as this newer work is larger and more complex, with a different focus and specific topic.

SUMMARY

This work discusses the problem of evil from a Christian perspective. It is written from a conservative theological position, but attempts to take a well-rounded look at the problem.

Within the Introduction, the problem of evil is defined from a philosophical perspective, however, this problem is also relevant in theology. The importance and relevance of the problem of evil is then discussed in the context of the Christian Church. It is not believed to be a logical problem for Christianity; however, it is believed only God can provide a remedy and ultimate solution to the problem of evil.

I used two Anglican authors, C.S. Lewis and Alister McGrath, and two Baptist authors, D.A. Carson and B.W. Woods. Each author takes a Biblical conservative position with regard to the problem of evil viewing it as within God's sovereign plan, logically soluble, a result of human free will to sin to some degree, and that God through Christ has provided a remedy which will culminate simultaneously with the Kingdom of God. I review and interact with each author, agreeing in general, but disagreeing with some specific viewpoints.

I survey fifty Anglicans and fifty Baptists on the topic, and interview five religious leaders within the Anglican and Baptists movements.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to my advisor, Dr. William Kay, for his guidance, to my mother, Merlena Murray, for typing and editing assistance and to Howard Bartel for his participation in final reading.

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October 2002

PREFACE

The problem of evil and the resulting suffering is an interesting and important theological topic for a variety of reasons. Some of the issues I desired to deal with by using this topic are:

1. The nature of God, his infiniteness, and omnipotence, as well as his attributes and will.

The nature of humanity in several states, such as pre-fall, post-salvation, and post-resurrection.

To see the problem of evil and suffering in both philosophical and theological terms, as well as practically since all human beings have been affected by evil and suffering.

To discuss God's use of evil in the Universe for the greater good while human beings freely choose to sin against God uncoerced.

To discuss some of the theological errors in regard to this topic in Christianity and within other world views.

To admit that God alone is infinite. He alone has all of the answers to the philosophical problem of evil, although I believe that human philosophy and theology can shed some light on the topic.

The atoning work of Christ is the practical remedy to the problem of evil within a Biblical world view.

To discuss, with the help of four authors, surveys and interviews, the problem of evil. My sources from the Church of England and related Anglican Churches as well as various Baptist denominations were helpful with this discussion.

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October 2002

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem of Evil

Definition and the Logical Problem of Evil

The term theodicy arose from G.W. Leibniz' book in 1710 entitled *Theodicy*.¹ Robert M. Adams (1996) notes that the word theodicy is from the Greek, as *theos* is God and *dike* is justice.² Theodicy is a defence of the justice of God in the face of objections arising from the problem of evil in the world.³ Dewi Zephaniah Phillips⁴ admits that 'philosophizing about the problem of evil has become common place.'⁵ There are 'theories, theodicies and defences abound.'⁶ These are all seeking to somehow justify God,⁷ or to render the concept of God as untenable.⁸ Phillips rightly reasons that such work should be done with fear,⁹ as approaches to

¹ Leibniz, G.W. (1710)(1998) *Theodicy*.

² Adams (1996: 794).

³ Adams (1996: 794). David Hume in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* explains that geniuses over the ages have continued to look for proofs and arguments concerning God. Hume (1779)(2004: 2). Theodicy would involve demonstrating that God exists and is good even as the problem of evil exists.

⁴ Unfortunately Phillips died within the time frame of writing this thesis (1934-2006).

⁵ Phillips (2005: xi).

⁶ Phillips (2005: xi).

⁷ Phillips (2005: xi).

⁸ Phillips (2005: xi). Most often atheistic attempts, or those critical of Christian thought.

⁹ Phillips (2005: xi).

the problem of evil in error could ‘betray the evils people have suffered.’¹⁰ Such explanation should never be overly simplistic, insensitive or ridiculous.¹¹ Phillips warns that pro-religious philosophical presentations can often do more damage to the cause of theodicy than can the work of critics.¹² David Hume (1779)(2004) discusses the danger of traditional superstition in religious presentations,¹³ and doubtless a reasonable, open-minded, philosophical approach from a theist would be far more helpful within a theodicy. He also warns against theistic claims of being able to adequately understand the Supreme Being, if there is one.¹⁴ This Being’s attributes would be ‘incomprehensible’¹⁵ and it basically impossible for the theist to understand the nature of this being.¹⁶ If Hume is correct,¹⁷ constructing a theodicy would be largely meaningless. To counter this problem, Biblical Revelation would be required in order that God reveals self in context of the issue of theodicy.¹⁸

Augustine¹⁹ (388-395)(1964) deduces that God is good and therefore does not commit evil.²⁰ The cause of evil is therefore not to be traced back to God, but to the person that does evil.²¹ [Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz](#)²² (1710)(1998) reasons God always chooses what is best, freely within his nature and is vindicated within his creation, even though it contains evil.²³ God

¹⁰ Phillips (2005: xi).

¹¹ Phillips (2005: xi). I can agree with this point in general terms, but there will certainly be disagreement between writers on the negative and positive aspects of various theodicy.

¹² Phillips (2005: xi). Henry Blocher warns that theodicy as a philosophical defence of God fails on its own, unless backed up by Scripture. Blocher (1994: 84). Phillips and Blocher would both be critical of poorly constructed theodicy approaches, even as their perspectives on theodicy are not identical.

¹³ Hume (1779)(2004: 7).

¹⁴ Hume (1779)(2004: 21-27).

¹⁵ Hume (1779)(2004: 21).

¹⁶ Hume (1779)(2004: 21).

¹⁷ Hume (1779)(2004: 21).

¹⁸ Blocher (1994: 84). German philosopher F.W.J. Schelling’s philosophy is noted within the ‘Introduction’ in *Of Human Freedom* to include the idea that God’s revelation is ‘a genuine metaphysical necessity.’ This is in the context of understanding what is ‘morally necessary’ concerning God. Gutmann (1845)(1936: xxxvi).

¹⁹ Augustine lived (354-430). Blackburn (1996: 29).

²⁰ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

²¹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

²² Leibniz lived (1646-1716). Blackburn (1996: 215).

²³ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

co-operates in all the actions of his creatures, and yet is not the author of sin.²⁴ Philosopher of Religion, John Hick (1970) writes that the fact of evil is the most serious objection against the Christian belief in a God of love, and is probably the most difficult objection to write about.²⁵ It can be disastrous to say too little or too much.²⁶ Christian philosopher, Alvin C. Plantinga (1977) notes many philosophers believe that the existence of evil constitutes a difficulty for the theist,²⁷ and many critics reason that the presence of evil and its abundance makes a belief in God unreasonable and irrational.²⁸ For Reformed theologian John S. Feinberg (1994), perhaps anyone that has suffered affliction or has friends or family that have suffered, must wonder why there is so much pain if a loving God exists that has the power to remedy evil.²⁹

Delton Lewis Scudder (1940) writes that the problem of evil arises from the theistic attempt to be loyal to the concepts concerning: (1) the sovereignty of God,³⁰ who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, (2) the reality of evils in the world,³¹ and (3) the goodness of God.³² Peter Kreeft (1988) explains that the problem of evil is the most serious problem in the world,³³ and is a very serious objection to theism.³⁴ Theologian John Frame (1999) notes that for many throughout history and today, the problem of evil is the most serious objection to Christian theism.³⁵ Ernest Valea (2007), a scholar on comparative religions,³⁶ admits that although God is considered good within Biblical Christianity, it can be clearly seen in the world that evil exists in

²⁴ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

²⁵ Hick (1970: xi).

²⁶ Hick (1970: xi).

²⁷ Plantinga (1977: 7).

²⁸ Plantinga (1977: 7). Many critics view religious claims as irrational. Beebe (2006: 1).

²⁹ Feinberg (1994: 11).

³⁰ Scudder (1940: 247).

³¹ Scudder (1940: 247).

³² Scudder (1940: 247).

³³ Kreeft (1988: 54-58).

³⁴ Kreeft (1988: 54-58).

³⁵ Frame (2000: 1).

³⁶ Valea (2007: 1).

an awful measure.³⁷ Greg Welty (1999), Assistant Professor of Philosophy from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary,³⁸ deals with the issue of whether the existence of evil is logically compatible with the belief in an omnipotent³⁹ and good God.⁴⁰ Welty explains that for many critics these concepts are incompatible.⁴¹ Greg Ganssle (1998) in his lecture on the problem of evil at Dartmouth College,⁴² explains it is deduced since God is omnipotent and all loving, he should eliminate evil, and that it is a challenge to demonstrate God exists in a reality where evil flourishes.⁴³ William Ferraiolo (2005) notes many anti-theists deduce that the all-powerful God would not allow his children⁴⁴ to suffer, and therefore the God of theism is an irrational concept.⁴⁵ Philosopher Theodore P. Rebar (1996) states that the logical problem of evil exists since God is omnibenevolent⁴⁶ and omnipotent,⁴⁷ and writes critics can view the logical problem as meaning that if God cannot end evil, he is not omnipotent, and if he can prevent evil and does not, he is not omnibenevolent or all loving.⁴⁸ Rebar concludes that God either does not exist or is misunderstood.⁴⁹ It should also be stated that the problem of evil is not only an intellectual problem,⁵⁰ but as R.K. McGregor Wright (1996) notes, a great deal of moral and emotional

³⁷ Valea (2007: 1).

³⁸ Welty (1999: 1).

³⁹ Theologian Kenneth Cauthen (1997) in 'Theodicy' describes God's omnipotence as meaning God is all-powerful. Cauthen (1997: 1). Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling explain omnipotence as God's attribute and ability to do whatever is consistent with his character. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 85-86). God is only limited by his character and not by a lack of power. R.K. McGregor Wright states that God cannot violate his own attributes and could not, for example, make a stone too heavy for the almighty to lift. Wright (1996: 278).

⁴⁰ Welty (1999: 1).

⁴¹ Welty (1999: 1).

⁴² Ganssle (1998: 1).

⁴³ Ganssle (1998: 1).

⁴⁴ In context Ferraiolo is describing human beings.

⁴⁵ Ferraiolo (2005: 1).

⁴⁶ Cauthen describes this as perfect goodness and love. Cauthen (1997: 1). Henry Thiessen in *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* states that the goodness of God includes his benevolence and love. Thiessen (1956: 130).

⁴⁷ Rebar (1996: 1).

⁴⁸ Rebar (1996: 1). Greek philosopher Epicurus was known to have made a similar statement. Epicurus (341-270 B.C.)(1949: 80).

⁴⁹ Rebar (1996: 1).

⁵⁰ Wright (1996: 178).

freight goes along with the problem of evil.⁵¹ He connects this to the fact that many philosophers have viewed the problem of evil as a disproof of God.⁵² I shall explain throughout this thesis that God has been largely misunderstood and, although Biblical revelation, theology, and philosophy do not provide an exhaustive and absolutely conclusive answer to the logical problem, there are reasonable solutions to the difficulty of evil existing within God's creation.⁵³ The logical problem of evil will be the main focus of my thesis,⁵⁴ but shall be dealt with while interacting with practical and empirical theology and data.⁵⁵

Gratuitous Evil

Another aspect of the problem of evil is the evidential⁵⁶ or gratuitous⁵⁷ problem of evil. I shall deal with this relevant issue in Chapter Four: John Hick: Soul-Making Theodicy,⁵⁸ but the evidential problem is not the main focus of my research.⁵⁹ Kirk Durston (2000) explains gratuitous evil is commonly understood as evil that God could have prevented without forfeiting a greater good, or permitting a worse evil.⁶⁰ Welty explains that throughout recent academic literature concerning the problem of evil the focus has shifted from the logical to evidential problem.⁶¹ He writes that a major reason the evidential problem is researched and written about more academically than the logical problem is the success of Alvin Plantinga's Free Will

⁵¹ Wright (1996: 178).

⁵² Wright (1996: 178).

⁵³ In my view the most reasonable of these explanations is a sovereignty theodicy, which shall be explained in Chapter Three.

⁵⁴ Chapters One to Four.

⁵⁵ Chapters Five and following.

⁵⁶ Welty (1999: 1)

⁵⁷ An argument for gratuitous evil shall be discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵⁸ I shall examine an argument from William Rowe, Rowe, William L. (1990) 'The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism' in Adams and Adams (eds.) *The Problem of Evil*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

⁵⁹ I fully admit the intellectual and academic importance of the evidential, gratuitous problem and therefore have made it a priority to deal with the issue in this thesis.

⁶⁰ Durston (2000: 67).

⁶¹ Welty (1999: 1).

Defense,⁶² which shall be reviewed in Chapter Two: Free Will Theodicy. Richard Swinburne (1998) notes that many theists and atheists, due to Plantinga's work,⁶³ have accepted the logical problem of evil has been eliminated,⁶⁴ and the evidential problem remains.⁶⁵ Swinburne writes that whether or not the logical problem has been eliminated depends on how it is defined, and this ends up being a debate between certain theists and atheists on what hypothetical state of affairs would mean that God does not logically exist.⁶⁶ Michael Peterson (1982) reasons that Plantinga's free will defense is sound in regard to the logical problem of evil and can be used to show that God must allow gratuitous evil or deny human free will.⁶⁷ Peterson thinks Plantinga's defense does not succumb to gratuitous evil.⁶⁸ Philosopher Doug Erlandson (1991) writes that theist and anti-theist have been debating the problem of evil for centuries,⁶⁹ and the basic differing philosophical assumptions made by the two groups means that the debate shall continue. William Hasker (2000) within *Process Studies* explains that the problem of evil has been written about more in the last ten years than the other theistic proofs put together,⁷⁰ and the trend continues.⁷¹

I am primarily researching and writing on the logical and not the evidential, gratuitous problem of evil, since although I can accept that Plantinga has primarily successfully dealt with the logical problem of evil, as described within his system and assumptions,⁷² I reason that Plantinga's free will approach is not the best and most effective system within Christian theism

⁶² Welty (1999: 1).

⁶³ Primarily from Plantinga's book, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (1977).

⁶⁴ Swinburne (1998: 13-20).

⁶⁵ Swinburne (1998: 13-20).

⁶⁶ Swinburne (1998: 13-20). Therefore there are some theists and atheists that still reason that the logical problem of evil has not been solved or dealt with adequately.

⁶⁷ Peterson (1982: 204).

⁶⁸ Peterson (1982: 204).

⁶⁹ Erlandson (1991: 1).

⁷⁰ Hasker (2000: 194-208).

⁷¹ Hasker (2000: 194-208).

⁷² Primarily from Plantinga's book, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (1977).

for dealing with the issue.⁷³ A well constructed sovereignty approach,⁷⁴ such as will be presented by John S. Feinberg in Chapter Three: Sovereignty Theodicy, is better equipped at dealing with both the logical and gratuitous problem. I also embed my own sovereignty theodicy⁷⁵ throughout this thesis, particularly in Chapter Three.⁷⁶ Within this thesis my own concepts of sovereignty theodicy are discussed in contrast to the approaches reviewed.⁷⁷ Plantinga's (1982) approach is problematic due largely to his support of the idea that God could not create significantly free, good creatures that would only commit good acts at all times.⁷⁸ Welty rejects Plantinga's idea that God cannot create a world containing moral good and no moral evil,⁷⁹ and raises the objection that God brought Christ into the world as a sinless human being.⁸⁰ Welty's point here is that every human being could have therefore been sinless⁸¹ and the world could contain good and no evil with significantly free human beings that would not commit wrong actions.⁸² I have a similar objection to Welty's,⁸³ which shall be discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Within my theodicy, I reason that God could have, if he wished, made significantly free human beings, or human like beings who would have been perfectly morally good and would not commit wrong actions.⁸⁴ God's choice not to create such beings, in my mind is not a sign of a lack of power, or moral failure, but rather the use of his own perfect and significantly free will for good purposes.

⁷³ This will be discussed primarily in Chapters Two and Three.

⁷⁴ With Reformed theological deductions.

⁷⁵ Previous academic advisers concerning the problem of evil, such as Dr. Stephen Wellum formerly of Trinity Western University, and Dr. William Kay of Wales, Bangor have accepted the academic notion that theodicy in the plural form is not correctly spelled 'theodicies.' Therefore, I have used the term 'theodicy' in the plural tense for my MTS, MPhil and PhD theses.

⁷⁶ It is similar, but not identical to Feinberg's approach, which I shall point out.

⁷⁷ It is not necessary for me to present my own theodicy Chapter within this work, as my views shall be explained throughout this thesis.

⁷⁸ Plantinga (1982: 166-167). This is an aspect of incompatibilism, which shall be primarily defined and discussed in Chapter Two.

⁷⁹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30). Welty (1999: 1).

⁸⁰ Welty (1999: 1).

⁸¹ Welty (1999: 1).

⁸² Welty (1999: 1).

⁸³ Welty (1999: 1).

⁸⁴ This is an aspect of compatibilism, which shall be primarily defined and discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

In Chapter Four, with my discussion on the evidential, gratuitous problem of evil, it shall be seen that a sovereignty theodicy can reasonably and successfully deal with both the logical and evidential problem of evil, and therefore the evidential problem is not a greater difficulty for theists than the logical one, rather it is simply a newer type of criticism since theism has been able to defend itself substantially through the use of free will approaches.⁸⁵ However, I can agree with Durston that even if there is no such thing as gratuitous evil,⁸⁶ which is my position, large amounts of evil that appear gratuitous will exist.⁸⁷ This would be evil that I would consider unexplainable, humanly speaking, but would not be gratuitous from God's perspective.⁸⁸ God can use evil for his greater purposes,⁸⁹ but this does not mean that any person will completely understand why certain evils exist.⁹⁰ God's attribute of omniscience⁹¹ provides him knowledge in order to work his plans for the greater good within creation that no other being can possess without God revealing this information.

Theodicy further explained

Simon Blackburn (1996)⁹² writes that theodicy is the part of theology⁹³ concerned with defending the omnibenevolence and omnipotence of God while suffering and evil exists in the world.⁹⁴ A reasonable definition of theodicy is the explanation of how the infinite,⁹⁵ omnipotent,

⁸⁵ Freewill approaches can be logically coherent, although not necessarily true.

⁸⁶ Durston (2000: 79).

⁸⁷ Durston (2000: 79).

⁸⁸ To be further discussed in Chapter Four.

⁸⁹ Durston (2000: 79).

⁹⁰ Durston (2000: 79).

⁹¹ This attribute denotes that God knows all things, and has direct cognition of all events in his creation. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 86).

⁹² Blackburn is a secular humanist philosopher who has been very helpful in my study of philosophy of religion.

⁹³ Theodicy is an important aspect of Christian philosophy as well. O. Fielding Clarke writes that theodicy or the justification of God has engaged the attention of philosophers and theologians for centuries. Clarke (1964: 9). Obviously not all of these philosophers have been non-Christian and many of my Christian sources in this thesis will be philosophers and not necessarily theologians.

⁹⁴ Blackburn (1996: 375).

and omnibenevolent, all loving God accomplishes his plans within his creation where the problem of evil exists. Philosopher Derk Pereboom (2005) writes that it is a project attempting to defend God in the face of the problem of evil.⁹⁶ Christian apologist, Art Lindsley (2003) reasons that it can be understood as a justification of God's ways.⁹⁷ John King-Farlow and Niall Shanks (1988) comment that theodicy is a central mystery of theology⁹⁸ and something in life where only a limited understanding can be made.⁹⁹ Kenneth Cauthen explains that it is an attempt to hold to the omnipotence and loving nature of God without contradiction.¹⁰⁰ Edward R. Wickham (1964) explains that it asks how human suffering can be reconciled with the goodness of God.¹⁰¹ How can evil occur if God loves humanity?¹⁰² Rolf Hille (2004) notes that the issue with theodicy is not only how God can allow suffering in the world, but on a different turn, why do evil persons prosper in God's creation?¹⁰³ Hille explains that these considerations on evil and the existence of God led to a criticism of Christianity and religion in Europe in the Eighteenth century and to some degree earlier.¹⁰⁴ The Eighteenth century¹⁰⁵ was when Leibniz' book *Theodicy*¹⁰⁶ was published as was previously noted, and this era of history was when much of the modern debate concerning the problem of evil and theodicy began¹⁰⁷ William Hasker (2007) in his review of Peter van Inwagen's book *The Problem of Evil*, explains that a theodicy,

⁹⁵ The unlimited and unfixed. Blackburn (1996: 193). God is considered infinite and his creation finite and therefore limited.

⁹⁶ Pereboom (2005:1).

⁹⁷ Lindsley (2003: 3).

⁹⁸ King-Farlow and Shanks (1988: 153).

⁹⁹ King-Farlow and Shanks (1988: 153).

¹⁰⁰ Cauthen (1997: 1).

¹⁰¹ Wickham (1964: vii).

¹⁰² Wickham (1964: vii).

¹⁰³ Hille (2004: 21).

¹⁰⁴ Hille (2004: 22). This took place in the era of the Enlightenment will shall be defined in Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁵ Hille (2004: 22).

¹⁰⁶ Leibniz, G.W. (1710)(1998).

¹⁰⁷ Hille (2004: 22).

unlike a defence, attempts to state the true reasons why evil exists¹⁰⁸ in a creation and world ruled by God.¹⁰⁹ Theistic and Christian theodicy are therefore largely a response to initial Seventeenth, and primarily Eighteenth century and forward, secular criticisms of the theology and philosophy of God within religion and Christianity.¹¹⁰

Is Theodicy Important?

A major reason for the existence of this thesis is that I value the importance of theodicy; however, not all scholars would share my view.¹¹¹ Some dismiss theodicy entirely and some view it as only having limited value.¹¹² Hille reasons that a satisfactory self-coherent answer to the question of the justice of God cannot be found in theology or philosophy.¹¹³ Ferraiolo explains that many critics of theism would claim the existence of gratuitous evil makes a theodicy a difficult thing to establish in our present world filled with evil.¹¹⁴ He concludes his article by noting it is not obvious that human suffering is reconcilable with theism.¹¹⁵ Pereboom writes that despite some important work within theodicy over the last thirty years, the problem of evil still remains the greatest challenge to theistic belief.¹¹⁶ Lindsley notes that many persons are unimpressed by Christian attempts at theodicy.¹¹⁷ He suggests that theodicy must be careful not

¹⁰⁸ Hasker (2007: 1).

¹⁰⁹ Plantinga states that a defence and theodicy are different, and this shall be discussed in Chapter Two. Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28). In Chapter Two I explain why a defence can be reviewed under the intellectual umbrella of theodicy. In my view there are enough similarities between defence and theodicy to allow a defence to be reviewed under the general heading of theodicy.

¹¹⁰ Hille (2004: 22).

¹¹¹ Hille (2004: 22). Ferraiolo (2005: 1).

¹¹² Theodicy is a general philosophical term, and yet there are different types, and therefore I reason that a critic needs to be careful in dismissing theodicy in general terms.

¹¹³ Hille (2004: 26).

¹¹⁴ Ferraiolo (2005: 1).

¹¹⁵ Ferraiolo (2005: 1).

¹¹⁶ Pereboom (2005: 33). Kreeft (1988: 54-58).

¹¹⁷ Lindsley (2003: 3).

to portray itself in a way that it is speaking for God.¹¹⁸ I fully admit and reason that theodicy is a speculative exercise to a degree, and any person writing on the subject should with humility approach it very carefully.¹¹⁹ Marcel Sarot (1997) comments that many feminist theologians see theodicy as dominated by white males,¹²⁰ and these feminists reject notions of God's omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect goodness.¹²¹ An important point here is that it needs to be remembered that each writer of theodicy is approaching the subject from theological assumptions.¹²² Many theodicy views are written by men and some of these male writers may not adequately portray female and feminist perspectives on the problem of evil. I have sought within the text and questionnaire to provide female perspectives.¹²³ Theologian Carl Henry (1983) writes that empirical and philosophical considerations devoid of revelation cannot vindicate God in this evil world.¹²⁴ I can accept Henry's point,¹²⁵ as from a traditional Christian perspective,¹²⁶ Biblical revelation is viewed as explaining God's workings in his creation,¹²⁷ although this revelation does not exhaustively discuss the problem of evil.¹²⁸ Henri Blocher (1994) notes theodicy are failures in themselves and must have ideas within that square with Biblical revelation in order to be true and beneficial.¹²⁹ I do not agree that all theodicy are

¹¹⁸ Lindsley (2003: 3).

¹¹⁹ Lindsley (2003: 3).

¹²⁰ Sarot (1997: 29).

¹²¹ Sarot (1997: 29).

¹²² As is the author of these thesis.

¹²³ My own theological views are not particularly feminist or non-feminist, but as females are half the population these perspectives should not be overlooked within a theoretical and empirical work on theodicy.

¹²⁴ Henry (1983: 282).

¹²⁵ Henry (1983: 282).

¹²⁶ Henry (1983: 282). Thiessen (1956: 31).

¹²⁷ Thiessen writes that Biblical revelation is the basis for theology, in particular systematic theology. Thiessen (1956: 31). Much of the philosophical theology and philosophy of religion presented in this thesis is related to and overlaps with the discipline of systematic theology.

¹²⁸ Sovereignty theodicy is both theological and philosophical and attempts to present arguments that do not contradict Scripture.

¹²⁹ Blocher (1994: 84).

failures in themselves,¹³⁰ but can grant a Christian theodicy needs the support of Scripture,¹³¹ which connects the reader to the salvific work of Christ.¹³²

It should be noted that a theodicy written from a sovereignty perspective, to be very valuable, needs to focus on how God's divine plans and purposes are accomplished through the development of human beings.¹³³ Erlandson explains that many theodicy are fatally flawed since they are too focused on the idea of God creating a world for the best possible state of human beings.¹³⁴ The ideas of Erlandson¹³⁵ are in line with sovereignty theodicy, which places greater emphasis on God's perfect and holy plans in willingly allowing the problem of evil to exist in creation, than does free will theodicy.¹³⁶ Concerning the idea of God being holy, Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling (1999) write the term holy is a Biblical idea, generally meaning *to be set apart*.¹³⁷ It is described of God who is set apart from his creation, pure from any of the evil within it.¹³⁸ Mennonite Old Testament scholar Elmer A. Martens (1990) suggests holiness is concerned with the idea of separation, not separation from something, but separation to something.¹³⁹ Biblically this type of holiness has to do with separation of a person to God.¹⁴⁰

Scudder comments that if the sovereignty of God is stressed, and evil is still considered to be reality,¹⁴¹ then this logically leads to the idea that God causes evil and it is part of a

¹³⁰ Blocher (1994: 84).

¹³¹ Henry (1983: 282). Thiessen (1956: 31).

¹³² Rowan Williams suggests Scripture becomes the Word in fidelity to Christ, as preaching becomes the Word in fidelity to Scripture, and Christ is himself the divine act as such. 'God reveals himself through himself.' Williams (2007: 108-109). I agree, God reveals himself through the Holy Spirit inspiring Scripture and presenting Christ.

¹³³ Erlandson (1991: 1).

¹³⁴ Erlandson (1991: 1).

¹³⁵ Erlandson (1991: 1).

¹³⁶ This will be seen in Chapter Three.

¹³⁷ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 60).

¹³⁸ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 60).

¹³⁹ Martens (1990: 94).

¹⁴⁰ Martens (1990: 94).

¹⁴¹ Scudder (1940: 248).

predetermined plan.¹⁴² I agree with this notion,¹⁴³ but Scudder deduces that a strong view of God willing evil for the greater good means evil could be understood as not really being evil.¹⁴⁴ I can understand how a scholar could come to such a conclusion,¹⁴⁵ but a Reformed influenced sovereignty theodicy does not need to agree with this idea¹⁴⁶ which is foreign to both traditional Reformed and conservative theology. Robert H. Mounce (1995) explains that God directs the affairs in life, for those who love him, for the greater good.¹⁴⁷ C.E.B. Cranfield (1992) comments that although God can will grievous and evil things to occur,¹⁴⁸ God in Christ works these things towards the greater good,¹⁴⁹ in particular in the context of salvation for those that know Christ.¹⁵⁰ Evil and sin are not to be confused with goodness and obedience¹⁵¹ within Reformed traditions, but as God willingly allows evil things to occur, his purposes and motives are pure.¹⁵² David Ray Griffin (1976) critically disagrees with this concept of John Calvin¹⁵³ and others,¹⁵⁴ but correctly defines the idea that God's will must be regarded as righteous, even when we as human beings cannot fully understand the rightness of his judgments, since God is the definition of righteousness.¹⁵⁵ Wright reasons the problem of evil can be solved in a straightforward manner by proposing that God predestines evils to occur for a particular purpose,¹⁵⁶ and that persons do

¹⁴² Scudder (1940: 248).

¹⁴³ Scudder (1940: 248).

¹⁴⁴ Scudder (1940: 248).

¹⁴⁵ Scudder (1940: 248).

¹⁴⁶ Scudder (1940: 248).

¹⁴⁷ Mounce (1995: 187).

¹⁴⁸ Cranfield (1992: 204).

¹⁴⁹ Cranfield (1992: 204).

¹⁵⁰ Cranfield (1992: 204).

¹⁵¹ Cranfield (1992: 204).

¹⁵² In Chapters Three and Six, I shall explain in further detail how within Reformed theology and theodicy, God can remain holy and pure while willing evil for the greater good.

¹⁵³ Calvin's perspective shall be mentioned throughout this work and particularly in Chapter Three.

¹⁵⁴ Griffin (1976: 129).

¹⁵⁵ Griffin (1976: 129).

¹⁵⁶ Wright (1996: 197).

not have an answer back for God.¹⁵⁷ This comment from Wright¹⁵⁸ is accurate from a Reformed perspective. I can interject and state that academically solving the logical and gratuitous problems of evil by tying them back to God is an ultimate intellectual solution,¹⁵⁹ but there are still practical ramifications to deal with, such as why certain evils occur. The fact that a sovereignty theodicy can logically and reasonably solve its problem of evil, does not mean that suffering often comes with an explanation.¹⁶⁰

I reason that free will theodicy in the case of Augustine and Plantinga which shall be described in Chapter Two, can logically and reasonably solve their problems of evil, but more difficulties remain than with a well constructed sovereignty theodicy which accepts compatibilism.¹⁶¹ I therefore can understand the dismissive and negative attitudes towards theodicy of some within academia,¹⁶² but do not think that all theodicy are equal, or should they be necessarily all judged as failures. However, as noted earlier, theists and atheists debate the problem of evil,¹⁶³ and it is safe to state that no particular theodicy will ever be accepted by all theists and atheists,¹⁶⁴ or even acknowledged as logical or reasonable by all critics.¹⁶⁵ I see no conclusive reason to abandon theodicy as an intellectual practice. I rather agree that a theodicy¹⁶⁶ needs to be supported by Biblical revelation¹⁶⁷ and must be for it to be theologically sound.¹⁶⁸ Practical theology and empirical data can strengthen and complement a successful Biblically inspired sovereignty theodicy by explaining how the common church member and attendee deals

¹⁵⁷ Wright (1996: 197).

¹⁵⁸ Wright (1996: 197).

¹⁵⁹ Wright (1996: 197).

¹⁶⁰ This is where practical and empirical theology can be very helpful when they offer practical assistance to those suffering under the problem of evil.

¹⁶¹ I explain why I favour compatibilism mainly in Chapter Three.

¹⁶² In particular critics of theism and Christianity.

¹⁶³ Swinburne (1998: 13-20). Erlandson (1991: 1).

¹⁶⁴ Swinburne (1998: 13-20). Erlandson (1991: 1).

¹⁶⁵ Swinburne (1998: 13-20). Erlandson (1991: 1).

¹⁶⁶ A Christian theodicy at least needs to have Scriptural support.

¹⁶⁷ Henry (1983: 282). Blocher (1994: 84).

¹⁶⁸ Henry (1983: 282). Blocher (1994: 84).

with theological concepts relating to theodicy.¹⁶⁹ A theodicy can be adjusted in order to better assist persons in the Christian Church by being adaptable in message without compromising Biblical and intellectual integrity.¹⁷⁰ I also reason that a logical and reasonable sovereignty theodicy presentation, even with its limitations, provides greater comfort to those trusting in the Biblical God and Christ than does fear inspired silence which completely capitulates to notions that human beings cannot in any meaningful way possibly understand why a holy God willingly allows evil within his creation.¹⁷¹

The Importance of Practical and Empirical Theology

Chapter Five, Practical/Empirical Theology and Theodicy shall be dedicated to discussing practical and empirical theology, and in order to avoid unnecessary repetition this section shall be fairly brief. Phillips reasons that practical ‘existential’¹⁷² evils must be dealt with properly by theodicy.¹⁷³ Philosophical presentations should not sidestep practical sufferings¹⁷⁴ in regard to evil, for it is by these problems it is known that there is a logical problem.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, as evil should not be overlooked,¹⁷⁶ practical and empirical theology should be used as tools in understanding theodicy. Donald G. Bloesch (1987) explains that the knowledge of God leading to theological dogmatics should be for the sake of ethical service for God.¹⁷⁷ Dogmatic theology should not exist for the sake of itself.¹⁷⁸ Practical theology,

¹⁶⁹ To be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

¹⁷⁰ This shall be demonstrated in Chapter Six and the Appendix.

¹⁷¹ As Dr. William Kay pointed out to me when reviewing my MPhil thesis, finite human knowledge concerning theodicy does not necessarily equate with human error.

¹⁷² Phillips (2005: xii).

¹⁷³ Phillips (2005: xii).

¹⁷⁴ And therefore practical theology should not be overlooked.

¹⁷⁵ Phillips (2005: xii). An insightful point, I agree.

¹⁷⁶ Phillips (2005: xii).

¹⁷⁷ Bloesch (1987: 12).

¹⁷⁸ Christians should live in service to their neighbours. Bloesch (1987: 12).

according to Charles E. Winquest (1987), is the theological specialty that deals with, and is grounded in theory and practice and the need to bring self-consciousness to ministry.¹⁷⁹

Theological agendas are replicated in practical ones, and therefore both theology and related practice should not be shallow.¹⁸⁰ Wilhelm Grab (2005) explains that practical theology involves reflecting on the rules of Christian leadership¹⁸¹ and considers theories of Christianity in modern society and interacts with other theological disciplines.¹⁸² Emmanuel Lartey (2000)(2007) comments that practical theology is a way of doing theology and being theologians,¹⁸³ as it is not simply or primarily a branch of theological knowledge or a method of theological action.¹⁸⁴ Practical theology is not primarily philosophical or systematic in nature,¹⁸⁵ but as Lartey notes is attempting to examine the content of faith and practice.¹⁸⁶ It is looking to find the content of faith, considering tradition, context and experience.¹⁸⁷ Lartey points out a perceived weakness by some with practical theology in that it derives knowledge from other disciplines.¹⁸⁸ In the case of this thesis it would be primarily deriving its information and knowledge¹⁸⁹ from the theology and philosophy expressed in the three approaches to theodicy that shall be examined. Importantly in his concept, Lartey includes situational analysis of theology, response, experience, situational analysis for a second time, and finally theological analysis.¹⁹⁰ The fact

¹⁷⁹ Winquest (1987: 1).

¹⁸⁰ Winquest (1987: 1).

¹⁸¹ Grab (2005: 181-196).

¹⁸² Grab (2005: 181-196).

¹⁸³ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131).

¹⁸⁴ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131).

¹⁸⁵ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131).

¹⁸⁶ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131). Practical theology is to develop theory in regard to Church practice. Anderson (2001: 24). Concrete lived experiences are evaluated. Cartledge (2003: 249).

¹⁸⁷ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131). Cartledge (2003: 249). It seeks to examine how a church functions. Anderson (2001: 24).

¹⁸⁸ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131).

¹⁸⁹ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131).

¹⁹⁰ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131).

that he allows theological analysis¹⁹¹ presents the intellectual possibility, in my mind, that Christian doctrine and related theology can be analyzed in the context of practical and empirical findings,¹⁹² but this does not necessarily mean that the theoretical nature of the doctrines are completely abandoned.¹⁹³ My practical and empirical findings within this thesis are to examine and question theoretical and philosophical approaches to theodicy, but not overturn them.¹⁹⁴ Practical and empirical theology is a complement to my theoretical work on theodicy, and not a replacement for it.¹⁹⁵

Leslie J. Francis (2005) writes that an element of practical theology is the use of empirical data.¹⁹⁶ Emanuel S. Goldsmith (2003) defines empirical theology as discussion of God grounded in human experience.¹⁹⁷ William Dean (1990) comments that empirical theology begins with a particular speculative view of life,¹⁹⁸ which in turn leads to the use of the empirical method.¹⁹⁹ An empirical theologian interprets the world²⁰⁰ and the empirical method refers to how that interpretation is made workable and is revised if needed.²⁰¹ Mark J. Cartledge (2003) reasons empirical theology has the objective of finding the faith and practice of the people concerned.²⁰²

2. Methodology of Practical Theology

Methodology: Pattison and Woodward

¹⁹¹ Lartey (2000)(2007: 131).

¹⁹² Lartey (2000)(2007: 131).

¹⁹³ There is always a need for systematic and philosophical theology to study the reasonableness of doctrines.

¹⁹⁴ I stay within Christian tradition, from a Reformed position, but am open to being influenced by empirical data.

¹⁹⁵ Through questionnaires, statistics and graphs, theology and theodicy can be examined academically in a different way from theoretical.

¹⁹⁶ Francis (2005: 1).

¹⁹⁷ Goldsmith (2003: 1).

¹⁹⁸ Dean (1990: 85-102).

¹⁹⁹ Dean (1990: 85-102).

²⁰⁰ Dean (1990: 85-102).

²⁰¹ Dean (1990: 85-102).

²⁰² Cartledge (2003: 14).

Stephen Pattison and James Woodward (2000)(2007) explain in ‘Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology’ in the text, which they serve as editors, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*²⁰³ that although it is difficult to provide a comprehensive and universal list of the methodology of practical theology,²⁰⁴ the list below contains many of the important elements.²⁰⁵ One, practical theology is a transformational activity,²⁰⁶ in that with both process and outcome, it aims to change the lives of persons, and create greater understanding in the contemporary world.²⁰⁷ Theoretical, Philosophical theology from both conservative and liberal perspectives can also offer an alteration in the thinking and life of a student of theology,²⁰⁸ but in many cases persons will not view doctrine as life changing and need to understand theoretical, philosophical concepts concerning theodicy clearly in the practical context,²⁰⁹ in order for theology to offer any possibility of impacting his/her life significantly.²¹⁰ Most persons do not receive specialized theological training and it is therefore reasonable to assume that a strictly and/or mainly theoretical approach will not significantly assist or impact the lives of many that attend Christian churches.²¹¹

Two, practical theology is not only concerned with the propositional, logical, and rational aspects of life and theology.²¹² Emotions, even if at times presented in an irrational manner, need

²⁰³ James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (eds.), *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.

²⁰⁴ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²⁰⁵ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13). In other words, the methodological approach to doing practical theology and the stages taken in the process. Cartledge (2003: 248).

²⁰⁶ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²⁰⁷ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²⁰⁸ My research of theodicy with MPhil and PhD work has definitely heavily influenced how I evaluate both academic and personal issues involving evil.

²⁰⁹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²¹⁰ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13). Practical theology aims to integrate theology with practice in order for the value of theology to be better understood. The gap between ‘understanding and explaining’ is sought. Anderson (2001: 26).

²¹¹ In the same way that a theologian, not heavily educated in another discipline, would not be impacted significantly in many cases by complex academic work within that other discipline.

²¹² Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13). Anderson (2001: 26).

to be understood within theological reflection of the human condition.²¹³ I should point out that emotions need not necessarily be irrational. Emotional reactions to the problem of evil and to theology and philosophy,²¹⁴ which deal with theodicy, can be reasonable and should not be automatically discounted as intellectually useless.²¹⁵ Understanding human emotions is vital for pastoral theological care,²¹⁶ which needs to reason out theology in artistic and imaginative ways.²¹⁷ While maintaining theoretical theological propositions,²¹⁸ I have no difficulty with examining the problem of evil from emotional perspectives.²¹⁹ This should be a natural human reaction for any person studying the problem of evil,²²⁰ whether this person is a professional theologian/philosopher or not. I deduce there is no reason to conclusively assume that theoretical theodicy cannot work hand in hand with emotions.²²¹ A person can feel and experience evil and suffering,²²² and yet have some understanding of it within a logical and reasonable theodicy. I reason not only that theological/philosophical theodicy can be complemented by practical and empirical theology, but also that emotions and suffering under evil does not necessarily have to lead one to disbelief in theodicy.²²³ In contrast, the better the theodicy, the more it shall assist a suffering person. A human being is often going to experience evil and suffering on both emotional and intellectual levels and both should be adequately dealt with by theology and philosophy. There is no need to detach emotion from the problem of evil

²¹³ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²¹⁴ The implications of theology are an important aspect of practical theology. Cartledge (2003: 249).

²¹⁵ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13). Cartledge (2003: 249).

²¹⁶ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²¹⁷ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²¹⁸ Such as Reformed doctrines and views developed through the study of Philosophy of Religion.

²¹⁹ Gary Collins admits that emotions can be crippling, but this provides opportunities for Christian pastoral counseling. Collins (1988: 16).

²²⁰ This should be natural for anyone dealing with the suffering of another from a theological perspective. Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²²¹ Collins (1988: 16). The Christian message can be presented within the context of one suffering.

²²² Practical theology should deal with the inner core issues of an individual. Anderson (2001: 28).

²²³ Collins (1988: 16).

for intellectual purposes.²²⁴

Three, practical theology is confessional and honest.²²⁵ This requires an objective evaluation of the world that is not philosophically committed to a particular faith or theological perspective in a close-minded fashion.²²⁶ Real suffering should not be denied for the sake of any theological system,²²⁷ as the logical and reasonable nature of a good theodicy does not take away the seriousness of suffering. Only God alone can ultimately free his creation from suffering,²²⁸ but a theodicy may explain to some degree, how God works within his creation that contains evil and suffering. Concerning objectivity, within this thesis my Reformed perspective shall not be spared from an objective evaluation and critique as a result of empirical findings.²²⁹

Four, it is unsystematic, throwaway theology that constantly needs to reinvent its tasks and methods.²³⁰ In my mind, this can work with certain strands of traditional theology, which Pattison and Woodward state are unchangeable and unchallengeable.²³¹ This is so, since although for example, Reformed and Roman Catholic theological systems²³² have certain dogmas that make them what they are, human reaction to these systems will often vary. Therefore, as a moderately conservative, Reformed theologian, even though I reason there are certain theological essentials²³³ that I bring into my theodicy, the human reaction to these doctrines shall not always be the same,²³⁴ and at the same time how the theology is understood and expressed

²²⁴ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13). Cartledge (2003: 249). Rather these would be an aspect of individual life experience which can be theologically analyzed with the use of data.

²²⁵ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²²⁶ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13).

²²⁷ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 13-14). Collins (1988: 16). Real suffering provides opportunity for pastoral counseling and theology.

²²⁸ Although human beings can somewhat minimize the suffering of others in many cases.

²²⁹ This shall be presented within Chapter Six and the Appendix.

²³⁰ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

²³¹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

²³² And Eastern Orthodox as well.

²³³ Reformed methodology which be discussed in Chapter 3.

²³⁴ Nor will be the various experiences of persons be the same. Therefore these differing experiences need to be theological considered, as Cartledge points out. Cartledge (2003: 249).

may not be identical in different eras²³⁵ even though the essential doctrines remain the same. Calvinist, Millard J. Erickson (1994) comments that doctrines need not be maintained precisely with the same form of expression that they were in Biblical times.²³⁶ Erickson also points out that not all other sources of knowledge and truth need to be excluded from Christian teaching.²³⁷ Scriptural truth revealed from God remains the same, but practical and empirical findings can alter how certain theological dogma are implemented with a particular society, group, or individual.²³⁸ Jerry W. McCant (1991) provides the idea that New Testament doctrines were definitely presupposed within,²³⁹ but the doctrines are not systematic or fully developed.²⁴⁰ I reason there are at times clearly defined Biblical doctrines,²⁴¹ but McCant is correct that the systemizing of these doctrines did not take place.²⁴² This systemization²⁴³ would be a task of systematic theology and philosophy of religion. Practical and empirical theology can provide opportunities to evaluate practically systematic theology and philosophy of religion in regard to the problem of evil.²⁴⁴

Five, practical theology is truthful and committed to changing the world through its intellectual findings.²⁴⁵ Awkward findings concerning theological perspectives should not be glossed over.²⁴⁶ Criticisms that are leveled at certain doctrines or the way these doctrines are presented²⁴⁷ within the context of theodicy does not necessarily mean that a doctrine is incorrect

²³⁵ Erickson (1994: 37).

²³⁶ Erickson (1994: 37).

²³⁷ Erickson (1994: 37). Including studies in science and medicine.

²³⁸ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

²³⁹ McCant (1991: 471).

²⁴⁰ McCant (1991: 471).

²⁴¹ McCant (1991: 471).

²⁴² McCant (1991: 471).

²⁴³ McCant (1991: 471).

²⁴⁴ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

²⁴⁵ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14). These include a ministry focus where Christ is seen as the means of reconciliation between the world and God. Anderson (2001:62).

²⁴⁶ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

²⁴⁷ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

or needs revision. It may be the case that the particular doctrine needs to be better explained by the Christian Church, and in particular within the tradition(s) for which it originates and is associated.

Six, it must be contextual and situational related.²⁴⁸ Practical theology can use the Bible and other historical data, but its main concern is to explore and contribute to immediate contexts, situations, and practices.²⁴⁹ From traditional and Reformed Christian perspectives, the Bible serves as the key Scripture and reference in regard to matters of faith.²⁵⁰ Cambridge theologian, J.S. Whale (1958) explains that within Protestant thought the Bible represents the whole counsel of God and nothing can be added whether by new revelation or tradition.²⁵¹ Whale, however, correctly warns against the idea of the Bible becoming a law book,²⁵² and the Scripture needs to stay a historical living word as opposed to a narrow book of rules.²⁵³ This goes back to Erickson's point that God's word, although an unchanging message must be interpreted for each era.²⁵⁴ This in no way allows for an overhaul of major, traditional Christian doctrines from traditional and Reformed perspectives,²⁵⁵ but with the use of practical and empirical approaches there would be opportunities to understand Christian theology in modern terms.²⁵⁶ In other words, the very same Biblical doctrines that were given in the contexts of ancient Israel, Europe, Asia, and Africa need to be explained in the contexts of twenty-first century Western civilization, and other societies in the world. Theological principles would remain the same, but theological

²⁴⁸ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

²⁴⁹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

²⁵⁰ Whale (1958: 15).

²⁵¹ Whale (1958: 15).

²⁵² Whale (1958: 15).

²⁵³ Whale (1958: 15).

²⁵⁴ Erickson (1994: 37).

²⁵⁵ Whale (1958: 15).

²⁵⁶ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14-15).

application can vary within eras and locations.²⁵⁷

Seven, practical theology is sociopolitically committed.²⁵⁸ Persons from ‘below’ are a focus of practical theology, these being people who experience institutionalized injustice and oppression.²⁵⁹ The Church should not simply attempt to raise itself to heaven in a sense,²⁶⁰ but needs to focus on working within the world.²⁶¹ Robert McAfee Brown (1984) comments that in the Bible, in places such as Exodus, God takes a position against those who promote oppression and injustice.²⁶² God at times does take sides in human struggles,²⁶³ and God does side with the oppressed.²⁶⁴ Christians are sometimes in the delicate and tricky position of staying true to Biblical standards and yet standing with those who are oppressed and within the world system,²⁶⁵ even if they are not believers and live outside of Christian morality.²⁶⁶ Those in power who call themselves Christians need to be respectfully challenged if they are perceived with a significant deal of evidence, to be involved in abusive practice.²⁶⁷ Western Christians need to examine the side they are on in many of the world’s social struggles, particularly in regard to the third world.²⁶⁸ In my mind there is a danger that Christianity, whether conservative or liberal, becomes overly influenced by cultures where it exists. Christian thought must stay true to Biblical and theological principles at the expense of being led astray by societal movements that later in history may be deemed to have been corrupt. Any historical corruption of the Christian Church is, in the end, a poor witness of Christ and the gospel and weakens the credibility of

²⁵⁷ Whale (1958: 15). Erickson (1994: 37).

²⁵⁸ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14-15).

²⁵⁹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁶⁰ Anderson (2001:181).

²⁶¹ Anderson (2001:181). The Church must work within the world without being worldly at the expense of being true to the Holy Spirit. This is no easy task for a large institution such as the Church.

²⁶² Brown (1984: 34).

²⁶³ Brown (1984: 34).

²⁶⁴ Brown (1984: 41).

²⁶⁵ Anderson (2001:181).

²⁶⁶ A good Christian witness will treat non-believers with love, care and respect.

²⁶⁷ Brown (1984: 160-161).

²⁶⁸ Brown (1984: 160-161). Anderson (2001: 181). The third world is also known as the developing world.

Christian ministry in the minds of many critics.²⁶⁹

Eight, practical theology is experimental, and personal experience of people's religious life.²⁷⁰ There is room for discussion in how doctrines should be practically implemented.²⁷¹ As people's religious reflection needs to be taken seriously,²⁷² and this has my total support, I reason this can be done within traditional Christian perspectives, including Reformed ones, without overthrowing doctrines that are considered Biblical and essential.²⁷³ Again, this is not to indicate, in any way, that I wish to avoid intellectual challenges to Reformed theology as concepts from both conservative and liberal perspectives shall be reviewed and examined within this work.²⁷⁴ J.I. Packer (1973) states those that know God have great thoughts concerning him.²⁷⁵ These types of thoughts require personal experiences beyond Biblical and theological knowledge alone. The God of academic and devotional theology needs to be personally experienced to seriously impacts lives.²⁷⁶

Nine, practical theology is often reflectively based.²⁷⁷ Persons are encouraged to analyze their own life and experiences.²⁷⁸ Theological reflection should be an integral part of both theoretical and practical/empirical approaches.²⁷⁹ Packer reasons that persons need to meditate on, think over, dwell on, and personally apply the things of God.²⁸⁰ In my view, revealed theology to be understood reasonably well in theory and practice requires a person to pray and

²⁶⁹ Anderson reasons the Church needs to repent for wrong doing in its existence. Anderson (2001: 180-181).

²⁷⁰ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

²⁷¹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁷² Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

²⁷³ Whale (1958: 15). Erickson (1994: 37).

²⁷⁴ Notably in the surveys.

²⁷⁵ Packer (1973: 24).

²⁷⁶ Packer (1973: 24). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

²⁷⁷ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁷⁸ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁷⁹ Packer (1973: 18).

²⁸⁰ Packer (1973: 18).

reflect on this over time. God must be contemplated.²⁸¹ Followers should reflect on Biblical,²⁸² theological and other truths in order to hopefully lead to correct practical applications.

Ten, practical theology, in its interrogative nature, unlike traditional, orthodox theology, is not primarily interested in staying within confined thought,²⁸³ but asks good questions concerning the nature of reality.²⁸⁴ Although I have stated that I am not interested in overturning primary Christian orthodox theology,²⁸⁵ at the same time this theology must be critically analyzed in order that persons within the Christian Church are being taught and understand concepts correctly.²⁸⁶ Packer warns of the real danger of knowing about theology and apologetics and yet not really knowing much about God.²⁸⁷ One can know certain Biblical, theological doctrines,²⁸⁸ but without a serious reflective, and perhaps interrogative type of evaluation of these views, God will not necessarily be known.²⁸⁹ It is possible this ties back to what Brown stated, as certain Christians may be on the wrong side of history on certain social issues.²⁹⁰ Perhaps in some cases this is because Christians, or persons that claim to be Christians, possess Biblical and theological knowledge,²⁹¹ and yet have not seriously interacted with material to have a reasonable understanding of how knowing the Biblical God should lead one to treat fellow human beings with love and respect.²⁹²

Eleven, practical theology is interdisciplinary, meaning it uses methods from academic

²⁸¹ Packer (1973: 18).

²⁸² Packer (1973: 18).

²⁸³ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁸⁴ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁸⁵ Secondary doctrines are different and can be overturned within Christian orthodoxy.

²⁸⁶ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁸⁷ Packer (1973: 21-22).

²⁸⁸ Packer (1973: 21-22).

²⁸⁹ Packer (1973: 21-22).

²⁹⁰ Brown (1984: 160-161).

²⁹¹ Packer (1973: 21-22).

²⁹² Packer (1973: 21-22). Matthew 22:39 and Mark 12:31 both command the believer in the Biblical God to love others as one loves self. Clearly this would mean that no person or group should face mistreatment from a true believer, if that believer is obeying God. Obeying God would be a sign of knowing God.

approaches that are not overtly theological.²⁹³ Although I reason none of these other disciplines²⁹⁴ should alter essential Biblical theology, I can agree with Pattison and Woodward when they explain that disciplines such as economics, sociology, and psychology could impact practical theology.²⁹⁵ As noted earlier, truth can be found outside of the Bible,²⁹⁶ and I deduce that other academic disciplines can certainly be used to help those in the Christian Church better understand theology. Christian theology in regard to theodicy is already relying on the related, but different discipline of philosophy.²⁹⁷ Within this thesis, I shall review Augustine and Feinberg who are noted theologians, but Plantinga and Hick are, in my view, philosophers or philosophers of religion. If theology can rely on philosophy for assistance in regard to theodicy, it can rely on disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and science as well.²⁹⁸

Twelve, practical theology is analytical and constructive, meaning it analyses situations and attempts to provide constructive ideas for change.²⁹⁹ Warren S. Kissinger (1975) when discussing German pietism³⁰⁰ notes that the Christian faith was understood to have practical consequences, and have an antagonism towards worldliness.³⁰¹ Christian faith and philosophy needs to have a progressive, practical nature, which seeks to find problems in the Christian life,³⁰² and with God's help sets out to change and improve things, both on an individual and corporate level.³⁰³ The antagonism³⁰⁴ should not be against the world,³⁰⁵ but opposed to acting in worldly

²⁹³ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁹⁴ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁹⁵ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

²⁹⁶ Erickson (1994: 37).

²⁹⁷ Philosophy of Religion.

²⁹⁸ It is wise to have an open mind concerning academic disciplines outside one's own. No discipline, including theology, adequately deals with all truth and therefore much can be learned from other types of knowledge and thought.

²⁹⁹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

³⁰⁰ Kissinger (1975: 37).

³⁰¹ Kissinger (1975: 37).

³⁰² Kissinger (1975: 37).

³⁰³ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

³⁰⁴ Kissinger (1975: 37).

ways which promote evil,³⁰⁶ instead of promoting God inspired goodness. Christian ministry to be effective should not hold animosity toward persons it is attempting to reach,³⁰⁷ but should present the gospel respectfully.

Thirteen, the authors comment that practical theology is dialectical and disciplined.³⁰⁸ There is a creative tension within the discipline with theory and practice,³⁰⁹ religious tradition and contemporary experience,³¹⁰ written texts and present experience, theology and other disciplines,³¹¹ and the religious community and outside communities.³¹² Here it can be admitted that although I reason the Bible is God's revealed word for humanity and the Church,³¹³ what is written in Scripture as conduct and practice is not always followed by those within the Christian Church. Harold Lindsell (1976) explains it is always a possibility that persons in the church can in practice deny what they believe in principle, although principle and practice should work together.³¹⁴ Disciplined conversation³¹⁵ can allow practical and empirical theology to discern at times where certain church groups and related organizations are not perhaps representing Scripture in the best way possible.

Fourteen, for the final point, practical theology is noted to be skillful and demanding.³¹⁶ The authors explain that there is much to learn concerning the different methods involved in this approach.³¹⁷ Francis reasons that the disciplines of the social sciences will be applied as

³⁰⁵ Anderson (2001:181).

³⁰⁶ Brown (1984: 160-161).

³⁰⁷ Kissinger (1975: 37).

³⁰⁸ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15-16).

³⁰⁹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15-16).

³¹⁰ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15-16).

³¹¹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15-16).

³¹² Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15-16).

³¹³ Thiessen (1956: 79).

³¹⁴ Lindsell (1976: 143).

³¹⁵ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 16).

³¹⁶ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 16).

³¹⁷ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 16).

methodology for studying practical and empirical theology.³¹⁸ Social sciences, science, and philosophy should be sought to assist theological understanding in the overall pursuit of truth.³¹⁹ The hope is that through difficult study and research practical theology can be both genuinely practical and authentically theological.³²⁰

Methodology: Alistair Campbell

Alistair Campbell (2000)(2007) also deals with several methodological issues concerning practical theology.³²¹ One, practical theology is concerned with the study of specific social structures and individual initiatives from which God's work can continue in the present world.³²² The hope is that this shall lead to renewal, and the source of this type of initiative and renewal can be found within or outside the life of the church.³²³ Basically, God's work does not necessarily always have to be done within a Christian organization.³²⁴ A Christian for example, could be working for a secular organization feeding the poor, and/or working against numerous forms of social injustice. Ivone Gebara (2002), a Catholic and feminist theologian, writes the message of Christ on the cross brings persons to the idea that suffering comes from injustice and this will ultimately lead to redemption and victory over opponents.³²⁵ The work of Christians should involve ending, and not promoting evil, whether in a Christian or secular work environment.³²⁶

Two, Campbell explains that the functions of ordained ministry can no longer be seen as

³¹⁸ Francis (2005: 2-3).

³¹⁹ Francis (2005: 2-3). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

³²⁰ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 17).

³²¹ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84-85).

³²² Campbell (2000)(2007: 84).

³²³ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84).

³²⁴ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84).

³²⁵ Gebara (2002: 107).

³²⁶ Gebara (2002: 107).

normative for the division of subject matter and the scope of work.³²⁷ Campbell writes that acts of charity and such, which were in the past on the periphery of church work, need to move to the centre.³²⁸ I reason that the atoning³²⁹ and resurrection³³⁰ work of Christ for believers must remain an essential element of Christian preaching, teaching and ministry. However, Brown believes the Bible teaches that there is hope for those in the world who are poor and oppressed.³³¹ Brown explains that if God sided with these suffering persons in Biblical times, he also does today.³³² I can grant this proposition,³³³ and state that although the salvific work of Christ for humanity should remain the core of Christian faith and philosophy,³³⁴ simultaneous to this Christians must help in an earthly physical sense, those they are attempting to assist in a spiritual sense. This is an important and essential way of making theology practical.

Three, practical theology has a relationship to other theological disciplines which is ‘lateral’ rather than ‘linear.’³³⁵ Practical theology, by Campbell’s methodology, is not in a linear fashion following a canon of relevance as he describes it,³³⁶ nor is it connected to some type of orthodoxy.³³⁷ My methodology and approach is somewhat different than Campbell’s.³³⁸ I agree that practical and empirical findings need to be objective in order to constructively critique theological systems, including Reformed theology in regard to theodicy and related issues. I reason that if the theoretical, theological work in regard to theodicy is logically and reasonably

³²⁷ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84).

³²⁸ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84).

³²⁹ Whale (1958: 71-93). Grenz, Guretzki, and Olsen (1999: 17).

³³⁰ Thiessen (1956: 331: 340). Whale (1958: 65-70). Grenz, Guretzki, and Olsen (1999: 102).

³³¹ Brown (1984: 14). Gebara (2002: 107).

³³² Brown (1984: 14).

³³³ Brown (1984: 14).

³³⁴ Whale (1958: 71-93). Thiessen (1956: 331: 340).

³³⁵ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84-85).

³³⁶ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84-85).

³³⁷ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84-85).

³³⁸ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84-85).

done, it can contain truth. As practical and empirical theology can also contain truth,³³⁹ these types of theological approaches may at times follow, in a linear manner,³⁴⁰ theoretical theology, even if it was not the original intention of the practical/empirical work. I therefore am not as convinced as Campbell that practical theology will often lead to theological conclusions that are inconclusive and ambiguous.³⁴¹ I must add if one assumes the theoretical nature of philosophical theology that is under review is inconclusive and ambiguous,³⁴² it is quite possible this will be the same result deduced from the related practical and empirical findings.³⁴³ A traditional orthodox Christian perspective would be that Scripture, at least with primary doctrines, is not inconclusive or ambiguous, but trustworthy³⁴⁴ as the Holy Spirit inspired chosen persons to write the Scriptures and what is written is what God desired.³⁴⁵

Four, since practical theology uses situation based methods, it is fragmentary and poorly systemized.³⁴⁶ Since it is constantly seeking out and presenting new situations,³⁴⁷ it cannot present a comprehensive theology of itself.³⁴⁸ These are strong words from Campbell,³⁴⁹ but the critic should understand that this does not make empirical theology useless. I can understand that Campbell is presenting an experimental theological approach in contrast to a theological system.³⁵⁰ Practical and empirical theology is a theological approach that examines theological

³³⁹ In particular truth about individual experiences not expressed within theoretical theology. Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

³⁴⁰ Campbell (2000)(2007: 84-85).

³⁴¹ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁴² Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁴³ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁴⁴ Lindsell (1976: 30).

³⁴⁵ Lindsell (1976: 30). Of course the original autographs are missing and presumably nonexistent. Therefore, the Bible consists of copies and portions of manuscripts.

³⁴⁶ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁴⁷ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁴⁸ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁴⁹ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁵⁰ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

systems, and is not a system in itself.³⁵¹ Within this thesis the practical and empirical approach and findings shall be used to critique and strengthen understanding of the theoretical theodicy discussed.³⁵²

Five, practical theology should result in concrete proposals developed to restructure the Christian Church in life, witness, fellowship and service.³⁵³ This should be true for the work of Christians within secular structures in society as well.³⁵⁴ David Lyon (1998) discusses the Christian Church and social changes,³⁵⁵ and explains that the cultural memory of some aspects of Christianity has been eroded.³⁵⁶ Secularization may have played its part in this erosion.³⁵⁷ He warns against the dangers of fundamentalism and hedonism/nihilism³⁵⁸ and states that the goodness and grace of the Christian God is the only hope for the world.³⁵⁹ In a secularized Western culture³⁶⁰ the Christian Church needs to restructure where necessary certain practices without denying the Biblical revelation which provides hope for persons.

3. Methodology of Empirical Theology within Practical Theology

Its Relation to Science

By evaluating free will, sovereignty and soul-making theodicy with the use of practical theology, it shall be examined to what degree the theological assumptions and concepts within these perspectives are understood and accepted empirically by questionnaire respondents.³⁶¹ As

³⁵¹ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁵² In particular in Chapter Six which discusses the questionnaire statistics.

³⁵³ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁵⁴ Campbell (2000)(2007: 85).

³⁵⁵ Lyon (1998: 279).

³⁵⁶ Lyon (1998: 279).

³⁵⁷ Lyon (1998: 279).

³⁵⁸ Lyon (1998: 294).

³⁵⁹ Lyon (1998: 294).

³⁶⁰ Lyon (1998: 279).

³⁶¹ This provides an empirical balance to theoretical theology.

noted, Francis writes that the disciplines of the social sciences will be applied as methodology for studying practical and empirical theology.³⁶² He reasons that the work of practical and empirical theology can be tested by the social sciences.³⁶³ R. Ruard Ganzevoort (2004)(2005) explains his view that theology is a forum where various scientific disciplines meet.³⁶⁴ Theology is like science in that various theological disciplines investigate language and other symbols in relation to religious experiences, beliefs, and actions,³⁶⁵ and therefore are concerned with understanding how ‘God speaks.’³⁶⁶ This thesis, within its methodology accepts that the theoretical, philosophical views within the reviewed theodicy³⁶⁷ shall be examined theologically within the Chapters,³⁶⁸ but also shall be reviewed practically, sociologically, and psychologically to some degree. This is done by examining the empirical questionnaire results and statistics within social science.³⁶⁹ Theological theories therefore, within this thesis, are not only presented for and by professional theologians and philosophers, but also by respondents that attend Christian Churches from various denominations and church groups.³⁷⁰ This thesis therefore, in the context of theodicy related ideas, shall to some extent bridge the intellectual gap between professional theology/philosophy in regard to the problem of evil, and how persons that attend Christian Churches respond to these theories.³⁷¹ Theology does not exist primarily for

³⁶² Francis (2005: 2-3). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

³⁶³ Francis (2005: 4). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

³⁶⁴ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 2).

³⁶⁵ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 2).

³⁶⁶ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 2).

³⁶⁷ Three basic theodicy and four exemplars and approaches.

³⁶⁸ Mainly Chapters Two to Four.

³⁶⁹ Francis (2005: 4). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

³⁷⁰ Christian theology should not only be created and exist for professional theologians and scholars, but also for church members and attendees. Practical and empirical theology can be created through questionnaire responses by those within the church that shall never be professionals.

³⁷¹ I am not a professional sociologist or psychologist, but the questionnaire respondents will quite naturally not only deal with theological and philosophical responses to questions, but also practical ramifications that deal with issues within the social sciences.

theologians and philosophers, but for all church attendees and members.³⁷² Therefore, any mistrust or misunderstanding of theology in regard to theodicy within the church by laypersons needs to be corrected and the use of questionnaires and empirical data provides a vehicle for correction.

Hans-Gunter Heimbrock (2005) notes that since religion and faith is experimental within empirical theology,³⁷³ the social sciences have been used to examine social dynamics, conditions and contexts of religious life.³⁷⁴ He reasons that pastoral work has also been assisted in this process.³⁷⁵ There has been increased discussion involving standards and criteria for appropriate empirical research in theology.³⁷⁶ Philosophically, I do not view Christian faith and philosophy as primarily experimental,³⁷⁷ although I can grant Heimbrock's point that the social sciences can deal with the existing experimental aspects of religion and assist in understanding.³⁷⁸ The experimental nature³⁷⁹ of empirical theology can not only lead to a better understanding of practical theology within the Christian Church, but when applied the theodicy related questions in this project, can help to explain how the theoretical theories of theologians and philosophers are being understood and accepted by persons that attend church. If there are misunderstandings and disagreements between professionals and amateurs in regard to theodicy concepts, the empirical aspect within this thesis allows for both pastoral work³⁸⁰ and theoretical theology to be assisted by feedback from church attendees of various denominations and groups.³⁸¹ The professional teacher within Christianity is therefore given the opportunity, after reading my

³⁷² Therefore this is a need for practical theology.

³⁷³ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299).

³⁷⁴ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299). Francis (2005: 4). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

³⁷⁵ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299).

³⁷⁶ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299).

³⁷⁷ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299).

³⁷⁸ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299). Francis (2005: 4). Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

³⁷⁹ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299).

³⁸⁰ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299).

³⁸¹ Heimbrock (2005: 273-299).

work, to better explain and/or reconsider the presentation of certain doctrines based on results of the empirical data.

Professor of philosophy and religion, Karl E. Peters (1992) comments in his abstract that empirical theology is in contrast to science in that it seeks to understand the nature and source of human fulfilment,³⁸² and science seeks to understand the world regardless of the implications of human welfare.³⁸³ Empirical theology is like science in that it affirms naturalism,³⁸⁴ accepts limitations on human knowledge, and therefore makes all religious knowledge tentative.³⁸⁵ Both scientific causal and religious explanations are sought for meaning in life, and a key criterion for justifying ideas is to explain experience and to focus on new research.³⁸⁶ Within my Reformed perspective there is an acknowledgement that science is dependent on the use of naturalism.³⁸⁷ Y. Krikorian (1944)(2007) explains naturalism is part of nature, contains nothing supernatural,³⁸⁸ and that the scientific method should be used to explain all aspects of reality, including those assumed to be ‘spiritual’ in nature.³⁸⁹ C.A. Dubray writes that naturalism is not primarily a special system as much as a view held by many within philosophy and religion.³⁹⁰ It is not so much a set of positive or negative doctrines, but a general attitude which influences many ideas.³⁹¹ Nature is viewed as the fundamental and original source for all that exists,³⁹² and therefore all reality needs to be explained in terms of nature.³⁹³ All events find an adequate

³⁸² Peters (1992: 297-325).

³⁸³ Peters (1992: 297-325).

³⁸⁴ Peters (1992: 297-325).

³⁸⁵ Peters (1992: 297-325).

³⁸⁶ Peters (1992: 297-325).

³⁸⁷ Peters (1992: 297-325).

³⁸⁸ Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

³⁸⁹ Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

³⁹⁰ Dubray (1911)(2007: 1).

³⁹¹ Dubray (1911)(2007: 1).

³⁹² Dubray (1911)(2007: 1).

³⁹³ Dubray (1911)(2007: 1). Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

explanation within nature itself.³⁹⁴ I can accept that science must use natural and not supernatural means³⁹⁵ and is clearly often a discipline with different methods than theology or philosophy. One should not expect scientific method to be religious in nature.³⁹⁶ Many Christians of moderate positions and various traditions would disagree with the concept that nature is the fundamental and original source for all that exists.³⁹⁷ James W. Sire (1977) notes there have been theistic critics that have found fault with naturalism.³⁹⁸ This was based on the conviction that a personal God was behind the universe and that naturalism in itself did not provide an adequate reason why human beings were valuable.³⁹⁹ Human beings are unique, but so are gorillas, and there remains the problem of establishing the value of human beings within naturalism, according to Sire.⁴⁰⁰

Bloesch reasons naturalism philosophically reduces humans to creatures that commit instinctual drives.⁴⁰¹ Wheaton professor, Henry Clarence Thiessen (1956) explains that since naturalism holds that nature is the whole of reality, everything that occurs is due to the laws of nature.⁴⁰² He comments Scripture recognizes the existence of the laws of nature, but it is reasoned they do not operate independently of God.⁴⁰³ God concurs with the laws he has established,⁴⁰⁴ and Thiessen reasons that miracles and revelation can occur when God operates outside of laws he established.⁴⁰⁵ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard,

³⁹⁴ Dubray (1911)(2007: 1). Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

³⁹⁵ Dubray (1911)(2007: 1). Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

³⁹⁶ God is revealed in Scripture to be spiritual in nature as described in John 4:24, therefore God could never be proven to exist through the empirical, scientific testing of matter. Science is therefore a discipline outside of the realm of the supernatural.

³⁹⁷ Dubray (1911)(2007: 1).

³⁹⁸ Sire (1977: 74).

³⁹⁹ Sire (1977: 74).

⁴⁰⁰ Sire (1977: 74).

⁴⁰¹ Bloesch (1987: 174).

⁴⁰² Thiessen (1956: 186).

⁴⁰³ Thiessen (1956: 186).

⁴⁰⁴ Thiessen (1956: 186).

⁴⁰⁵ Thiessen (1956: 186).

Jr. (1993) suggest miracle stories in the Gospels serve to demonstrate who Jesus Christ was and that God was breaking into human history.⁴⁰⁶ Miracles are not typical, but were primarily used in the New Testament to highlight the ministry of Christ.⁴⁰⁷ Naturalists and moderate Christians would not necessarily disagree on scientific facts, but many Christians would accept a revealed supernatural source behind nature,⁴⁰⁸ the naturalist would deny.⁴⁰⁹ It can be reasoned therefore that Christians can embrace the similarities that science has with empirical theology,⁴¹⁰ without a necessary abandonment of the belief that God revealed himself and his plan of salvation within history.⁴¹¹ Empirical theology within practical approaches⁴¹² can therefore without necessary contradiction, complement philosophical theology in the context of theodicy.

Methodology: William Dean

Dean explains that for empirical theology, method is the outcome of content and not the other way around.⁴¹³ The empirical method contributes to the continual development, correction and revision of speculative content.⁴¹⁴ He writes that empirical method is distinctive in making experience the highest authority;⁴¹⁵ however, he reasons that even anti-experimental theologians depend on Scripture and related tradition when they are trusted and experienced.⁴¹⁶ Erickson appears to agree with this notion to a point as he comments that in theology, truth and experience

⁴⁰⁶ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 340).

⁴⁰⁷ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 340).

⁴⁰⁸ Thiessen (1956: 186).

⁴⁰⁹ Dubray (1911)(2007: 1). Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

⁴¹⁰ Peters (1992: 297-325).

⁴¹¹ Weber (1955)(1981: 381-382). Franke (2005: 65).

⁴¹² Francis (2005: 1).

⁴¹³ Dean (1990: 2).

⁴¹⁴ Dean (1990: 2).

⁴¹⁵ Dean (1990: 3).

⁴¹⁶ Dean (1990: 3).

are always related.⁴¹⁷ This connection would be denied or questioned, but theological truth will always impact experience.⁴¹⁸ F.W. Dillistone (1999) writes that it is a distinctive aspect of Christianity that one learns continually through religious experience.⁴¹⁹ Revelation through Christ is the source of that experience.⁴²⁰ Theological empiricism examines its perspectives to determine if they are connected to the experienced world.⁴²¹ To Dean, empirical theology, one, begins with a speculative view of life as a struggle.⁴²² He also states that, two, from moment to moment empirical theology uses a speculative model to generate piecemeal conclusions in the face of little reliable empirical knowledge.⁴²³ For Dean method is the outcome of content, as empirical research and findings shall determine the reasonable plausibility of the theology. In the end, the assumptions of practical theology must be examined by consequences, and if the theology does take root in the real world.⁴²⁴

Methodology: Tyron Inbody

Tyron Inbody (1995) describes three methodological assumptions of empirical theology.⁴²⁵ One, as a result of the general attitude of the empirical thinker, empirical theology has an attitude of total openness towards experimental evidence. Knowledge is dependent on observable data supplied by evidence and experience.⁴²⁶

Two, empirical theology uses a method of inquiry, and a way of organizing the data that

⁴¹⁷ Erickson (1994: 29).

⁴¹⁸ Erickson (1994: 29).

⁴¹⁹ Dillistone (1999: 207).

⁴²⁰ Dillistone (1999: 207).

⁴²¹ Dean (1990: 5).

⁴²² Dean (1990: 5).

⁴²³ Dean (1990: 5).

⁴²⁴ Dean (1990: 5).

⁴²⁵ Inbody (1995: 215-216).

⁴²⁶ Inbody (1995: 215).

is experimental.⁴²⁷ Empirical theology is not an appeal to experience alone, but uses a method of inquiry with the use of data.⁴²⁸ All public theological claims based on empirical data are open to public inspection and correction.⁴²⁹ If the data is deemed as common experience, according to Inbody, it can be accepted as empirical theology.⁴³⁰

Three, empirical theology is an appeal to common human experience as the source for justification for theological assertions.⁴³¹ Empirical theologies appeal to experience as the primary source and the empirical method as the primary norm for justifying a theological claim.⁴³² From my perspective, I can acknowledge that empirical methodology has to be open to empirical evidence,⁴³³ and I can tentatively accept Inbody's first point.⁴³⁴ With point two, I do not have a difficulty with empirical data being open to public inspection,⁴³⁵ in fact I would welcome a public review of my findings in regard to theodicy.⁴³⁶ With point three, within Reformed tradition, I reason that revealed Scripture is the final authority for justifying a theological claim,⁴³⁷ and therefore would see the empirical method's evaluation of Biblical theology as very important,⁴³⁸ but not primarily or singularly important in determining the truthfulness of a doctrine. Although I reason that Christian doctrine and practice must be grounded in revealed Scripture,⁴³⁹ this does not negate the fact that theodicy reviewed within this thesis can be examined through the empirical data, and therefore my disagreement with Inbody

⁴²⁷ Inbody (1995: 215-216).

⁴²⁸ Inbody (1995: 216).

⁴²⁹ Inbody (1995: 216).

⁴³⁰ Inbody (1995: 216).

⁴³¹ Inbody (1995: 216).

⁴³² Inbody (1995: 216).

⁴³³ Inbody (1995: 216).

⁴³⁴ Inbody (1995: 216).

⁴³⁵ Inbody (1995: 215-216).

⁴³⁶ Presenting the data in book, journal and blog article format is another way of receiving public feedback, in particular from those within the Christian community.

⁴³⁷ This is called the Scripture principle. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 106).

⁴³⁸ Inbody (1995: 215-216).

⁴³⁹ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 106). Lindsell (1976: 30-32).

on his third point,⁴⁴⁰ does not in any way subtract from the effectiveness of this work.⁴⁴¹

Methodology: Daniel Day Williams

Daniel Day Williams (1969) comments that there are certain broad foundations of the empirical method that can perhaps be agreed upon.⁴⁴² One, experience in the empirical method is the felt, bodily, organic action of human history.⁴⁴³ This experience includes sense data, but is not limited by it.⁴⁴⁴ Williams writes that there is a mysterious disclosure of God by which God is revealed metaphysically, and he reasons that human faith cannot survive without interpreting this metaphysical experience that is manifested in all things.⁴⁴⁵ Traditional Christian thought can agree that, in a sense, God reveals things about himself outside of revealed Scripture.⁴⁴⁶ Through creation God provided sufficient evidence for his existence,⁴⁴⁷ and therefore persons would be accountable for denying this revelation.⁴⁴⁸ This is known as natural revelation and is distinguished from special revelation.⁴⁴⁹ Special revelation would include Scripture and the gospel message,⁴⁵⁰ and therefore natural revelation would provide natural information concerning God,⁴⁵¹ but not specific information in regard to salvation.⁴⁵² The knowledge of God for

⁴⁴⁰ Inbody (1995: 216).

⁴⁴¹ A moderate conservative using empirical data to evaluate and critique his own tradition and related sovereignty theodicy, along with two other perspectives, should in my opinion be viewed as a positive and open-minded academic development.

⁴⁴² Williams (1969: 176).

⁴⁴³ Williams (1969: 176).

⁴⁴⁴ Williams (1969: 176).

⁴⁴⁵ Williams (1969: 177-178).

⁴⁴⁶ Mounce (1995: 77).

⁴⁴⁷ Mounce (1995: 77).

⁴⁴⁸ Mounce (1995: 77).

⁴⁴⁹ Mounce (1995: 78).

⁴⁵⁰ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 109).

⁴⁵¹ Mounce (1995: 78).

humanity is limited when restricted to natural theology.⁴⁵³ It is not the same knowledge of God that is revealed supernaturally in Scripture.⁴⁵⁴ James D.G. Dunn (1988) writes it is clear that within the Romans text the concept of God revealing himself through natural theology exists.⁴⁵⁵ This natural theology has always been apparent to humanity, and has been present as long as the cosmos have existed.⁴⁵⁶

Two, God is experienced as a power and process, immanent, and therefore working within the world, creating ways in which God is experienced by rational communities.⁴⁵⁷ Williams asks that if there is a way of getting knowledge outside of science, what is it?⁴⁵⁸ Conservative Christians and some liberals would of course answer that God has revealed spiritual knowledge through prophets, apostles and scribes through Scripture.⁴⁵⁹ Williams recommends the phenomenological method, which deals with understanding and clarifying human experience.⁴⁶⁰ For Williams, human beings are animals, but a special kind of animal that needs to be understood in the context of human suffering and how this impacts the human relationship with God.⁴⁶¹

Three, the knowledge of the character of things is derivable from a disciplined and critical analysis of the structures in experience and testing of the theological propositions concerning God and humankind.⁴⁶² Empirical theology has often denied religious claims that are

⁴⁵² Cranfield (1992: 32).

⁴⁵³ Cranfield (1992: 32).

⁴⁵⁴ Cranfield (1992: 32).

⁴⁵⁵ Dunn (1988: 56).

⁴⁵⁶ Dunn (1988: 57). There is no assumption here that human beings existed at the creation of the cosmos.

⁴⁵⁷ Williams (1969: 176).

⁴⁵⁸ Williams (1969: 178).

⁴⁵⁹ Whale (1958: 17). Weber (1955)(1981: 169-331).

⁴⁶⁰ Williams (1969: 178).

⁴⁶¹ Williams (1969: 178).

⁴⁶² Williams (1969: 177).

deemed to be private or related to a church.⁴⁶³ Williams admits, however, that this view is problematic as every empirical theology stands within a historical religious perspective.⁴⁶⁴ Even though Williams states that each empirical theology is coming from a historical perspective,⁴⁶⁵ it does not mean that claims and doctrines within a historical approach should be beyond criticism.⁴⁶⁶ Ganzevoort explains that for the empirical method, Scripture is not limited to its original understanding, and it may be directed to uncover interpretive potential for today.⁴⁶⁷ Doctrines and creeds within tradition will be questioned,⁴⁶⁸ as will overall religious worldviews.⁴⁶⁹ Ganzevoort reasons that for Biblical theology, other disciplines are often used in the process, such as linguistic and literary sciences, archeology, and of course history.⁴⁷⁰ The other disciplines can yield insights on Biblical texts,⁴⁷¹ the implication being that empirical theology is a discipline outside of Biblical theology, which can also assist in the understanding of Biblical texts.⁴⁷² Philosophically, I reason that for the sake of religious truth, a member of a faith group, and in particular a scholar such as myself, must be willing to, while striving for objectivity, examine his historical religious perspectives and doctrines, and this can occur through the use of disciplines other than Biblical studies, theology, and philosophy. This work of empirical theology will provide the opportunity to examine the views and doctrines of free will, sovereignty, and soul-making theodicy, and also to evaluate the criticisms of these approaches as well.

Four, empirical theology has a formal structure that is tentative with correctable

⁴⁶³ Williams (1969: 180).

⁴⁶⁴ Williams (1969: 180).

⁴⁶⁵ Williams (1969: 180).

⁴⁶⁶ Williams (1969: 180).

⁴⁶⁷ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 4).

⁴⁶⁸ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 4).

⁴⁶⁹ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 4).

⁴⁷⁰ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 4).

⁴⁷¹ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 4).

⁴⁷² Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 4).

assertions.⁴⁷³ This would seem to be essential as empirical theology by nature is awaiting data⁴⁷⁴ and reviewing the quality of that data in order to form conclusions.⁴⁷⁵ To form conclusions, based on theological deductions, before empirical data exists,⁴⁷⁶ would be the work of philosophical and not empirical theology.

4. Original Work

Author's Viewpoints

Ganzevoort provides the opinion that theology as a discipline is underdeveloped and at times diverse to a troublesome extent.⁴⁷⁷ As a result of its underdeveloped⁴⁷⁸ and diverse nature, Ganzevoort reasons that it is in danger of disintegration, because it is in constant dialogue with other disciplines such as science, social sciences,⁴⁷⁹ literary sciences, philosophy, anthropology, and history.⁴⁸⁰ I can add that theology is diverse since there are various denominations and traditions.⁴⁸¹ An object of this thesis is to, primarily in the English speaking Western world,⁴⁸² sample⁴⁸³ a wide range of persons that attend Christian Churches. My sample of 213 respondents is not excessively large, and yet is substantial. Within, there is diversity in my research, as most of the persons surveyed are outside of my Reformed tradition.⁴⁸⁴

This thesis will provide statistical data in regard to free will, sovereignty and soul-making

⁴⁷³ Williams (1969: 177).

⁴⁷⁴ Williams (1969: 177).

⁴⁷⁵ Williams (1969: 177).

⁴⁷⁶ Williams (1969: 177).

⁴⁷⁷ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 1).

⁴⁷⁸ I do not hold the view that theology is underdeveloped in every case. A purpose of writing a theodicy is to present a developed presentation.

⁴⁷⁹ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 1). Francis (2005: 4).

⁴⁸⁰ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 1).

⁴⁸¹ Within my questionnaire, I sampled Christians from conservative and liberal traditions, and those that attend Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and non-denominational churches.

⁴⁸² Since this is a British thesis.

⁴⁸³ The segment of a population selected for research. Bryan (2004: 543).

⁴⁸⁴ This was intentionally done.

theodicy. From my research, I deduce that the problem of evil, especially in regard to sovereignty theodicy, within a Reformed tradition, needs further discussion.⁴⁸⁵ Through the use of a dual methodology of both theological/philosophical examination of theodicy, and ramifications related to the social sciences,⁴⁸⁶ with practical and empirical theology data, this work does constitute an original approach to learning which adds to the overall body of knowledge. It demonstrates a systematic study in regard to both theological/philosophical research and evaluation, and the practical/empirical results. Feinberg's work, particularly in *The Many Faces of Evil*⁴⁸⁷ presents a sovereignty theodicy, which I largely agree with, but his work does not provide statistics. Works from Dutch empirical theologians⁴⁸⁸ do connect theodicy with symbols and provide a questionnaire and statistics, but my work specifically deals with three theodicy and in the review of my statistics I shall provide an original analysis for each of these three perspectives.⁴⁸⁹ In particular, I will discuss the current state of Reformed theology and sovereignty theodicy, my personal view.⁴⁹⁰ At the end of three Chapters featuring theoretical theodicy, I will present a section entitled summary and practical theology,⁴⁹¹ which shall present some issues from the Chapters that will be translated into propositional questions on the questionnaire.⁴⁹²

Why This Thesis is Beneficial

⁴⁸⁵ Mainly within Chapter Three and Chapter Six.

⁴⁸⁶ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 1). Francis (2005: 4).

⁴⁸⁷ Feinberg (1994). *The Many Faces of Evil*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House.

⁴⁸⁸ These are discussed in Chapter Five.

⁴⁸⁹ My work is also a more in-depth study of theodicy from a theoretical perspective than is the work of the Dutch school.

⁴⁹⁰ In regard to theodicy, and not an overall examination of Reformed theology.

⁴⁹¹ My original advisor, Dr. Mark Cartledge, views these summaries as precursors for the statistics.

⁴⁹² The idea being that survey questions could begin development at this stage of my work.

As noted previously, Ganzevoort wrote that theology is underdeveloped.⁴⁹³ Theodicy, as an aspect of theology can as well be underdeveloped.⁴⁹⁴ For this reason, within the Christian Church, I will review and explain free will, sovereignty, and soul-making theodicy. The free will and sovereignty perspectives exist within a moderate conservative tradition, and soul-making within a progressive liberal one.⁴⁹⁵ Within my survey propositions Christians from various theological perspectives will be provided concepts from three general perspectives and four authors⁴⁹⁶ to promote better understanding of the problem of evil. This should assist questionnaire respondents to better explain their Christian faith and philosophy with those outside of the Christian Church.⁴⁹⁷ I hope that my work can also provide some peace of mind to those suffering in this world of many evils. There is intellectual evidence that the Christian Church can still provide reasonable answers, and that intellectual progress has been made.⁴⁹⁸

Theodicy is a definite theological problem for Christianity and theism,⁴⁹⁹ but Christians can be confident that it can be intellectually, adequately dealt with, in particular in my view, with an emphasis on the sovereignty of God.⁵⁰⁰ I do not hold to free will theodicy, but reason that it presents a logical and reasonable case,⁵⁰¹ and that soul-making theodicy has some elements of truth within it.⁵⁰² As a moderate conservative that holds to Reformed theology, I reason that the atoning and resurrection work applied to believers in the eventual culminated Kingdom of God⁵⁰³ is the ultimate remedy for the problem of evil. I must be clear: *theodicy is not the remedy to the*

⁴⁹³ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 1).

⁴⁹⁴ Therefore, this type of project can still be valuable academically.

⁴⁹⁵ This conservative/liberal distinction is not always clear-cut, as some concepts do overlap, and this shall be observed through the reviews.

⁴⁹⁶ Augustine and Plantinga both write from a free will perspective.

⁴⁹⁷ 1 Peter 3:15 tells the believer to always be ready to give a defence to everyone that asks, and therefore Christians, both scholars and student are wise to have some knowledge concerning theodicy.

⁴⁹⁸ Swinburne (1998: 13-20).

⁴⁹⁹ Blackburn (1996: 375). Pereboom (2005: 33). Hille (2004: 21).

⁵⁰⁰ Erlandson (1991: 1). Although objections to this idea are duly noted throughout this thesis.

⁵⁰¹ Peterson (1982: 204).

⁵⁰² This will be discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵⁰³ Mounce (1990: 369-397).

problem of evil, but a speculative, and in my case, Biblically based attempt to explain how God deals with evil in his creation.⁵⁰⁴ In similar fashion, practical and empirical theology do not offer solutions to the problem of evil, but are theological disciplines⁵⁰⁵ which assist persons to understand how evil is comprehended and dealt with in the Christian community and in society at large.

Even with the understanding that God and Christ will eventually save the world from evil,⁵⁰⁶ and that this can be explained in ways through theodicy, does not mean that I or any theologian or philosopher can always provide specific reasons and answers for each instance of evil and suffering in creation.⁵⁰⁷ Although I do not side with critics that doubt that theism can be squared with the evil that takes place in this world,⁵⁰⁸ I fully admit that in many cases of evil and suffering, only God has a comprehensive understanding of what is occurring, and why it is occurring. Is this a weakness particular for theism? I reason not, in that atheists and critics such as Ferraiolo⁵⁰⁹ will also not be able to fully explain evil and suffering in many cases, and therefore cannot conclusively intellectually deny that the infinite, omnipotent God can use occurrences of evil in creation for his good purposes.⁵¹⁰ Therefore, theists and atheists from various perspectives are all left with degrees of ignorance in regard to the problem of evil. No person can fully understand evil and the suffering that results in every case.⁵¹¹ Theists and atheists are therefore left with using reason, and in the case of the Christian theist, the Bible⁵¹² to

⁵⁰⁴ Lindsley (2003: 3).

⁵⁰⁵ Winqest (1987: 1). Francis (2005: 1).

⁵⁰⁶ Mounce (1990: 369-397).

⁵⁰⁷ I can approach my theodicy presentation with confidence, but should always possess great humility.

⁵⁰⁸ Ferraiolo (2005: 1). Phillips (2005: 265).

⁵⁰⁹ Ferraiolo (2005: 1).

⁵¹⁰ The idea of God using evil for the greater good, without being evil in nature himself is central to sovereignty theodicy. This will be discussed in the context of gratuitous evil in Chapter Four.

⁵¹¹ Henry (1983: 282). Blocher (1994: 84).

⁵¹² Thiessen from examining Scripture reasons that the evil acts of creatures are under the control of God. Thiessen (1956: 183). Henry (1983: 282). Blocher (1994: 84).

work out theories concerning the problem of evil.

Science has made discoveries that have assisted humanity,⁵¹³ and has helped persons understand many realities.⁵¹⁴ My Reformed perspective deduces that human corruption cannot be entirely corrected scientifically,⁵¹⁵ but human beings are changed permanently to avoid evil only by the completed regeneration work of God.⁵¹⁶ I reason that scientific progress has helped humanity tremendously to live better quality lives,⁵¹⁷ but human beings are capable of committing as grotesque and intense evils as ever in the twenty-first century.⁵¹⁸ This is so, in my view, because scientific knowledge has not as of yet, been able to change the essential nature of human beings. Even if science could perfect the physical nature of persons to avoid evil actions, assuming for the sake of argument human beings have a spirit,⁵¹⁹ it needs to be considered if materially based science could perfect the human spirit as well to avoid all wrong actions. This would appear doubtful. Philosophy and theology have assisted human beings throughout history to better understand life,⁵²⁰ but neither of these disciplines can provide a remedy to the problem of evil;⁵²¹ however, they can help to explain evil and suffering through effective theodicy.⁵²²

By reviewing free will, sovereignty, and soul-making theory, and an examination of empirical data this thesis can shed light on the issue of theodicy in general terms, and at the same time reason that the culmination of God's plans will provide the remedy for evil.⁵²³ An additional benefit to the empirical questionnaire approach has been the fact that in order to

⁵¹³ Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

⁵¹⁴ Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

⁵¹⁵ Divine supernatural assistance is required to overcome evil.

⁵¹⁶ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172). Erickson (1994: 1228). Packer (1996: 924). Mounce (1990: 394).

⁵¹⁷ Krikorian (1944)(2007: 1).

⁵¹⁸ For example, nuclear technology has made nuclear weapons possible since the 1940s and there are nuclear weapons in the world which can do tremendous damage to humanity on a large scale within a few hours.

⁵¹⁹ Genesis 2:7. H.L. Ellison (1986) explains that in the Old Testament breath or spirit came from God and provided life and individuality. This is a complex issue outside the depths of this thesis.

⁵²⁰ Scudder (1940: 247).

⁵²¹ Henry (1983: 282). Blocher (1994: 84).

⁵²² Scudder (1940: 247).

⁵²³ Feinberg (1994: 141).

receive 213 completed surveys, I needed to contact a few thousand persons with the questionnaire. Several respondents have informed me in person, and through email,⁵²⁴ that this is a valuable academic exercise. It is helpful to share my work with others in this extended way and this *could not* take place similarly, if this work was strictly theoretical. It shall be seen in the statistics in the Appendix, that the problem of evil and theodicy is not explained sufficiently in Western society, in particular from a sovereignty perspective, and I am pleased that outside of the actual written thesis work I was able to assist some people in thinking about evil and suffering in our world.⁵²⁵

Why Do I Review Both Philosophical and Practical Theology?

Philosophical approaches to the problem of evil have been covered over the centuries.⁵²⁶ There have been views critical of theism such as Epicurus,⁵²⁷ David Hume,⁵²⁸ Antony Flew, J.L. Mackie,⁵²⁹ and William Rowe,⁵³⁰ as well theological defences within a type of Christian tradition such as Augustine,⁵³¹ G.W. Leibniz,⁵³² Alvin C. Plantinga,⁵³³ John Hick⁵³⁴ and John S. Feinberg,⁵³⁵ to name major players within this thesis. From my initial work on the subject with a Master of Theological Studies⁵³⁶ degree, to Master of Philosophy⁵³⁷ and Doctoral thesis, the consensus

⁵²⁴ There were of course critics as well, but for the most part persons appreciated the opportunity to ponder on the complex issues of theodicy.

⁵²⁵ I cover this issue on blogs as well.

⁵²⁶ For example, the problem of evil can be found in the Old Testament book of Job.

⁵²⁷ Epicurus (341-270 B.C.)(1949) in *Overcoming Evil* from the German translation, *Von der Ueberwindung der Furcht*, Zurich, *Von der Ueberwindung der Furcht*. Phillips discusses this view of Epicurus. Phillips (2005: 3).

⁵²⁸ Hume (1779)(2004) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Digireads.com/Neeland Media LLC, Lawrence, Kansas.

⁵²⁹ Both will be discussed with Chapter Two.

⁵³⁰ His argument concerning gratuitous evil will be discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵³¹ He shall be reviewed within Chapter Two as a primary exemplar.

⁵³² Leibniz (1710)(1998) *Theodicy*, Translated by E.M. Huggard Chicago, Open Court Classics.

⁵³³ A primary exemplar in Chapter Two.

⁵³⁴ The primary exemplar in Chapter Four.

⁵³⁵ Feinberg's view will be reviewed with Chapter Three.

⁵³⁶ From Trinity Western University.

among my advisors has been that there needs to be a practical element connected to theoretical theodicy that would better connect practical ramifications of the atoning and resurrection work of Christ to the theoretical views on the issue.⁵³⁸ So, having come to primarily Reformed conclusions⁵³⁹ I seek to analyze these conclusions and other views, such as Plantinga and Hick, through the use of questionnaires. The survey results would provide practical theological data that I could review and also form practical theological conclusions in regard to the various views discussed.

Why an Atheistic Anti-Theodicy is not Included in the Thesis

One, my sample⁵⁴⁰ has to be a certain group, and my advisors for both my MPhil⁵⁴¹ and PhD⁵⁴² work determined it must be persons within the Christian Church. Therefore, sampling atheists would need to be necessarily excluded and I would not review as a primary philosophical presentation a perspective that could not provide me with an empirical sampling.⁵⁴³

Two, there are key atheistic presentations within the work.⁵⁴⁴ The problem of evil itself is largely a critical and sometimes an atheistic criticism of theism and Christianity.⁵⁴⁵ This can be seen as the problem, as framed within the initial pages of the introduction, and with the atheistic objections of Flew and Mackie,⁵⁴⁶ as well as with the argument for gratuitous evil from William

⁵³⁷ From the University of Wales, Bangor.

⁵³⁸ For the sake of both Christians and non-Christians that would read my thesis and complete related questionnaires, the sometimes complex theoretical perspectives presented need to be associated with practical theology that are relevant.

⁵³⁹ Through my research on theodicy. I was not born or brought into the tradition.

⁵⁴⁰ The segment of a population selected for research. Bryman (2004: 543). Therefore in this context, it is the group of people I chose to survey. The material within my thesis is directly relevant to people within this population segment.

⁵⁴¹ For my MPhil thesis sample, it was Bible school and seminary students within the Christian Church.

⁵⁴² For my PhD thesis sample, it was those that attend culturally Christian churches.

⁵⁴³ By the same reasoning I also would not sample agnostics, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, etcetera.

⁵⁴⁴ D.Z. Phillips and his, in a sense anti-theodicy, are quoted throughout this thesis.

⁵⁴⁵ Valea (2007: 1). Ferraiolo (2005: 1). Epicurus (341-270 B.C.)(1949: 80).

⁵⁴⁶ In regard to Plantinga, in Chapter Two.

Rowe,⁵⁴⁷ and with critics of John Hick's theodicy.⁵⁴⁸ Atheism and an overall critical view of Christianity, from traditional and progressive perspectives, will be examined within this work,⁵⁴⁹ but the sample group is those that attend Christian Churches. Therefore, it was deemed not necessary or appropriate within the context of this thesis to review an atheistic position against theodicy as there are plenty of critical and atheistic citations and critiques within my work, and far more importantly I would not be able to sample those that represent noted positions as they are not within the Christian Church. This work is not seeking to place God in the docks or primarily to take God out of the docks.⁵⁵⁰

I should point out that the majority of scholars cited within this thesis *do not* agree with my Reformed sovereignty theodicy. Certainly Feinberg's view is similar as would be John Calvin's⁵⁵¹ but Hick's would be radically different,⁵⁵² and I would not likely receive support from the empirical theologians discussed.⁵⁵³ I am also citing many atheists and critics of traditional Christian views that would not agree with my perspectives.⁵⁵⁴ I *have not* attempted to write a thesis where I face little opposition, as on the contrary, even many of the traditional Christians cited would oppose my Reformed sovereignty perspective, such as Plantinga and incompatibilists.⁵⁵⁵ I also have included many positions critical of my own, such as non-traditional views on omnipotence that follows and the views of Immanuel Kant concerning

⁵⁴⁷ Chapter Four.

⁵⁴⁸ Chapter Four.

⁵⁴⁹ Any critical evaluation of the problem of evil would include atheistic critiques evaluating theism.

⁵⁵⁰ Doubtless many critics of theism and Christianity do place God in the docks and so a work should deal with these concepts.

⁵⁵¹ Although Calvin did not write a theodicy, his views on free will and determinism are similar to mine as will be documented throughout the thesis.

⁵⁵² Hick's theodicy is a non-traditional approach as he freely admits and I document in Chapter Four.

⁵⁵³ It will be seen in Chapter Five that Reformed and Calvinist views of God's retribution and punishment for humanity are not strongly emphasized and supported. The overall presentation of the Dutch empiricists is Christian, but not Reformed.

⁵⁵⁴ Frankly, a thesis minus serious critiques of theism and Reformed Christianity would not only be untenable in a secular PhD context, but also a Christian one as well.

⁵⁵⁵ This will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

religious dogma and belief.⁵⁵⁶ Within Chapter Three where I discuss Reformed methodology, I also discuss different non-Reformed perspectives. As shall be discussed in Chapter Five, many of the questionnaire respondents do not agree with my theodicy on key points.⁵⁵⁷

5. Traditional and Non-Traditional Views on the Omnipotence of God

Traditional Explanation

The omnipotence of God, from traditional Christian and Reformed perspectives,⁵⁵⁸ was mentioned earlier within this Chapter and briefly⁵⁵⁹ within the problem of evil discussion.⁵⁶⁰ Concerning omnipotence and God from traditional Christian view points, Thiessen defines this as meaning the creator is able to accomplish whatever he wills,⁵⁶¹ as long as it does not oppose his nature.⁵⁶² Roman Catholics Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli (1994) suggest that God faces no real barriers in actions he wishes to commit, and that only what God allows, such as human sin, could thwart God's plans.⁵⁶³ Humanist Simon Blackburn, from a non-theistic critical perspective, reasons there are difficulties with the concept of an omnipotent God not being able to make a stone so heavy he could not lift it, as this would make God possibly contradictory⁵⁶⁴ but does explain that the classic explanation is that God cannot commit the logically impossible.⁵⁶⁵

Baptist and Reformed theologian Millard Erickson writes that God cannot do any

⁵⁵⁶ Within Chapter Four.

⁵⁵⁷ Please see questionnaire results in Chapter Five, and the graphs in Appendix.

⁵⁵⁸ These perspectives are similar in that they take traditional, Biblical positions concerning omnipotence.

⁵⁵⁹ For the sake of context when discussing the problem of evil and theodicy.

⁵⁶⁰ Cauthen (1997: 1). Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 85-86). Wright (1996: 278).

⁵⁶¹ Thiessen (1956: 126). Herman Bavinck reasons God does whatever pleases God. Bavinck (1918)(2006: 233 Volume 2).

⁵⁶² Thiessen (1956: 126).

⁵⁶³ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 96).

⁵⁶⁴ Blackburn (1996: 268).

⁵⁶⁵ Blackburn (1996: 268). William T. Shedd explains that God cannot do what is 'absurd and self-contradictory'. Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 359 Volume 1).

arbitrary thing he desires,⁵⁶⁶ as he can only accomplish what is logical and not illogical and contradictory.⁵⁶⁷ Erickson also reasons, interestingly, that God cannot undo the past,⁵⁶⁸ although he may take away the effects and memory of it.⁵⁶⁹ God cannot logically violate his own nature⁵⁷⁰ or fail to live up to a promise.⁵⁷¹ Otto Weber suggests God has unlimited capacity⁵⁷² and unrestricted will.⁵⁷³ God is unrestricted in what he determines within self and outside of self.⁵⁷⁴ Presbyterian theologian John M. Frame admits the term omnipotence is not in Scripture,⁵⁷⁵ but reasons the concept is Biblical.⁵⁷⁶ He deduces that based on the Bible, it is impossible for anything to occur outside of what God has willed to happen.⁵⁷⁷

John Frame and D.Z. Phillips

The ‘all things’⁵⁷⁸ God can accomplish does come with some need to interpret.⁵⁷⁹ Frame explains that God cannot perform logically contradictory actions,⁵⁸⁰ as in making a square circle,⁵⁸¹ committing that which is immoral and sinful,⁵⁸² and interestingly, God cannot commit actions ‘appropriate only to finite creatures.’⁵⁸³ This would include ‘buying shoes’ and ‘taking

⁵⁶⁶ Erickson (1994: 277).

⁵⁶⁷ Erickson (1994: 277). For Shedd a logical impossibility is a nonentity and God could not create a nonentity. Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 359-360 Volume 1).

⁵⁶⁸ Erickson (1994: 277).

⁵⁶⁹ Erickson (1994: 277). The implication being that God could hypothetically change all the results of a past occurrence, but could not logically make the past occurrence to have not occurred, even if only he had any ultimate knowledge of it.

⁵⁷⁰ Erickson (1994: 277). Thiessen (1956: 126). Weber (1955)(1981: 440).

⁵⁷¹ Erickson (1994: 277).

⁵⁷² Weber (1955)(1981: 440).

⁵⁷³ Weber (1955)(1981: 440).

⁵⁷⁴ Weber (1955)(1981: 440).

⁵⁷⁵ Frame (2002: 515).

⁵⁷⁶ Frame (2002: 515).

⁵⁷⁷ Frame (2002: 518). Weber (1955)(1981: 440).

⁵⁷⁸ Frame (2002: 518).

⁵⁷⁹ Frame (2002: 518).

⁵⁸⁰ Frame (2002: 518). Erickson (1994: 277). Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 359-360 Volume 1).

⁵⁸¹ Frame (2002: 518). Thiessen (1956: 126).

⁵⁸² Frame (2002: 518). Thiessen (1956: 126). Weber (1955)(1981: 440).

⁵⁸³ Frame (2002: 520).

medicine for a cough.’⁵⁸⁴ Philosopher, D.Z. Phillips within *The Problem of Evil and The Problem of God*, disagrees with this basic notion and writes that since God cannot commit the actions of finite creatures such as ‘riding a bicycle’⁵⁸⁵ he is not omnipotent.⁵⁸⁶ Phillips reasons it is not logically contradictory for one to ride a bicycle and therefore God should be able to do it and yet he cannot.⁵⁸⁷ Therefore, God is not omnipotent.⁵⁸⁸

One approach to Phillip’s argument⁵⁸⁹ is to admit that God, as non-finite, cannot commit finite actions⁵⁹⁰ and is therefore not omnipotent⁵⁹¹ as classically reasoned by many within traditional thought.⁵⁹² A second approach is in agreement with Frame’s point that even though God cannot by nature commit the actions of finite creatures,⁵⁹³ this does not disqualify God as being omnipotent within his infinite nature.⁵⁹⁴ God’s lack of finiteness is actually a strength.⁵⁹⁵ Frame states God could commit the type of finite actions discussed if he so desired by taking human form.⁵⁹⁶ I reason God could take human form to accomplish the task of riding a bicycle, as for example, God is stated in Genesis⁵⁹⁷ to have walked and spoken⁵⁹⁸ in the Garden of Eden.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁸⁴ Frame (2002: 520).

⁵⁸⁵ Phillips (2005: 113).

⁵⁸⁶ Phillips (2005: 113).

⁵⁸⁷ Phillips (2005: 113).

⁵⁸⁸ Phillips (2005: 113). For Phillips, God’s inability to do finite things is a weakness making God less than all-powerful. For Frame it is a strength which maintains God as omnipotent. Frame (2002: 520).

⁵⁸⁹ Phillips (2005: 113).

⁵⁹⁰ Frame (2002: 520). Phillips (2005: 113).

⁵⁹¹ Phillips (2005: 113).

⁵⁹² Cauthen (1997: 1). Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 85-86). Wright (1996: 278).

⁵⁹³ Frame (2002: 520). Phillips (2005: 113).

⁵⁹⁴ Frame (2002: 520). A traditional perspective would not view the lack of finite nature of God as a negation, but God would be understood in the positive sense as not lacking power by being infinite.

⁵⁹⁵ Frame (2002: 520). With Phillips’ view, God could be considered less than omnipotent with my own example I provide here, because it is not illogical for a being to sleep, and God cannot sleep. However, it could be stated that it is a strength for God to not need to sleep or be able to sleep.

⁵⁹⁶ Frame (2002: 520). Phillips would more than likely view this as an ‘absurd suggestion’ with no contextual warrant, as he describes similar attempts to counter his argument. Phillips (2005: 113).

⁵⁹⁷ Genesis 3: 8 in The New American Standard Bible Version (1984: 4).

⁵⁹⁸ Old Testament scholar Victor P. Hamilton reasons this could be taken from a literal (to some degree) reading. Hamilton (1982: 48).

⁵⁹⁹ I realize there is debate on the creation story in Genesis concerning whether it is to be taken as plain literal, figurative literal, myth or a combination of approaches. La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush reason there is definitely

Although I do not reason this is a ridiculous suggestion to deduce God could take bodily form⁶⁰⁰ to walk or ride a bicycle,⁶⁰¹ it certainly would not be within God's nature to typically ride a bicycle.⁶⁰²

Philips summarizes his view on God's omnipotence in three points.⁶⁰³ One, God would only be omnipotent if he could do anything that can be explained that is done without contradiction.⁶⁰⁴ Two, he then reasons there are many countless activities that God without contradiction cannot do.⁶⁰⁵ Three, his conclusion is that God is not omnipotent.⁶⁰⁶ Philips' view can be accepted as reasonable and for some God's omnipotence would need to be redefined.⁶⁰⁷ However, I reason Frame's explanation adequately offers the points that God can only do what is logically possible⁶⁰⁸ and as well what is not contrary to his infinite and spiritual nature.⁶⁰⁹

Friedrich Schleiermacher

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)⁶¹⁰ according to W.A. Hoffecker (1996), is considered to be a very influential theologian of the nineteenth century,⁶¹¹ and the father of

metaphorical language in Genesis. La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush (1987: 72). My example does serve well as agreement with Frame's point, however. Aspects of Genesis will be further discussed within this thesis.

⁶⁰⁰ Hamilton (1982: 48).

⁶⁰¹ Phillips (2005: 113).

⁶⁰² Phillips (2005: 113).

⁶⁰³ Philips (2005: 11).

⁶⁰⁴ Philips (2005: 11).

⁶⁰⁵ Philips (2005: 11). Frame (2002: 518-520). I of course offered Frame's response to this view, and my own.

⁶⁰⁶ Philips (2005: 11).

⁶⁰⁷ Traditional perspectives would still reason that God's omnipotence need not be redefined as a lack of finiteness would demonstrate God's lack of impotency.

⁶⁰⁸ Frame (2002: 518). Erickson (1994: 277). Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 359-360 Volume 1). Blackburn (1996: 268).

⁶⁰⁹ Frame (2002: 520). Erickson (1994: 277). Thiessen (1956: 126). Weber (1955)(1981: 440). David Hume within Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion questions this traditional understanding of an omnipotent supreme being as human limitations make God's attributes 'totally incomprehensible.' Hume (1779)(2004: 21).

⁶¹⁰ Grenz and Olson (1992: 40). Hoffecker (1996: 983).

⁶¹¹ Hoffecker (1996: 981). Stephen Neill and Tom Wright explain that Schleiermacher's influence upon theology was notable by the end of the eighteenth century. Neill and Wright (1964)(1988: 3).

liberal Protestant theology.⁶¹² Schleiermacher's views on omnipotence can be contrasted with traditional view discussed.⁶¹³ Editors H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (1821)(1928)(1976) within the Editors Preface of Schleiermacher's 1821 text *The Christian Faith* provide the opinion that besides John Calvin's *Institutes*,⁶¹⁴ *The Christian Faith* is the most important work covering Christian theology and doctrine within Protestantism.⁶¹⁵ George Cross within his 1913 text, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, explains that in Schleiermacher's theology human religious consciousness⁶¹⁶ expresses a relation between God and the world,⁶¹⁷ and therefore the consciousness of a dependence on God only arises in connection with the world.⁶¹⁸ God-consciousness⁶¹⁹ is connected with every human experience⁶²⁰ and this is a demand upon human nature.⁶²¹ and means every 'world-impression' must be able to connect with religious feeling.⁶²² God-consciousness is not only a contingent aspect of human experience,⁶²³ as this would not allow God omnipotence to be an obtained expression in this world.⁶²⁴ God's omnipotence can only be referred to as finite human beings are affected by it through our God consciousness.⁶²⁵ Divine omnipotence will be conceived by persons as eternal and omnipresent⁶²⁶ as everything in reality is already 'posited through finite causes in time and space.'⁶²⁷ Everything that exists by

⁶¹² Hoffecker (1996: 981). Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson reason Schleiermacher is a pioneer in theology. Grenz and Olson (1992: 40). His influence on contemporary theology 'can hardly be over estimated.' Grenz and Olson (1992: 39).

⁶¹³ Traditional and Reformed.

⁶¹⁴ Calvin, John (1539)(1998) Book II *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

⁶¹⁵ Mackintosh and Stewart (1821)(1928)(1976: v).

⁶¹⁶ As discussed and referenced from Schleiermacher's text *The Christian Faith*. See also Selbie (1911)(2009: 68-70).

⁶¹⁷ Cross (1913)(2009: 1). Selbie (1911)(2009: 68-70).

⁶¹⁸ Cross (1913)(2009: 1). Selbie (1911)(2009: 68-70). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶¹⁹ This will be further discussed in Chapter Four, as Schleiermacher's views have influenced John Hick.

⁶²⁰ Cross (1913)(2009: 1). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶²¹ Cross (1913)(2009: 1). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶²² Cross (1913)(2009: 1).

⁶²³ Cross (1913)(2009: 1).

⁶²⁴ Cross (1913)(2009: 1).

⁶²⁵ Cross (1913)(2009: 1).

⁶²⁶ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212).

⁶²⁷ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212).

natural order still takes places through divine omnipotence and therefore through One, that being God.⁶²⁸ W.B. Selbie (1911)(2009) explains that for Schleiermacher, the almighty nature of God is ‘grounded in the infinite causality’ of the divine God.⁶²⁹ Persons understand the manifested causality of God through human dependence on everything that comes from this divine being.⁶³⁰ There is little difference for Schleiermacher between what God can do and what God will do.⁶³¹ God’s omnipotence is energy everywhere in action and equates to all possible things.⁶³² God can do what he wills, and ‘whichever is greater than the other, the will or the ability, there is always a limitation.’⁶³³ This limitation is only done away with for Schleiermacher when what God can do and will do, are equal in range.⁶³⁴ The inner power of God to do something and his will do it cannot be separated.⁶³⁵ God’s almighty power is not the power to do anything, but instead anything God pleases.⁶³⁶ The divine power of the Almighty is subject to self-limitations which are connected to both God’s moral nature and the freedom of his human creatures.⁶³⁷ The one all-embracing divine will is identical with eternal omnipotence.⁶³⁸

Schleiermacher’s approach redefines Christian religion as a unique element of human experience, not located in the intellectual and moral aspects of persons as these produce indirect knowledge concerning God only.⁶³⁹ God is instead experienced through feeling.⁶⁴⁰ The infinite

⁶²⁸ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212).

⁶²⁹ Selbie (1911)(2009: 68). Within natural order every effect has been ordained by divine causality.

Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212).

⁶³⁰ Selbie (1911)(2009: 68). Persons understand omnipotence also based on a feeling of ‘absolute dependence’ on God. Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶³¹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 214). Selbie (1911)(2009: 68).

⁶³² Selbie (1911)(2009: 68). Selbie further explains that omnipotence for Schleiermacher is the ‘infinity of divine productivity.’ Selbie (1911)(2009: 70).

⁶³³ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 214).

⁶³⁴ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 214).

⁶³⁵ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 214). Selbie (1911)(2009: 68).

⁶³⁶ Selbie (1911)(2009: 68).

⁶³⁷ Selbie (1911)(2009: 68-69).

⁶³⁸ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 214).

⁶³⁹ Hoffecker (1996: 982).

⁶⁴⁰ Hoffecker (1996: 982). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

God is experienced through human experience with the finite world⁶⁴¹ and not primarily from rational and doctrinal concepts.⁶⁴² Therefore, with Schleiermacher, unlike many traditional and Reformed approaches with the omnipotence of God⁶⁴³ the approach is not primarily concerned with a dogma and doctrine⁶⁴⁴ concerning the omnipotence of God, but is instead focused on how God is experienced by persons,⁶⁴⁵ and this would include God's attribute of omnipotence. I personally still favour a doctrinal approach⁶⁴⁶ but also grant that an understanding of God, which can include both intellectual and emotional⁶⁴⁷ aspects, can be reasonably theologically considered. Also, there is at least minimally, some truth to the notion that the omnipotence of God with the approach of Schleiermacher, can be experienced by persons through the finite world.⁶⁴⁸ God's almighty power and will⁶⁴⁹ can be somewhat deduced through his creation that human beings experience daily.⁶⁵⁰

William James

William James (1842-1910)⁶⁵¹ is a well-known American philosopher,⁶⁵² psychologist⁶⁵³

⁶⁴¹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶⁴² Hoffecker (1996: 982).

⁶⁴³ Such as Erickson and Frame.

⁶⁴⁴ Hoffecker (1996: 982). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶⁴⁵ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶⁴⁶ In particular a Reformed perspective.

⁶⁴⁷ Including feelings. Hoffecker (1996: 982). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶⁴⁸ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 212-213).

⁶⁴⁹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 214-215).

⁶⁵⁰ Romans, Chapter 1 indicates this idea and C.E.B. Cranfield explains that since creation persons have viewed within that creation God's eternal power and his divine nature. Cranfield (1992: 32). Robert H. Mounce reasons God is explained within this Chapter as being understandable to persons as powerful and existing beyond natural order. Mounce (1995: 78). The Bible of course does not deal with the philosophical term 'omnipotence' but implies in Romans 1 that God is almighty and beyond the visible physical realm.

⁶⁵¹ McDermott (1996: 385). Burr and Goldinger (1976: 145). Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger (1996: 71). Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 1).

⁶⁵² John K. Roth writes that James was a dominant philosopher within James' time. Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 1). James' 'life and philosophy reflect a delight in the sheer variety of human experience.' Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 1). James is known as one of America's greatest philosophers. Burr and Goldinger (1976: 145).

and a founder of the philosophy of pragmatism.⁶⁵⁴ John K. Roth (1892-1907)(1969) explains within the Introduction to *The Moral Philosophy of William James* that James' pragmatism emphasizes the human ability to choose an individual lifestyle from several actual and authentic possibilities.⁶⁵⁵ Pragmatism emphasized the need for a community of free thought that was open to inquiry and testing.⁶⁵⁶ Concepts are to be considered without 'initial prejudice.'⁶⁵⁷ A pragmatic approach should analyze and clarify forms of human experience and action in order to bring harmony to human community.⁶⁵⁸ David Paulsen (1999) within *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*⁶⁵⁹ explains that James rejected some of the traditional philosophical views concerning the nature of God, which would include concepts of God as infinite and unchangeable.⁶⁶⁰ James reasoned there was a very distinct difference between the God of classic philosophy, orthodox theology, and what the Bible actually taught.⁶⁶¹ James in his 1902 text, *Varieties of Religious Experience*⁶⁶² writes that since philosophy could do little to legitimately demonstrate God's existence,⁶⁶³ it would not fare better in accurately describing God's divine attributes.⁶⁶⁴ Most importantly, James rejected the God of orthodox theology because this being lacked significant

⁶⁵³ McDermott (1996: 385). Burr and Goldinger (1976: 145). James found that his study and teaching within psychology brought up philosophical issues that were not always covered within psychology. Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 2).

⁶⁵⁴ McDermott (1996: 385). Burr and Goldinger (1976: 145). James and C.S. Peirce have set forth the theory that a statement/proposition is interpreted in terms of practical consequences. Pojman (1996: 598). James wrote the text *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* in 1907.

⁶⁵⁵ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 3-4).

⁶⁵⁶ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 14).

⁶⁵⁷ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 14).

⁶⁵⁸ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 14). Even a critic of James' pragmatism can admit communities with harmony often bring about positive consequences for those of various worldviews within it. Peace, would be a prime example.

⁶⁵⁹ The article is entitled: 'The God of Abraham, Isaac, and (William) James.'

⁶⁶⁰ Paulsen (1999: 1). The concept that God cannot change is one of immutability. God cannot change in 'attributes, consciousness, and will.' Thiessen (1956: 127). The idea being that God does not change or develop, but some scholars reason this understanding is to be more attributed to influences from Greek philosophy than the Bible. Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 64). Some reason, as do I, that God is eternally immutable, but can change in how he deals within temporal situations with finite beings. Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 64).

⁶⁶¹ Paulsen (1999: 1).

⁶⁶² Within the text *Writings 1902 – 1910*.

⁶⁶³ I strongly doubt that God as a spiritual being, could ever be proven empirically and physically to exist. Philosophical attempts, in general terms, at proving God's existence will be discussed briefly in Chapter Four.

⁶⁶⁴ James (1902-1910)(1987: 394).

practical meaning.⁶⁶⁵ When applying pragmatism to theories of ‘God’s metaphysical attributes’⁶⁶⁶ they are ‘destitute of all intelligible significance.’⁶⁶⁷ James examines many of God’s supposed attributes as distinguished from his moral qualities,⁶⁶⁸ and seriously questions how ‘such qualities as these make any definite connection with our life?’⁶⁶⁹ He reasons there is not even the smallest consequence religiously whether any of the philosophical deductions concerning God’s attributes were true.⁶⁷⁰ In contrast, James’ views concepts of God’s moral attributes as beneficial and they ‘positively determine fear and hope and expectation, and are foundations for the saintly life.’⁶⁷¹ Religion can provide for James metaphysical support for moral efforts of human beings.⁶⁷² Pragmatically God’s moral attributes are on a stronger intellectual footing.⁶⁷³ James reasons the existence of a personal God is ‘an ultimate brute fact.’⁶⁷⁴ This personal God is inconceivable⁶⁷⁵ and the human mind can only know its own thoughts and yet a ‘moral imperative exists’⁶⁷⁶ and ‘spiritual principle in every one.’⁶⁷⁷ James desired to make room for religious belief if it was pragmatic, even if the entire worldview

⁶⁶⁵ Paulsen (1999: 1). This makes sense since James was one of the founders of pragmatism. McDermott (1996: 385). Burr and Goldinger (1976: 145). Pojman (1996: 598). According to Norman Geisler, James doubted that rational proofs for God’s existence were psychologically convincing as human beings had needs that went beyond the rational. Geisler (1975: 88).

⁶⁶⁶ James (1902-1910)(1987: 400).

⁶⁶⁷ James (1902-1910)(1987: 400). They have no relevance to any vital human concern. Paulsen (1999: 4). James tested the ‘fruits of religious life’ by examining how they contributed to the development of ideal human communities. Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 3-4).

⁶⁶⁸ James (1902-1910)(1987: 400).

⁶⁶⁹ James (1902-1910)(1987: 400). Philosophy at times obscures God’s nature and the divine relationship with humanity. Paulsen (1999: 4).

⁶⁷⁰ James (1902-1910)(1987: 400). For James the source of religious experience is not important, but rather the fruits that are produced by religious experience are important. Geisler (1975: 60). Therefore, understanding God’s attributes, and in a theory of God, is not vital for James as are the results within persons that have religious belief.

⁶⁷¹ James (1902-1910)(1987: 401).

⁶⁷² Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 12).

⁶⁷³ Paulsen (1999: 6).

⁶⁷⁴ James provides this view within *The Will to Believe* (1897), which is within a textual compilation of his work entitled *The Moral Philosophy of William James*. James (1892-1907)(1969: 202).

⁶⁷⁵ As would be traditional theories of omnipotence to James.

⁶⁷⁶ James (1892-1907)(1969: 202).

⁶⁷⁷ James (1892-1907)(1969: 202). Roth admits that James’ theory may seem to reduce truth to subjective opinion. Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 15). James deals with this criticism by noting truth must be pragmatic as in being expedient, useful and workable over the long haul and in overall terms. Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 15).

expressed by a religion was not verifiable.⁶⁷⁸ Religion had its practical emotional benefits.⁶⁷⁹ As a result of James' pragmatic philosophy, Paulsen explains that God's omnipotence is rejected in a traditional sense,⁶⁸⁰ but rather God's omnipotence⁶⁸¹ provides the power to secure the triumph of good,⁶⁸² and not the power to bring about any logical state of affairs.⁶⁸³

Within this view, God's knowledge of the future⁶⁸⁴ is finite and therefore not much different than that of human beings.⁶⁸⁵ God would only have knowledge of facts and possibilities.⁶⁸⁶ Therefore, a classic view of divine omnipotence would need to be abandoned and God would only be able to bring about a logical state of affairs that would be under constraints based on the actions of other agencies.⁶⁸⁷ God is a morally perfect being that is working out history within time.⁶⁸⁸ The environment God is working in includes significantly free human beings that have choices that cannot be controlled or absolutely foreknown.⁶⁸⁹ For James, human beings and not God alone shape the future of the world.⁶⁹⁰ He holds to a view that the future is open-ended for both God and humanity.⁶⁹¹ God's knowledge of the future would be incomplete as far as with what actually will occur.⁶⁹²

⁶⁷⁸ Blackburn (1996: 201).

⁶⁷⁹ Blackburn (1996: 201).

⁶⁸⁰ Paulsen (1999: 6).

⁶⁸¹ More so the human idea of God's omnipotence is meant here.

⁶⁸² James (1902-1910)(1987: 401).

⁶⁸³ Paulsen (1999: 6).

⁶⁸⁴ Foreknowledge which will be discussed throughout the thesis, including by Augustine in Chapter Two.

⁶⁸⁵ Paulsen (1999: 9).

⁶⁸⁶ Paulsen (1999: 9). I would suggest even if God was finite, his knowledge based on intelligence and a longer existence would provide him with better understanding of possible situations in comparison to his creations.

⁶⁸⁷ Paulsen (1999: 9).

⁶⁸⁸ Paulsen (1999: 9). God works through time and completes his plans, including a plan of salvation. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 114).

⁶⁸⁹ Paulsen (1999: 9).

⁶⁹⁰ Paulsen (1999: 9). Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 12).

⁶⁹¹ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 12).

⁶⁹² Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 12). Within *The Will to Believe*, James explains that there was an 'endless chain of causes' in reality but God was the 'absolute first cause.' James (1892-1907)(1969: 203). For James, there would be many causes within the endless chain not in God's absolute control.

James' view on omnipotence, can be considered to be somewhat subjectively based.⁶⁹³ Roth does raise this legitimate criticism⁶⁹⁴ which I do not think is completely answered by James, or by Roth of his behalf.⁶⁹⁵ A significantly subjective view of God that assumes he is omnipotent in some way⁶⁹⁶ and claims that this view can lead to some power to overcome evil for good for humanity⁶⁹⁷ seems on somewhat shaky philosophical ground.⁶⁹⁸ A critic⁶⁹⁹ can state that there is no objective reason to believe that God, if there is one, has the actual power to rid the world of evil, as James' view could just be a figment of the imagination and misplaced optimism based in emotionalism and a desire for a God based morality as James desired.⁷⁰⁰ A world filled with evil may not be seen by critics as being good in the long run pragmatically,⁷⁰¹ just because some type of omnipotent and good God may exist.⁷⁰² A traditional Christian and Reformed view on omnipotence would be more philosophically based.⁷⁰³ I would add that it also favours an objective approach. The objection was raised, that from James' perspective Christian theistic views on omnipotence were not really Biblical.⁷⁰⁴ Erickson does point out that within the Bible God is called Almighty,⁷⁰⁵ and that for God all things are possible.⁷⁰⁶ Within Job it is explained that no purpose of God can be restrained.⁷⁰⁷ I can accept these as reasonable claims made

⁶⁹³ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 15).

⁶⁹⁴ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 15).

⁶⁹⁵ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 15-16).

⁶⁹⁶ James (1902-1910)(1987: 401).

⁶⁹⁷ James (1902-1910)(1987: 401).

⁶⁹⁸ I am not stating that there are not human subjective aspects to understanding God's omnipotence, but that the objective understanding of this concept is still important.

⁶⁹⁹ Atheistic or theistic.

⁷⁰⁰ James (1902-1910)(1987: 401).

⁷⁰¹ Roth (1892-1907)(1969: 15).

⁷⁰² James (1902-1910)(1987: 401).

⁷⁰³ Frame (2002: 515). Phillips (2005: 3-21).

⁷⁰⁴ Paulsen (1999: 1).

⁷⁰⁵ Genesis 17: 1. Erickson (1994: 276).

⁷⁰⁶ Matthew 19: 26. Erickson (1994: 277).

⁷⁰⁷ Job 42: 2. Thiessen (1956: 126).

through Scripture⁷⁰⁸ concerning the all powerful nature of God and do not see them as meaningless⁷⁰⁹ when these claims are systemized into philosophical theology. However, the Bible is an ancient text and does not deal with the modern term and concept of omnipotence.⁷¹⁰ Therefore, I can accept that there are, even within orthodox Christian approaches, several ways of examining omnipotence Biblically and as well differing conclusions of what this exactly entails in regard to Almighty God philosophically and theologically.⁷¹¹

John K. Roth

John K. Roth (1981) also explains within ‘A Theodicy of Protest’⁷¹² that the finite, limited God of William James offered him some intellectual appeal.⁷¹³ He reasons that to deny God completely would be going too far, but to affirm God’s total goodness and to apologize for a weak God in anyway would also be going too far.⁷¹⁴ Roth’s theodicy of protest puts God on trial,⁷¹⁵ and any human repentance will have to be matched by God.⁷¹⁶ Stephen Davis (1981) suggests that Roth has given up the notion that God is ‘perfectly morally good.’⁷¹⁷ Roth insists that most theodicy approaches very wrongly legitimize evil.⁷¹⁸ They can attempt to make suffering all deserved, and/or create happy endings due to God’s ultimate goodness.⁷¹⁹ There is

⁷⁰⁸ Frame (2002: 515).

⁷⁰⁹ James (1902-1910)(1987: 400). Paulsen (1999: 1). Geisler (1975: 88).

⁷¹⁰ Frame (2002: 515).

⁷¹¹ I reason this can be done while still taking a primarily objective approach.

⁷¹² Within *Encountering Evil*, Stephen T. Davis (ed.)

⁷¹³ Roth (1981: 9).

⁷¹⁴ Roth (1981: 10). I can agree that if God is indeed weak, it should be pointed out as such, and not defended.

⁷¹⁵ Roth (1981: 10). And God’s supposed omnipotence as well, I would suggest could naturally be challenged.

⁷¹⁶ Roth (1981: 10). Roth’s position assumes that God has moral weakness which finite human beings could intellectually detect. God would have to share the blame for the problem of evil. Phillips (2005: 116-117).

⁷¹⁷ Davis (1981: 22). Phillips writes that Roth’s analysis leads to the idea that God is not perfectly good. Phillips (2005: 27).

⁷¹⁸ Roth (1981: 19).

⁷¹⁹ Roth (1981: 19).

within this view ‘no legitimation of evil to acknowledge its existence.’⁷²⁰ The excessive amount of evil that exists in human history demonstrates that there is an evil side to God which willingly allows it.⁷²¹ Davis explains that for Roth, God is not really omnipotent as God does not possess the perfect goodness to redeem all evil.⁷²² Human beings lack the ability to envision how God could use all the evil within world history for the greater good.⁷²³ Roth, in contrast to Davis, states that he actually shares with Davis a belief in God’s omnipotence.⁷²⁴ Davis speculates that Roth’s approach weakens a view on God’s omnipotence,⁷²⁵ but Roth’s claim that he holds to omnipotence should be taken seriously.⁷²⁶ Roth’s interpretation makes sense, as if Roth sees God as all-powerful then the evil God willingly allows that cannot all be used for greater good, is not redeemable⁷²⁷ and therefore God should repent of his evil.⁷²⁸

I share with Roth an intellectual and personal frustration with the evil that God willingly allows.⁷²⁹ A theodicy of protest is not completely unmerited as all persons have suffered by the hand of God that is ultimately responsible, logically, as he is all-powerful.⁷³⁰ Within my Reformed sovereignty theodicy view which I explain within Chapter Three in particular, I reason God does use all evil for the greater good with pure motives.⁷³¹ This view accepts a traditional view of omnipotence.⁷³² Roth does have hope as he looks for a resurrection of the dead in the future, and in the present realm hopes that somehow ‘the waste’ as in unnecessary evil, will be

⁷²⁰ Roth (1981: 19).

⁷²¹ Davis (1981: 22).

⁷²² Davis (1981: 23).

⁷²³ Davis (1981: 23). There is certainly a degree of truth to the idea that the evil God allows often cannot be reasonably understood by persons. This could, however, be due as much, or even more, to finite human nature and reasoning as opposed to a moral deficiency or lack of omnipotence with God.

⁷²⁴ Roth (1981: 32). Phillips verifies this as well. Phillips (2005: 22).

⁷²⁵ Davis (1981: 23).

⁷²⁶ Roth (1981: 32).

⁷²⁷ Roth (1981: 19). Davis (1981: 23).

⁷²⁸ Roth (1981: 10).

⁷²⁹ Roth (1981: 8-10).

⁷³⁰ Roth (1981: 32).

⁷³¹ Gratuitous evil is also reviewed and discussed in Chapter Four.

⁷³² Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 96). Bavinck (1918)(2006: 233 Volume 2). Weber (1955)(1981: 440).

placed in check.⁷³³ He views the traditional concept of God that Davis has as a God that is ‘hidden, absent, even non-existent.’⁷³⁴ A trust and hope in any type of God is risky, but he reasons that the hope does not completely die.⁷³⁵ I question whether an omnipotent God with less than perfect motives that would will so much evil, not for the greater good throughout history, would ever change his ways or be convinced by finite creatures to do so.⁷³⁶

John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873),⁷³⁷ is a well-known British philosopher,⁷³⁸ economist,⁷³⁹ political and social theorist,⁷⁴⁰ and empiricist.⁷⁴¹ Fred Wilson (2007) suggests Mill’s views on empiricism and liberal political views on society and culture are among the most effective in modern thought.⁷⁴² Blackburn states Mill is ‘the most influential liberal thinker of the nineteenth century.’⁷⁴³ He is the son of Scottish philosopher James Mill (1773-1836).⁷⁴⁴ George W. Carey (2002) writes that John Stuart Mill reasoned that traditional Christianity needed to be replaced⁷⁴⁵ and Mill introduced a concept of a ‘limited God.’⁷⁴⁶ Mill reasons there is a ‘final cause’ that

⁷³³ Roth (1981: 35). Phillips dislikes the use of the term ‘waste’ in regard to humanity and evil and suffering and reasons a loss and gain approach in regard to individual persons is not reasonable. Phillips (2005: 70-71). This is an important point, for the loss suffered by a single individual should never be underestimated for the sake of many persons that do not suffer in the same way and may in some way possibly gain from the suffering of one.

⁷³⁴ Roth (1981: 35).

⁷³⁵ Roth (1981: 35).

⁷³⁶ It is also possible that given God’s omnipotence as Roth accepts, what he and others with similar views understand as evil within God’s nature is simply all goodness. Roth (1981:32). This is not my Reformed view which views evil as separate from good, and not part of God’s nature, but is a reasonable deduction based on Roth’s assumptions on the all-powerful nature of God.

⁷³⁷ Wilson (2007: 1). Blackburn (1996: 243). Geisler (1974: 105). Edwards and Pap (1973: 831).

⁷³⁸ Wilson (2007: 1). Blackburn (1996: 243).

⁷³⁹ Wilson (2007: 1). Blackburn (1996: 243).

⁷⁴⁰ Wilson (2007: 1). Wilson (1996: 493).

⁷⁴¹ Edwards and Pap (1973: 831). Wilson (1996: 493). Carey (2002: 113).

⁷⁴² Wilson (2007: 1).

⁷⁴³ Blackburn (1996: 243).

⁷⁴⁴ Blackburn (1996: 243). Edwards and Pap (1973: 831). Wilson (1996: 493).

⁷⁴⁵ Carey (2002: 115).

⁷⁴⁶ Carey (2002: 115).

appears to be God working within the natural order,⁷⁴⁷ but this God was not omnipotent and had limited powers that were incapable of bringing about the full reality of what God wanted.⁷⁴⁸ Mill within *Theism* from 1833 explains that there could be no real belief in a ‘Creator and Governor’ until humankind had begun to understand the confused phenomena which existed around them.⁷⁴⁹ Humanity must bring itself out of the chaos and confusion of reality to have a workable system in able to work out ‘a single plan.’⁷⁵⁰ This type of world was anticipated ‘by individuals of exceptional genius’ but could only become true after a long period of scientific examination and thought.⁷⁵¹ Mill desired to replace the God of Christianity with a Religion of Humanity.⁷⁵² He reasoned traditional Christianity had been overrated in its promotion of human virtue and morality in society.⁷⁵³ The Christian God was not the actual creator of the world.⁷⁵⁴

Mill theorized of a God that *resembled* the ‘Platonic Demiurge.’⁷⁵⁵ This God did not measure up to the highest human morality and was not concerned with the greatest possible

⁷⁴⁷ Carey (2002: 115-116). Mill within *Theism* discusses the need for a cause and beginning to a series of individual facts. Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 7). Everything persons know of has a cause and owes existence to a cause. He ponders on how the world can be indebted to a cause for which the world has its existence. He deduces ‘that not everything which we know derives its existence from a cause, but only every event or change.’

Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 10).

⁷⁴⁸ Carey (2002: 116). David Gordon writes that Mill believed God was limited in nature and therefore not omnipotent. Gordon (2002: 3).

⁷⁴⁹ Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 6).

⁷⁵⁰ Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 6).

⁷⁵¹ Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 6).

⁷⁵² Carey (2002: 110). In *The Utility of Religion* from 1874, Mill explains that Christianity offers rewards in the next life for good conduct and the Religion of Humanity would be superior as human virtue would exist for unselfish reasons. Mill (1874)(2002: 16). Although I reason Christians should do what is good and right, just because it is good and right, and not primarily for a possible reward, Mill does not demonstrate in my mind a conclusive argument in how human beings, as they are, can or will ever operate with completely unselfish motives. Is all selfishness wrong, or does some degree of human self-concern and a desire for self-benefit remain an integral part of how God intended humanity to be?

⁷⁵³ Carey (2002: 114).

⁷⁵⁴ Carey (2002: 116). Gordon reasons that Mill was ‘no Christian.’ Gordon (2000: 2).

⁷⁵⁵ Carey (2002: 116). A demiurge is a Greek term meaning ‘artisan’, ‘craftsman.’ It is a deity that develops the material world from ‘preexisting chaos.’ Plato introduced the concept and term in his text *Timaeus*. The perfectly good demiurge wishes to present his goodness and shapes the chaos as best he can, and the present world results. Wainwright (1996: 188). The demiurge is a limited, non-omnipotent God, that did not create original matter. Wainwright (1996: 188). Blackburn (1996: 98).

happiness for the greatest possible number of human beings.⁷⁵⁶ Since God was so limited, it was up to humanity to bring about greater human happiness.⁷⁵⁷ However, Mill still reasoned that God as is, without omnipotence, would have intelligence and power beyond that of human beings.⁷⁵⁸ Mill embraced a type of secular altruism and a selfless concern for society as a whole as opposed to concerns with personal salvation for the typical person.⁷⁵⁹ Within Mill's philosophy there was room within the world for human beings to improve it and the for persons within it to improve.⁷⁶⁰ Mill desires to philosophically develop a positive view on the material universe and the place of human beings within it.⁷⁶¹ Within *The Utility of Religion* which was published in 1874, after his death in 1873, Mill reasons the improvements that have taken place in humanity and that will continue to proceed over time should produce religion with the best human morality.⁷⁶²

The religious goodness can be reasoned out from 'philosophical, Christian, or any other elements.'⁷⁶³ Modern religion, once it has freed itself from the questionable consequences of concepts of bad doctrine,⁷⁶⁴ can be examined for its philosophical usefulness.⁷⁶⁵ Religious belief should serve as an instrument of social goodness for humanity.⁷⁶⁶ Mill's views strike me as being influential within modern secular thought,⁷⁶⁷ and modern western religious concepts.⁷⁶⁸ I

⁷⁵⁶ Carey (2002: 116). Mill likely thought Christianity was a false religion which limited the freedom of persons. Gordon (2000: 2).

⁷⁵⁷ Carey (2002: 116).

⁷⁵⁸ Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 24).

⁷⁵⁹ Carey (2002: 116).

⁷⁶⁰ Wilson (2007: 36).

⁷⁶¹ Wilson (2007: 1).

⁷⁶² Mill (1874)(2002: 3).

⁷⁶³ Mill (1874)(2002: 3).

⁷⁶⁴ For example, Mill within *Utilitarianism and On Liberty* within the essay 'On Liberty' from 1859 is critical as a 'narrow theory of life' of the Calvinistic theory that a great offence of humanity against God is human self will. That being, human nature is very corrupt and there is no redemption unless human nature dies. God must be obeyed for redemption. Mill (1789-1861)(2003: 136).

⁷⁶⁵ Mill (1874)(2002: 3).

⁷⁶⁶ Mill (1874)(2002: 4).

⁷⁶⁷ Wilson (2007: 1). Blackburn (1996: 243).

can support, in limited terms, human effort to understand reality⁷⁶⁹ and improve human conditions.⁷⁷⁰ Indeed humanity should come together as much as possible to develop a plan in order to benefit all of humanity.⁷⁷¹ I would not support a ‘Religion of Humanity,’⁷⁷² but do favour persons of various religious and non-religious backgrounds working together for human benefit.

Mill rejects Christianity⁷⁷³ and traditional Christian doctrine concerning omnipotence.⁷⁷⁴ Mill’s deity is similar to the ‘Platonic Demiurge’⁷⁷⁵ and this deity simply develops matter from preexisting chaos⁷⁷⁶ and therefore would not only be limited in power but also finite in nature. Mill supports a concept of a first cause⁷⁷⁷ as in a series of events⁷⁷⁸ but this leaves the nagging question and problem of what was the cause of the Demiurge? An infinite eternal God⁷⁷⁹ can be understood as the first cause not needing a cause.⁷⁸⁰ A finite deity, although admittedly logically possible, requires further explanation.⁷⁸¹ If the being is not revealed through Scriptural

⁷⁶⁸ Wilson (2007: 1). Blackburn (1996: 243).

⁷⁶⁹ Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 6).

⁷⁷⁰ Mill (1874)(2002: 3). Wilson (2007: 36).

⁷⁷¹ Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 6).

⁷⁷² Mill (1874)(2002: 16). Carey (2002: 110).

⁷⁷³ Mill (1874)(2002: 16). Carey (2002: 110).

⁷⁷⁴ Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 24). Carey (2002: 115). Gordon (2002: 3).

⁷⁷⁵ Wainwright (1996: 188). Carey (2002: 116).

⁷⁷⁶ Wainwright (1996: 188).

⁷⁷⁷ Carey (2002: 116). Gordon (2002: 3). Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 10).

⁷⁷⁸ Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 7).

⁷⁷⁹ Karl Barth explains within *The Doctrine of Creation* that the essence of God himself is eternal, he is before time, above time and after time. Barth (1932-1968: 67). God is ‘infinite spirit’ and eternal. Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 152 Volume 1). God is eternal and without beginning or end. Bavinck (1918)(2006: 148 Volume 2). God is eternal and infinite, he is eternal now, ‘the permanent now’ and eternity results from his infinity. Weber (1955)(1981: 455). God has eternal existence as a ‘just and wise person.’ Frame (2002: 388).

⁷⁸⁰ God’s essence is eternal and necessary (logically must exist), and the finite universe is temporal and contingent (not necessary). Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 191 Volume 1). God as a necessary being is therefore the cause of contingent creation. Frame reasons God is the creator and the Lord of the beginning of history. This occurs within his eternal plans. Frame (2002: 389). Within this view God is the implied first cause that exists necessarily prior to everything else. Pojman (1996: 596).

⁷⁸¹ Hypothetically, humanity and the universe could have been created by a finite God that was created by another cause.

revelation,⁷⁸² it is a God of primarily philosophical speculation and requires further elaboration on the part of Mill in regard to, for instance, why humanity should believe in and follow this type of deity, assuming that there is not a greater, infinite, eternal first cause that would necessarily⁷⁸³ exist behind that being.

Edgar Sheffield Brightman

Edgar Sheffield Brightman (1884-1953)⁷⁸⁴ is a philosopher and theologian noted for believing in a finite God.⁷⁸⁵ John H. Lively (2007) explains that Brightman ‘carved out’ a concept of ‘theistic finitism.’⁷⁸⁶ Brightman within *A Philosophy of Religion* (1940) calls God the ‘finite-infinite controller of the given.’⁷⁸⁷ He developed an original view on the finite God different than John Stuart Mill, William James and Alfred North Whitehead.⁷⁸⁸ His view features a shift from traditional theism,⁷⁸⁹ but this is not a rejection of the Christian faith.⁷⁹⁰ Instead he offers from his perspective, a true Christian expression within a more reasonable approach to traditional supernaturalism.⁷⁹¹ Brightman explains in *The Problem of God* (1930)

⁷⁸² In contrast to God in the Hebrew Bible, God in the New Testament and Allah in the Qur'an.

⁷⁸³ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 191 Volume 1). Pojman (1996: 596).

⁷⁸⁴ Gale (2006: 1). Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84).

⁷⁸⁵ Thiessen (1956: 74). Lively (2007: 121). Nikkel (2006: 7). Flew (1955: 538-539).

⁷⁸⁶ Lively (2007: 121).

⁷⁸⁷ Brightman (1940: 336). Lively (2007: 122).

⁷⁸⁸ Lively (2007: 122). This is not to state there are no similarities in views.

⁷⁸⁹ Lively (2007: 123). Brightman explains that some do not like to consider a change in fundamental religious concepts. It was absurd for persons to think that a view concerning God could not be improved. Brightman (1930: 9-10). He also notes that it is ‘ludicrous’ for one to reason the whole truth about God is personally known. Brightman (1930: 63). I can agree that even if God is finite, a finite human being is going to be unable to completely understand this superior being.

⁷⁹⁰ Lively (2007: 24). Brightman reasoned, because of the problem of evil, God could not be both omnipotent, in a traditional sense and omnibenevolent. Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84). Brightman suggested it absurd to state that there was no evidence for the existence of God. Brightman (1930: 62).

⁷⁹¹ Lively (2007: 124). Doubts concerning concepts of God within Christian theism need to be contemplated and discussed. Brightman (1930: 9).

the new concept of God has not confined the divine creative work to a single week,⁷⁹² and God does not cease to produce and maintain newer life forms.⁷⁹³ As there is scientific evolution and progression in the material realm, he reasons there can be expansion with God as in more far reaching goals and development for the physical realm than persons had previously realized.⁷⁹⁴ Brightman reasons that God is not fixed but is still growing and expanding.⁷⁹⁵ He questions traditional concepts that God is a metaphysical unity that is perfectly at peace with self, as in no struggle, instead God may not be so separate from the physical world and the struggles that go with it.⁷⁹⁶ Brightman reasons there are struggles within the divine being and God has genuine problems to deal with in the physical realm as a finite and limited God.⁷⁹⁷ The expansion of God means he must lack some knowledge and power, and this view contradicts those within theology that place a strong emphasis on God's sovereignty, as does Calvinism.⁷⁹⁸

According to Gordon Clark (1959) Brightman is also a noted empiricist and works out philosophy of religion along these lines;⁷⁹⁹ however, philosophical interpretations should be reasonably understood within human experience and should never be under the subordination of logic or empiricism.⁸⁰⁰ Persons were not to follow the logic of the rationalists,⁸⁰¹ but a

⁷⁹² Many moderate conservative and liberal Christians are not convinced that God necessarily created the world in one week, or six days to be more precise. I discuss Genesis and the fall in Chapter Two, and I am not convinced that all of the creation account must be taken plain literally in order to stay true to Scripture. Figurative literal approaches are possible at some points.

⁷⁹³ Brightman (1930: 68).

⁷⁹⁴ Brightman (1930: 68). Those within the Church prior to the development of scientific evolutionary theory would be at an intellectual disadvantage in coming to similar conclusions to Brightman.

⁷⁹⁵ Brightman (1930: 70). God is therefore finite for Brightman, as noted. Thiessen (1956: 74). Lavelly (2007: 121). Flew (1955: 538-539).

⁷⁹⁶ Brightman (1930: 94).

⁷⁹⁷ Brightman (1930: 94).

⁷⁹⁸ Brightman (1930: 102).

⁷⁹⁹ Clark (1959: 34). Delaney (1996: 575).

⁸⁰⁰ Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84). Every item of experience properly understood should point a person toward God and is evidence for the existence of God. Brightman (1930: 62). Brightman took an empirical approach to God. Lavelly (2007: 122-123).

⁸⁰¹ Clark (1959: 34). A rationalist holds that there is knowledge that can be understood independent of empirical experience. Edwards and Papp (1973: 666). A view that certain things can be innately known by the mind, even without being experienced. Pojman (1996: 599).

reasonable approach is to follow a set of empirical principles and concepts by which human beings organize their experience within the universe.⁸⁰² Brightman subscribes to a view of ‘personalism’ as in the term referring to the ‘ultimate and irreducible unit of reality,’⁸⁰³ and there exists no realities other than persons.⁸⁰⁴ James Richmond (1999) notes it is the philosophical viewpoint which views human personality as the starting point, and this may include a personal God as a key to understanding the nature of the world.⁸⁰⁵ Everything that is in existence, exists in the mind of a person, of some sort, on some level.⁸⁰⁶ The concept of ‘person’ was a ‘concrete universal.’⁸⁰⁷ God was the uncreated creator of humanity, ‘the ground of all being’ and the one that sustains the universe.⁸⁰⁸ God was also person.⁸⁰⁹ Personalism would include God’s creations and reality is a community of persons sustained by God, the Supreme Person.⁸¹⁰ The total view of human experience leads one to a belief in some sort of Supreme Being, who is also supremely good, beautiful and of reason.⁸¹¹ Creation did not come ex nihilo⁸¹² from the hand of God, and matter is not something external from God.⁸¹³ Matter and the physical world is therefore not completely separate from God,⁸¹⁴ and in a sense nature is a representation of the divine creator.⁸¹⁵ God, in fact was capable of growth and can accomplish more within reality than he has

⁸⁰² Clark (1959: 34).

⁸⁰³ Lavelly (2007: 124).

⁸⁰⁴ Lavelly (2007: 124). John Lachs and Robert B. Talisse describe Brightman as the leading personalist of the twentieth century. Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84).

⁸⁰⁵ Richmond (1999: 443).

⁸⁰⁶ Brightman (1958: 135). Lavelly (2007: 124). Brightman was influenced by Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne in the development of his views on personalism. Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84).

⁸⁰⁷ Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84).

⁸⁰⁸ Lavelly (2007: 124).

⁸⁰⁹ Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84). Delaney (1996: 575).

⁸¹⁰ Lavelly (2007: 124).

⁸¹¹ Brightman (1930: 63).

⁸¹² Creation ‘out of nothing’. Geisler (1975: 334). Erickson (1994: 367). Barth (1932-1968: 413).

⁸¹³ Lavelly (2007: 124).

⁸¹⁴ Lavelly (2007: 124).

⁸¹⁵ Lavelly (2007: 124).

presently.⁸¹⁶

Lavelly reasons that Brightman's view on omnipotence is 'ambiguous' and is difficult to explain within his overall description and understanding of God.⁸¹⁷ Omnipotence may literally describe the quality of everything to God,⁸¹⁸ in other words God is omnipotent, not in a traditional sense but rather God has all the power there is, and all the power that is available.⁸¹⁹ God is omnitemporal as opposed to unchanging.⁸²⁰ God is all-powerful in a sense, only within the finite realm and not beyond it, and God can also change and expand within that realm.⁸²¹ God is 'creative, supreme, and personal' yet is limited⁸²² and there are experiences which are eternally existent which he does not create.⁸²³ Nevertheless, God can control the experiences that he did not create.⁸²⁴ Any understanding of God as omnipotent would be 'derived predominantly from abstract thought' as the view and theory cannot be based on experience alone, although humanity does experience the power of God.⁸²⁵ Our finite human experiences cannot express omnipotence.⁸²⁶ As with the previous approaches, I view the finite God as logically possible but would still leave the need for the infinite first cause.⁸²⁷

Process Theism: Alfred North Whitehead

⁸¹⁶ Brightman (1930: 11).

⁸¹⁷ Lavelly (2007: 132). This is a reasonable point.

⁸¹⁸ Lavelly (2007: 132).

⁸¹⁹ Lavelly (2007: 132).

⁸²⁰ Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84). God would not be considered immutable.

⁸²¹ Lachs and Talisse (2008: 84).

⁸²² God's will and power is limited within this view. Delaney (1996: 575).

⁸²³ Brightman (1930: 10).

⁸²⁴ Brightman (1930: 10). At the same time Brightman believes that supposed revelation from God needs to be judged by human reason. Clark (1959: 34). God controls all experiences but religious ideas were still better understood through human experience and reason.

⁸²⁵ Brightman (1930: 98). Main values and religious concepts would need to be discovered through human experience. Clark (1959: 34). Omnipotence would therefore remain largely a philosophical issue.

⁸²⁶ Brightman (1930: 98).

⁸²⁷ Ultimately I reason that even if human beings were created by a finite God, the ultimate first cause is the one that human beings should ultimately appeal to as this being could overrule the lesser deity. I would make any appeal for everlasting life to the most powerful good being in existence.

David Viney (2008) suggests that Brightman is one of the twentieth century proponents of Process theism.⁸²⁸ Although Brightman's views were primarily independently made,⁸²⁹ process theism refers to a general group of theological concepts attributed to Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)⁸³⁰ and Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000).⁸³¹ Whitehead is the more preeminent exemplar and within *Process and Reality* (1927-1929)(1957) explains he desired to complete an account of humanity and its experience in relation to philosophical problems.⁸³² In *Religion In The Making* (1926) Whitehead explains it is legitimate to attempt with a more definite knowledge of metaphysics, to interpret human experience, but these general principles must be amplified and adapted into one general system of truth.⁸³³ Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olsen (1992) explain that antiquated pre-scientific concepts of the divine creator that view God in absolute and sovereign terms are rejected.⁸³⁴ Whitehead disagreed with a traditional view of a 'transcendent creator, at whose fiat the world came into being, and whose imposed will it obeys.'⁸³⁵ The nature of God needed to be philosophically constructed anew.⁸³⁶ A balance is sought between God's immanence⁸³⁷ and transcendence,⁸³⁸ and a concept of static transcendence is rejected as instead God is understood to have a evolutionary transcendence.⁸³⁹ God and the physical realm are immanent with each other and God's transcendence means their realities are

⁸²⁸ Viney (2008: 35).

⁸²⁹ Viney (2008: 35).

⁸³⁰ Viney (2008: 1). Grenz and Olsen (1992: 135).

⁸³¹ Viney (2008: 1).

⁸³² Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: vi).

⁸³³ Whitehead (1926: 149).

⁸³⁴ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 131).

⁸³⁵ Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 404).

⁸³⁶ Whitehead (1926: 150).

⁸³⁷ God is actively present within reality and creation. Erickson (1994: 302).

⁸³⁸ God by nature is beyond and separate from his material creation. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 115).

⁸³⁹ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 132). A balance needed to be sought as there were extreme views concerning God as impersonal force behind the universe as in deism and also the view that God has absolute sovereignty as the sole creator of matter. Whitehead (1926: 150).

not identical and not always determined by each other.⁸⁴⁰ God is fully reasoned to be involved and influenced by temporal events and processes.⁸⁴¹ These processes unfold as sequences of events over time.⁸⁴² God, contrary to classic and traditional Christian theism is finite, temporal, changeable⁸⁴³ and experiences intense emotion, pain and sadness.⁸⁴⁴ Whitehead explains that ‘It is not true that God is on all respects infinite.’⁸⁴⁵ Process theology is a philosophical approach that does not rely on any kind of divine revelation.⁸⁴⁶ Instead it relies on a process of change over time as a theory of metaphysics.⁸⁴⁷ God’s actual concrete nature is responsive and influenced by the processes that take in the world, and therefore God is limited.⁸⁴⁸ Some things are unknowable for God, that he only can realize as they happen,⁸⁴⁹ and as these new things develop God’s knowledge processes over time.⁸⁵⁰ Divine sovereignty is questionable and certainly no longer absolute within this system.⁸⁵¹

Whitehead, a mathematician and philosopher,⁸⁵² established a speculative philosophy of metaphysics within a scientific non-metaphysical reality.⁸⁵³ This system is an attempt to

⁸⁴⁰ Viney (2008: 10).

⁸⁴¹ Viney (2008: 1). Grenz and Olsen (1992: 131). Diehl (1996: 880).

⁸⁴² Blackburn (1996: 305). The process is not according to a motion of changeless matter. Diehl (1996: 881).

⁸⁴³ God is not immutable as is classically defined. See Thiessen (1956: 127). Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 64).

⁸⁴⁴ God is not impassible according to this view. This concept will be further discussed within Chapter Five. Surin (1982: 97). My view would not be strictly classic by this definition.

⁸⁴⁵ Whitehead (1926: 153). Whitehead claims that if God was infinite in all ways this would make him as infinitely evil as he is good. I doubt logically and reasonably that an infinitely holy and good God could at the same time be infinitely evil and so I can grant Whitehead half a point here. However, God could still be infinite completely in nature and willingly allow evil to exist within his creation, which shall be discussed particularly in Chapter Three as a Reformed view. I definitely agree with Whitehead that an infinitely good and evil God would be a God of nothingness. Whitehead (1926: 153). I doubt this being could logically exist.

⁸⁴⁶ Viney (2008: 1). Diehl (1996: 881).

⁸⁴⁷ Viney (2008: 1).

⁸⁴⁸ Erickson (1994: 280).

⁸⁴⁹ Erickson (1994: 280).

⁸⁵⁰ Erickson (1994: 280). Process theology espouses a world of process with a God that ‘grounds that process’. Geisler (1975: 216).

⁸⁵¹ Erickson (1994: 280).

⁸⁵² Grenz and Olsen (1992: 135). Diehl (1996: 881).

⁸⁵³ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 135).

adequately explain all individual beings in existence, including God.⁸⁵⁴ Basically a system of metaphysics needed to be developed that would work with modern scientific theories and reality, and therefore God was not a ‘static essence’ but a process.⁸⁵⁵ The ‘actual entities’⁸⁵⁶ that make up this process are non-permanent and transient and each action and activity is dipolar having a physical pole of the past and a mental pole which is a possibility that can be achieved.⁸⁵⁷ The physical pole feels the physical reality of actual entity, while the mental pole feels or prehends as Whitehead calls it, the eternal objects by which actual entities have conceptual definiteness.⁸⁵⁸ These physical and mental poles are an aspect of every real being/actual entities although they are not real things themselves.⁸⁵⁹ Prehends is the feeling of grasping the physical and conceptual information concerning actual entities.⁸⁶⁰ This will occur within a stream and series of occasions.⁸⁶¹ All occurrences take place within the process of these actual entities.⁸⁶² Each event is partially self-created and partially influenced by other occasions and entities.⁸⁶³ God is also dipolar⁸⁶⁴ and his nontemporal pole is where God conceives the infinite variety of external objects and sees the possibilities and provides the opportunity for the process of becoming.⁸⁶⁵ God is an actual entity and being.⁸⁶⁶ God has a primordial nature and consequent nature, with the primordial being conceptual, while the consequent nature is God as conscious.⁸⁶⁷ Whitehead explains that the ‘consequent nature is the weaving of God’s physical feelings upon his

⁸⁵⁴ Diehl (1996: 881).

⁸⁵⁵ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 135).

⁸⁵⁶ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 135). Diehl (1996: 881).

⁸⁵⁷ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 136). Diehl (1996: 881).

⁸⁵⁸ Diehl (1996: 881). Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407).

⁸⁵⁹ Viney (2008: 8).

⁸⁶⁰ Diehl (1996: 881). Viney (2008: 9).

⁸⁶¹ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 136).

⁸⁶² Diehl (1996: 881).

⁸⁶³ Diehl (1996: 881).

⁸⁶⁴ Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407). Viney (2008: 8).

⁸⁶⁵ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 137).

⁸⁶⁶ Viney (2008: 9).

⁸⁶⁷ Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407).

primordial concepts.⁸⁶⁸ God's primordial conceptual nature is infinite and does not have negative prehension/feelings, and is eternal and unconscious.⁸⁶⁹ This nature is permanent as God works out endless possibilities.⁸⁷⁰ God in his vision can determine every possibility and adjust details where needed.⁸⁷¹ The consequent nature of God originates with physical experience with the material temporal world and it is integrated with the primordial conceptual nature.⁸⁷² The consequent nature as conscious is determined, finite and incomplete.⁸⁷³ These two aspects of God's deity can be distinguished but are inseparable.⁸⁷⁴ This consequent conscious nature had God constantly acquiring new experiences.⁸⁷⁵ A problem arises that if God's primordial nature is eternal and unconscious⁸⁷⁶ it precedes the consequent nature that is temporal⁸⁷⁷ and has consciousness. I question whether an unconscious deity would in any way proceed to a conscious temporal reality. Where did God's consciousness come from? I reason consciousness would have to exist eternally to lead to a finite reality of consciousness.⁸⁷⁸

Panentheism

Process theism approaches are sometimes referred to as being panentheistic.⁸⁷⁹ The two approaches are not identical but process theism moves in the direction of panentheism.⁸⁸⁰ David

⁸⁶⁸ Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407).

⁸⁶⁹ Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407).

⁸⁷⁰ Viney (2008: 9).

⁸⁷¹ Whitehead (1926: 153-154).

⁸⁷² Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407).

⁸⁷³ Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407).

⁸⁷⁴ Viney (2008: 9).

⁸⁷⁵ Viney (2008: 9).

⁸⁷⁶ Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407).

⁸⁷⁷ Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 407).

⁸⁷⁸ An eternal reality of unconsciousness should lead to a finite reality of unconsciousness.

⁸⁷⁹ Geisler (1975: 153).

⁸⁸⁰ Grenz and Olsen (1992: 142). I am not stating that this is the case in every documented view of process theism, but it is generally true that the two views are closely related.

H. Nikkel (2003) defines panentheism as from the Greek meaning ‘all is in God.’⁸⁸¹ Both God’s transcendence and immanence are accepted, as the world and matter is in God, and God is ‘all-encompassing with respect to being.’⁸⁸² Panentheism is not identical to pantheism which postulates that ‘God is identical with everything’⁸⁸³ or that God is in everything and that God and the universe are one.⁸⁸⁴ The difference being that panentheism understands ‘God is in all things’⁸⁸⁵ but not identical with all things as with pantheism.⁸⁸⁶ As example, God in pantheism may be considered to be equal with a tree. God in panentheism may be considered beyond the tree, but the vital force within it, where as in my traditional Christian theistic understanding God is beyond a tree and sustains it, but is not the vital force within it.⁸⁸⁷ Panentheism attempts to ‘avoid the pitfalls’ of traditional theism.⁸⁸⁸ God is prohibited from having a true and genuine relationship with matter and the universe because of traditional theistic views such as that God is immutable, impassible, and eternal and timeless.⁸⁸⁹ Panentheism is an intellectual compromise between traditional theism and pantheism.⁸⁹⁰ God is more than just the material universe, as there is an unchanging aspect to God’s being and also a dynamic aspect to God as the divine being changes as matter and the universe do.⁸⁹¹ German philosopher, F.W. J. Schelling⁸⁹² (1845)(1936) reasons: ‘As there is nothing before or outside of God, he must contain within

⁸⁸¹ Nikkel (2003: 1).

⁸⁸² Nikkel (2003: 1).

⁸⁸³ Martinich (1996: 556).

⁸⁸⁴ Blackburn (1996: 276). Blackburn also explains Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) is noted for this view within Western philosophy

⁸⁸⁵ Martinich (1996: 556). The doctrine that all things exist in God. Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 94).

⁸⁸⁶ Martinich (1996: 556).

⁸⁸⁷ This is my example based on Erickson’s presentation. Erickson (1994: 303-307).

⁸⁸⁸ Nikkel (2003: 1). Many modern theologians and philosophers now question the concept of an eternal God. Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 94).

⁸⁸⁹ Nikkel (2003: 1). God is not eternal within this view. Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 94).

⁸⁹⁰ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 94).

⁸⁹¹ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 94).

⁸⁹² Schelling lived (1775-1854). Blackburn (1996: 341).

himself the ground of his existence.’⁸⁹³ He reasons God’s nature is inseparable from God and yet can be distinguished.⁸⁹⁴ Panentheism can reasonably be understood as an overarching view within many process theism approaches⁸⁹⁵ which I have contrasted with my own views.⁸⁹⁶

CHAPTER TWO

FREE WILL THEODICY

1. Introduction

Free Will Theodicy Defined

⁸⁹³ Schelling (1845)(1936: 32).

⁸⁹⁴ Schelling (1845)(1936: 32). Schelling sought to deflect criticisms that he was a pantheist. ‘Unity is of essence, but so is diversity.’ Gutmann (1845)(1936: xxxi). However, his comments make it possible that he had views which were perhaps panentheistic. Material things are dependent on God and yet independent.

⁸⁹⁵ Including that of Whitehead. Nikkel (2003: 2-3). Grenz and Olsen (1992: 142).

⁸⁹⁶ My views are Reformed but not strictly within a certain camp such as Presbyterian or Baptist. I have primarily come to my Reformed views through MPhil and PhD research.

John S. Feinberg the author of *The Many Faces of Evil*,⁸⁹⁷ writes in his review of free will theodicy,⁸⁹⁸ that it assumes God is not the cause of evil, but rather it is the abuse of human free will that leads to the problem evil.⁸⁹⁹ God is considered to have given human beings free will in order that they would freely choose to commit good actions,⁹⁰⁰ including worshipping their creator.⁹⁰¹ Despite the fact God knew human beings would commit evil actions when he made them,⁹⁰² God was not guilty of wrong doing because he did not force human beings to commit evil; human beings did this freely.⁹⁰³ Richard Schoenig (1997) states free will theodicy claims, contrary to God's commands, human beings misuse their free will and cause moral evil.⁹⁰⁴ In opposition to critics' ideas,⁹⁰⁵ God would therefore remain omnibenevolent despite the moral failings of his creation according to free will theodicy.⁹⁰⁶ Clark Pinnock (1986) explains that God could have made a world in which he determined every last detail,⁹⁰⁷ but God did not, and instead there exists a world where significantly free moral agents exist.⁹⁰⁸ The created universe therefore does not always follow God's intentions.⁹⁰⁹

Within free will theodicy, human beings are understood to have a mind and will that is truly conscious and able to make independent decisions apart from coercive or any substantial

⁸⁹⁷ My primary exemplar for Chapter Three.

⁸⁹⁸ Feinberg (1994: 56).

⁸⁹⁹ Feinberg (1994: 56). Lubac provides and discusses a viewpoint that human beings were created by God with natural abilities, although limited, to see and understand God. Humans were created righteous. Lubac (1965)(2000: 150-151).

⁹⁰⁰ Feinberg (1994: 56).

⁹⁰¹ Feinberg (1994: 56). God provides persons grace by which they can be freed from evil and be led to everlasting life. Lubac (1965)(2000: 148).

⁹⁰² Feinberg (1994: 56).

⁹⁰³ Feinberg (1994: 64).

⁹⁰⁴ Schoenig (1997: 457).

⁹⁰⁵ Schoenig (1997: 457).

⁹⁰⁶ Schoenig (1997: 457).

⁹⁰⁷ Pinnock (1986: 145).

⁹⁰⁸ Pinnock (1986: 145).

⁹⁰⁹ Pinnock (1986: 145).

influence from another being.⁹¹⁰ Tim Mawson (1999) indicates free will theodicy assumes moral evil that accompanies free will is necessary as a universe with free will is better than one without free will.⁹¹¹ The idea being that within free will theodicy significant, unfettered, human freedom, is vital for meaningful existence.⁹¹² God is therefore justified in having evil exist in his creation because the amount of overall good produced with significant human free will would far outweigh the negatives within the problem of evil,⁹¹³ even though many persons reject God.⁹¹⁴ A greater good could not be realized unless God allowed his human creatures to freely reject him, since this was the only means by which they could also ultimately love, trust, and obey God.⁹¹⁵ A free will theodicy therefore assumes God exists,⁹¹⁶ and is morally perfect. The evil that results in his creation is not caused by the creator, but by his creatures.⁹¹⁷

Incompatibilism

Philosopher Tim Mawson reasons that incompatibilism, which is also known as libertarianism in regard to human free will,⁹¹⁸ believes that true human free will must be uncaused by preceding states.⁹¹⁹ Thus within incompatibilist theory, a human action would never truly be free because God would have willed and determined it on his own before he simultaneously willed it with a given person.⁹²⁰ David M. Ciochi (2002) describes the

⁹¹⁰ Feinberg (1994: 64-65).

⁹¹¹ Mawson (1999: 323).

⁹¹² Feinberg (1994: 65).

⁹¹³ Feinberg (1994: 65).

⁹¹⁴ Feinberg (1994: 65).

⁹¹⁵ Schoenig (1997: 458).

⁹¹⁶ Feinberg (1994: 65). Schoenig (1997: 458).

⁹¹⁷ Schoenig (1997: 458).

⁹¹⁸ Mawson (1999: 324).

⁹¹⁹ Mawson (1999: 324).

⁹²⁰ Mawson (1999: 324).

incompatibilist idea as being God can determine that an agent commit action x , but he cannot determine that an agent commit action x freely.⁹²¹ Frederick Ferre (1973)(1976) presents an incompatibilist view called self-determinism.⁹²² Ferre reasons that, although there are external conditions relevant for every action, the outcomes of these actions are not fixed by any causal chain.⁹²³ Ferre here is suggesting that for some events there is not a prior determined cause.⁹²⁴ Therefore, within this theory some human actions would not be caused or simultaneously determined by God or any external force,⁹²⁵ and some human actions could be considered self-determined.⁹²⁶ Norman Geisler (1986) describes a form of incompatibilism which he, like Ferre, calls self-determinism.⁹²⁷ Moral choices are not caused or uncaused by another being, but are self-caused.⁹²⁸ Incompatibilists, therefore, do not deny there are outside forces that influence significantly free human actions;⁹²⁹ however, they do not accept any notion that a free act can be caused in a determined sense by one being upon another and remain a significantly free act.⁹³⁰ An act cannot be determined or simultaneously determined and remain truly free within incompatibilism.⁹³¹

Feinberg, who has written extensively on the concepts of free will and determinism, explains incompatibilism is defined as the idea within free will theodicy that a person is free in regard to an action if he or she is free to either commit, or refrain from committing the action.⁹³²

⁹²¹ Ciocchi (2002: 46).

⁹²² Ferre (1973)(1976: 31-44).

⁹²³ Ferre (1973)(1976: 35).

⁹²⁴ Ferre (1973)(1976: 35).

⁹²⁵ Ferre (1973)(1976: 35).

⁹²⁶ Ferre (1973)(1976: 35).

⁹²⁷ Geisler (1986: 75).

⁹²⁸ Geisler (1986: 75).

⁹²⁹ Geisler (1986: 75).

⁹³⁰ Ferre (1973)(1976: 35). Geisler (1986: 75). Mawson (1999: 324).

⁹³¹ Ferre (1973)(1976: 35). Geisler (1986: 75). Mawson (1999: 324).

⁹³² Feinberg (1994: 64).

There can be no antecedent⁹³³ conditions or laws that will determine that an action is committed or not committed.⁹³⁴ Hugh McCann (2001) explains there can be no independent determining conditions of human deeds, and human actions are committed voluntarily.⁹³⁵ Incompatibilism states it is incompatible for human beings to be significantly free in committing actions while,⁹³⁶ at the same time, God or any other being forces, coerces, or simultaneously determines those same actions.⁹³⁷ Gregory A. Boyd (2001) explains incompatibilism assumes, since human beings are free their wills and resulting actions are not, in any way, determined by any outside force.⁹³⁸ In contrast, human beings have self-determining freedom.⁹³⁹ John Sanders (1998) writes that in incompatibilism it is believed genetic or environmental factors are not ignored in the process of human actions,⁹⁴⁰ but it is thought a human being could always have done otherwise in any given situation.⁹⁴¹

Blackburn explains free will theory requires autonomous beings that are able to perform free actions without any significant influence upon their will.⁹⁴² He describes autonomy as the ability of agents to govern themselves,⁹⁴³ and for this to occur autonomous agents must commit actions which are truly their own.⁹⁴⁴ Autonomy cannot occur when an outside force is coercing or forcing a will to act.⁹⁴⁵ Therefore incompatibilism states God could not have made human beings in a way that they were both truly free and, at the same time, guarantee human beings

⁹³³ In his article entitled 'Conditional' Simon Blackburn writes that an antecedent exists if *p* causes *q*. *P* is the antecedent or prior cause of *q* which is the conditional and the consequence. Blackburn (1996: 73-74).

⁹³⁴ Feinberg (1994: 64).

⁹³⁵ McCann (2001: 115).

⁹³⁶ Feinberg (1994: 64).

⁹³⁷ Feinberg (1994: 64).

⁹³⁸ Boyd (2001: 52).

⁹³⁹ Boyd (2001: 52).

⁹⁴⁰ Sanders (1998: 221).

⁹⁴¹ Sanders (1998: 221). That would be significant freedom for incompatibilism.

⁹⁴² Blackburn (1996: 31).

⁹⁴³ Blackburn (1996: 31).

⁹⁴⁴ Blackburn (1996: 31).

⁹⁴⁵ Blackburn (1996: 31).

always committed actions God desired.⁹⁴⁶ Feinberg writes that for this view, freedom is incompatible with contingently sufficient nonsubsequent conditions of an action.⁹⁴⁷ The contingently sufficient nonsubsequent actions⁹⁴⁸ would be God making people in such a way that they only freely did one thing or another.⁹⁴⁹ Michael Peterson (1982) explains the problem of evil for this system would therefore be a natural result of God creating beings with free will,⁹⁵⁰ and he could not cause them to do good actions without eliminating their significant freedom.⁹⁵¹ Peterson (1998) reasons a world filled with significantly free creatures would have more value than a world filled with creatures that had their actions determined.⁹⁵²

Feinberg importantly writes that just as the incompatibilist does not claim that all actions are significantly free,⁹⁵³ the compatibilist also does not attach significant freedom to all acts.⁹⁵⁴ Feinberg then admits that it is difficult for compatibilists to determine intellectually if certain acts were done by an individual with significant freedom, or with the use of some type of compulsion.⁹⁵⁵ He then states that this intellectual difficulty does not disprove compatibilism.⁹⁵⁶ I agree that it does not disprove compatibilism,⁹⁵⁷ but the fact that both compatibilists and incompatibilists admit that some actions are not significantly free would make the self-deterministic notions of Ferre and Geisler unlikely.⁹⁵⁸ If some actions are determined and caused by God or an external force,⁹⁵⁹ then a system that generally adopts a strong view of God's

⁹⁴⁶ Feinberg (1994: 60).

⁹⁴⁷ Feinberg (1994: 60). Ferre (1973)(1976: 35).

⁹⁴⁸ Feinberg (1994: 60).

⁹⁴⁹ Feinberg (1994: 60).

⁹⁵⁰ Peterson (1982: 104).

⁹⁵¹ Peterson (1982: 104).

⁹⁵² Peterson (1998: 35).

⁹⁵³ Feinberg (2001: 637).

⁹⁵⁴ Feinberg (2001: 637).

⁹⁵⁵ Feinberg (2001: 638).

⁹⁵⁶ Feinberg (2001: 638).

⁹⁵⁷ Feinberg (2001: 638).

⁹⁵⁸ Geisler (1986: 75). Ferre (1973)(1976: 31-44).

⁹⁵⁹ Feinberg (2001: 638).

sovereignty and limited significant human freedom is preferable. If to both compatibilists and incompatibilists, human beings at times can be forced to commit actions against their will,⁹⁶⁰ it is ever more likely that the human will is not the primary cause in human actions, but the secondary cause if it is allowed to be a secondary determining factor by the primary cause.⁹⁶¹ This concept is describing soft determinism as stated previously in this work.⁹⁶²

Compatibilism

This approach within theodicy needs to be noted at this point because it is often compared to incompatibilism. Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling define compatibilism as the theory that human free will is compatible with God's sovereign prerogative to determine or will all events.⁹⁶³ Within compatibilism human freedom is considered to be analogous to God's freedom but not equal with it,⁹⁶⁴ human freedom is considered limited while God's is absolute.⁹⁶⁵ Louis P. Pojman (1996) explains the difference between determinism, which is also known as hard determinism,⁹⁶⁶ and compatibilism, which is also known as soft determinism.⁹⁶⁷ Within determinism or hard determinism, God⁹⁶⁸ causes an act and no created being is responsible for his or her moral actions,⁹⁶⁹ while for compatibilism or soft determinism, although God causes

⁹⁶⁰ These actions would be done without significant human freedom and therefore it would be intellectually untenable to attach human moral responsibility to such actions.

⁹⁶¹ Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁶² Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁶³ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 28).

⁹⁶⁴ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 28).

⁹⁶⁵ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 28).

⁹⁶⁶ Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁶⁷ Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁶⁸ This could be an outside force, as well, that is not God. An atheist may be a compatibilist and/or an incompatibilist, or one could hold to hard determinism. Schelling suggests that 'absolute causal power in one being leaves nothing but unconditional passivity for all the rest.' Schelling (1845)(1936: 11). This would be a difficulty with accepting hard determinism.

⁹⁶⁹ Pojman (1996: 596).

actions, created beings are responsible where they act voluntarily.⁹⁷⁰ Leibniz made it clear that human beings must be free, even though human freedom may appear incompatible with divine nature, as persons must have freedom in order to be considered worthy of punishment for wrong actions.⁹⁷¹ W.T. Stace (1952)(1976) explains that moral responsibility is consistent with determinism in the context of soft determinism and requires it.⁹⁷² If human actions are uncaused then reward or punishment would be unjustified.⁹⁷³ Stace reasons that there must be at least some human cause within human actions to make them morally responsible.⁹⁷⁴ If human actions were coerced or forced with hard determinism, persons could not be held morally responsible.⁹⁷⁵ At the same time, if human beings are not at least a secondary cause⁹⁷⁶ of actions primarily caused by God, then human actions would be morally insignificant.⁹⁷⁷ If one reasons that human actions are random and uncaused, and there is no primary or secondary cause to human actions, meaning neither determinism/hard determinism or compatibilism/soft determinism exists, this would make human actions amoral and morally irrelevant and insignificant.

Within hard determinism God would be the only cause of human actions,⁹⁷⁸ while with soft determinism God would be the primary cause of human actions and persons the secondary cause.⁹⁷⁹ Compatibilism, like incompatibilism, holds to free will but in a limited form.⁹⁸⁰ P.S. Greenspan (1998) writes compatibilism holds to free will and determinism being compatible.⁹⁸¹ Feinberg, a noted compatibilist, describes compatibilism as stating certain nonconstraining

⁹⁷⁰ Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁷¹ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 123).

⁹⁷² Stace (1952)(1976: 29).

⁹⁷³ Stace (1952)(1976: 29).

⁹⁷⁴ Stace (1952)(1976: 30).

⁹⁷⁵ Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁷⁶ Stace (1952)(1976: 30).

⁹⁷⁷ Stace (1952)(1976: 30).

⁹⁷⁸ Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁷⁹ Stace (1952)(1976: 30).

⁹⁸⁰ Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁸¹ Greenspan (1998: 1).

conditions could strongly influence actions in conjunction with human free will performing these actions.⁹⁸² Feinberg (2001) explains that with this viewpoint, there will be no contradiction in stating God would create human beings who were significantly free, unconstrained, and yet committed actions that God willed.⁹⁸³ Sovereignty theodicy, which will be discussed in the next Chapter, does hold to a modified form of free will and believes human beings freely choose actions for which they can be held fully responsible.⁹⁸⁴ This would be, as noted, as soft-determinism and also compatibilism.⁹⁸⁵ However, since compatibilism, in contrast to incompatibilism, believes external forces can simultaneously influence the human will and actions with soft determinism,⁹⁸⁶ compatibilism is generally rejected within free will theodicy.⁹⁸⁷

Alexander R. Pruss (2003) notes a key difference between incompatibilism and compatibilism in regard to committing an action.⁹⁸⁸ The incompatibilist thinks if someone freely refrains from an action, they must not have been causally determined or significantly influenced to do so.⁹⁸⁹ The compatibilist thinks if someone refrains from an action, they have the power to do this and were not constrained from doing the action by an outside force.⁹⁹⁰ Compatibilism allows for significantly free human beings to commit free actions, simultaneously influenced and determined by an outside force,⁹⁹¹ but never with the use of constraint, coercion or force.⁹⁹² Incompatibilism denies that any outside influence can significantly will any action,⁹⁹³ or impose

⁹⁸² Feinberg (1994: 60).

⁹⁸³ Feinberg (2001: 637).

⁹⁸⁴ Feinberg (2001: 637).

⁹⁸⁵ Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁸⁶ Feinberg (2001: 637). Pojman (1996: 596).

⁹⁸⁷ Compatibilism/soft determinism will be rejected by some incompatibilists as a slightly watered down version of determinism/hard determinism. Others may reject it even while understanding its major differences from hard determinism.

⁹⁸⁸ Pruss (2003: 216).

⁹⁸⁹ Pruss (2003: 216).

⁹⁹⁰ Pruss (2003: 216).

⁹⁹¹ Pruss (2003: 216).

⁹⁹² Pruss (2003: 216).

⁹⁹³ Pruss (2003: 216).

itself on a significantly free being for a truly free action to occur.⁹⁹⁴

John Calvin's (1543)(1998) theology holds to a strong view on God's sovereignty⁹⁹⁵ and to a limited view of human freedom.⁹⁹⁶ In modern, but not Reformation era terms, Calvin could be considered a compatibilist⁹⁹⁷ and explains that those who committed wrong actions performed them willfully and deliberately.⁹⁹⁸ Calvin viewed God as working his good purposes through the evil conduct of people,⁹⁹⁹ but he pointed out that God's motives in willing these deeds were pure while those who committed wrong had wicked motives.¹⁰⁰⁰ Leibniz writes that the holy God co-operates in human evil.¹⁰⁰¹ Human beings committed these actions freely within their nature and people were not forced or coerced by God to commit wrong actions.¹⁰⁰² Calvin's views shall be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Author's Viewpoints

I personally do not hold to free will theodicy but to a compatibilist sovereignty theodicy.¹⁰⁰³ My research, however, has shown that Augustine and Alvin C. Plantinga have written logical, reasonable presentations for free will theodicy,¹⁰⁰⁴ although within *God*,

⁹⁹⁴ Pruss (2003: 216).

⁹⁹⁵ Calvin (1543)(1998: 37).

⁹⁹⁶ Calvin (1543)(1998: 37).

⁹⁹⁷ In pre-modern times, Calvin would be considered a Reformed theologian with strong views on God's sovereignty.

⁹⁹⁸ Calvin (1543)(1998: 37).

⁹⁹⁹ Calvin (1543)(1998: 37).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Calvin (1543)(1998: 37).

¹⁰⁰¹ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 123).

¹⁰⁰² Calvin (1543)(1998: 68).

¹⁰⁰³ Feinberg presents this theodicy type in Chapter Six of *The Many Faces of Evil*. My views on theodicy would be similar, but not identical to Feinberg's. Feinberg (1994: 124-143).

¹⁰⁰⁴ Their approaches are basically logical and successful in dealing with the evil they set out to discuss, although I still favour a Reformed type theodicy more.

Freedom, and Evil, Plantinga calls his presentation a defence which I will discuss later.¹⁰⁰⁵

Augustine and Alvin C. Plantinga

Augustine's approach was mainly theological with some philosophy, and Plantinga's approach was mainly philosophical with some theology, so a synthesis is not the best approach and I shall review them separately.¹⁰⁰⁶ I will discuss primarily where their viewpoints are similar in order to provide a cohesive evaluation of free will theodicy, bearing in mind that Augustine existed over 1500 years earlier than Plantinga.¹⁰⁰⁷ This, of course, means Augustine could have influenced the understanding of Plantinga, and Plantinga does explain Augustine wrote a free will theodicy which has some similarities to his Free Will Defence.¹⁰⁰⁸ As shall be seen in the coming review, the writings of Augustine and Plantinga agree God was not the cause of evil,¹⁰⁰⁹ and that human free will was required in order for human beings to truly commit good actions and to be in line with God's ultimate purposes.¹⁰¹⁰ Both men agree some type of corruption and depravity took place in humanity.¹⁰¹¹ Augustine (421)(1998) names it privation and Plantinga calls it transworld depravity, both of which shall be explained later.¹⁰¹² These two men, especially Plantinga, also deal with the idea of natural evils and attempt to explain why they existed, so I will discuss natural evils.¹⁰¹³ I will not be dealing in depth with the differing approaches to the topic of free will theodicy between Augustine and Plantinga since they are

¹⁰⁰⁵ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28).

¹⁰⁰⁶ It is important to review these views separately in order for their historical context. Augustine is an ancient theological writer, Plantinga is a modern philosophical one.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Plantinga therefore used modern terms that Augustine would not have had the opportunity to be familiar with.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 27-28).

¹⁰⁰⁹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Plantinga (1982: 189).

¹⁰¹⁰ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Plantinga (1982: 189).

¹⁰¹¹ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8). Plantinga (1982: 184-189).

¹⁰¹² Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8). Plantinga (1982: 184-189).

¹⁰¹³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 58).

beyond the scope of this thesis, although some differences should be noted briefly.¹⁰¹⁴

Augustine's writings feature some controversial theological issues Plantinga did not primarily deal with as Plantinga's approach was more narrowly focused and less dogmatic.¹⁰¹⁵ Augustine's writings supported the idea of the fall of humanity,¹⁰¹⁶ a theological concept that Plantinga does not deal with to any great degree in regard to his defence. The fall, however, was a background to understanding the corruption aspect of Augustine's theodicy.¹⁰¹⁷ In *The City of God*, Augustine (426)(1958) writes the fault of an evil will begins when a person falls from God, the Supreme Being, and becomes something less.¹⁰¹⁸ He clarifies later by stating a person does not fall into sin, but rather sinfully falls.¹⁰¹⁹ Augustine applies this theological concept to the Biblical story of the fall of Adam and Eve as he postulates in an earlier work, *Confessions*, he freely chooses to sin because he is a son of Adam.¹⁰²⁰ Augustine notes that in Adam's first sin we all died.¹⁰²¹ Augustine deduces Adam, who he believed was the first man, sinned and therefore the fall took place that corrupted humanity and enslaved all of Adam's biological descendents to sin.¹⁰²² I note the fall because Augustine describes a literal fall¹⁰²³ and corruption of humanity that led to the literal problem of evil.¹⁰²⁴ Understanding Augustine's basic assumptions concerning the condition of humankind¹⁰²⁵ is important when reviewing views within his theodicy.

¹⁰¹⁴ Augustine is both a theologian and philosopher of religion, Plantinga is a philosopher of religion. This can be seen as Plantinga is more abstract in presentation and Augustine relatively more interested in theology and Scripture.

¹⁰¹⁵ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28).

¹⁰¹⁶ Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

¹⁰¹⁷ Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

¹⁰¹⁸ Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

¹⁰¹⁹ Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

¹⁰²⁰ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 149). Human beings are left to their own powers even while the soul is still capable of knowing God. Humanity is still left in a 'powerlessness' and needs God's grace. Lubac (1965)(2000: 151-152).

¹⁰²¹ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 197).

¹⁰²² Augustine (398-399)(1992: 197).

¹⁰²³ Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

¹⁰²⁴ Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

¹⁰²⁵ Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

For many secular and Biblical scholars from mainline denominations, the Biblical story of the fall is likely fiction.¹⁰²⁶ As John G. Jackson (1941)(2006) notes many liberal Christian apologists do not believe in a literal fall of humanity.¹⁰²⁷ Adam and Eve have been relegated to the realm of mythology.¹⁰²⁸ Terence E. Fretheim (1994) of Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, is not dogmatic¹⁰²⁹ but appears to favour the idea that the fall is metaphorical in Genesis 3.¹⁰³⁰ He does not think a traditional, conservative view of a single human fall into sin is supported by the Genesis text¹⁰³¹ which is filled with metaphorical, symbolic language.¹⁰³² He does, however, believe the Genesis text is providing a general, but not specifically literal, idea of how sin and evil became part of the cosmos.¹⁰³³ Fretheim raises a very important point in whether or not a scholar looks at the fall story in Genesis as fiction, or non-fiction, the metaphorical and symbolic use of words and concepts used within should not be ignored.¹⁰³⁴ William Sanford La Sor, David Allan Hubbard, and Fredric William Bush (1987) reason the author of Genesis is writing as an artist and storyteller who uses literary device.¹⁰³⁵ They point out it is imperative to distinguish which literary device is being used within the text of Genesis.¹⁰³⁶ The literary use of metaphor and symbolism within Genesis 3,¹⁰³⁷ and the story of the fall means there are tenable academic ways to interpret that fall as less than literal.¹⁰³⁸ For those scholars who view the fall as myth and fiction,¹⁰³⁹ but wish to accept free will theodicy, they

¹⁰²⁶ Jackson (1941)(2006: 1). Fretheim (1994: 152).

¹⁰²⁷ Jackson (1941)(2006: 1).

¹⁰²⁸ Jackson (1941)(2006: 1).

¹⁰²⁹ Fretheim (1994: 152).

¹⁰³⁰ Fretheim (1994: 152).

¹⁰³¹ Fretheim (1994: 152).

¹⁰³² Fretheim (1994: 153).

¹⁰³³ Fretheim (1994: 153).

¹⁰³⁴ Fretheim (1994: 153).

¹⁰³⁵ La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush (1987: 72).

¹⁰³⁶ La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush (1987: 72).

¹⁰³⁷ La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush (1987: 72).

¹⁰³⁸ Fretheim (1994: 153).

¹⁰³⁹ This could include those within progressive liberal Christian churches.

would have to explain human evil and corruption in terms separate from Augustine's concept of the human fall¹⁰⁴⁰ from God's original plan. As I noted earlier, Plantinga's free will defence does not discuss the fall so this option is academically viable.

Plantinga argues against atheists of his day who think theism contradictory and untenable because of the problem of evil,¹⁰⁴¹ but this is not a key to Augustine's theology. I will not discuss this in any great detail, although I will review Plantinga's disagreement with atheistic compatibilism.¹⁰⁴²

2. Augustine

Augustine's Background

Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430)¹⁰⁴³ is historically an important Christian Theologian.¹⁰⁴⁴ Mark D. Jordan (1996) notes Augustine's influence is impossible to circumscribe.¹⁰⁴⁵ Earl E. Cairns (1981) explains Augustine's work has had great impact throughout the centuries on many theological writers as he was a key Church Father.¹⁰⁴⁶ According to Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger (1996) Augustine was one of the first writers to comprehensively deal with the problem of evil,¹⁰⁴⁷ and so it would seem important for me to review his approach in this Chapter.

Augustine's Influences

Manichaeism

¹⁰⁴⁰ Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

¹⁰⁴¹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 22).

¹⁰⁴² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 22).

¹⁰⁴³ Frend (1999: 55).

¹⁰⁴⁴ Jordan (1996: 52). Cairns (1981: 311).

¹⁰⁴⁵ Jordan (1996: 52).

¹⁰⁴⁶ Cairns (1981: 311).

¹⁰⁴⁷ Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger (1996: 231).

According to Alan Richardson (1999), as a student Augustine was attracted to Manichaeism,¹⁰⁴⁸ a movement began by the Persian, Manes (ca 215-275).¹⁰⁴⁹ Vernon J. Bourke (1958) writes that Augustine was in this religion for nine years from 373 A.D.¹⁰⁵⁰ The Manichees, according to Augustine scholar Henry Chadwick (1992), held that matter itself was evil.¹⁰⁵¹ Augustine rejected Manichaeism when he converted to Christianity,¹⁰⁵² but this does not mean with certainty the views of Manes have no influence whatsoever on Augustine's theodicy.¹⁰⁵³ However, Augustine is historically known to have eventually challenged Manichaeism by denying its views as mythology,¹⁰⁵⁴ and in disagreement with what he viewed as orthodox Christianity.¹⁰⁵⁵ Augustine's view of the corruption and privation of matter and nature was that they were good things as created originally by God,¹⁰⁵⁶ but had become less than they were originally intended through the rebellion of creatures.¹⁰⁵⁷ This view would therefore contradict Manichaeism¹⁰⁵⁸ which saw matter as always by nature being inherently evil.¹⁰⁵⁹

Platonic Philosophy

Augustine was also documented to have been influenced by Platonic philosophy.¹⁰⁶⁰ Scott MacDonald (1989) explains in his article 'Augustine's Christian-Platonic Account of Goodness' that Augustine held views influenced by Platonic thought.¹⁰⁶¹ Platonic philosophy

¹⁰⁴⁸ Richardson (1999: 344).

¹⁰⁴⁹ Richardson (1999: 344).

¹⁰⁵⁰ Bourke (1958: 7).

¹⁰⁵¹ Chadwick (1992: xiv).

¹⁰⁵² Chadwick (1992: xiv).

¹⁰⁵³ Chadwick (1992: xv).

¹⁰⁵⁴ Chadwick (1992: xiv).

¹⁰⁵⁵ Chadwick (1992: xv).

¹⁰⁵⁶ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117).

¹⁰⁵⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117).

¹⁰⁵⁸ Chadwick (1992: xv).

¹⁰⁵⁹ Chadwick (1992: xiv).

¹⁰⁶⁰ MacDonald (1989: 485-486). Jordan (1996: 52).

¹⁰⁶¹ MacDonald (1989: 485-486).

was largely created by Plato (427-347 B.C.).¹⁰⁶² Richard Kraut (1996) notes Plato was a preeminent Greek philosopher who conceived the observable world as an imperfect image of the realm of the unobservable and unchanging forms.¹⁰⁶³ Plato, in *Timaeus*, written in 360 B.C, viewed these forms as divinely moved objects.¹⁰⁶⁴ Mark D. Jordan (1996) notes Augustine was primarily affected by Neoplatonism before his conversion to Christianity.¹⁰⁶⁵ Augustine (398-399)(1992) states in *Confessions* he examined Platonist writings that supported his Biblical understanding of the nature of God.¹⁰⁶⁶ Jordan states the Platonic writings helped Augustine to conceive of a cosmic hierarchy in the universe in which God was immaterial and had sovereign control over his material creation.¹⁰⁶⁷ However, Jordan states Augustine saw philosophy alone as being unable to change his life as only God himself could do.¹⁰⁶⁸ Augustine's use of Plato does not in itself invalidate his understanding of Biblical writings where the two may happen to be in agreement.¹⁰⁶⁹ From my overall research of Augustine and his free will theodicy, he places much emphasis on Biblical theology as primary,¹⁰⁷⁰ and therefore although it is possible he could read Neoplatonism into his understanding of theodicy, it is also very likely he rejects Neoplatonism where it contradicts his Scriptural findings through in depth study.¹⁰⁷¹

3. The Problem of Evil is Caused by Human Free Will, Not God

Augustine's View

¹⁰⁶² Pojman (1996: 6).

¹⁰⁶³ Kraut (1996: 619-620).

¹⁰⁶⁴ Plato (360 B.C.)(1982: 35).

¹⁰⁶⁵ Jordan (1996: 52).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Augustine (398-399)(1992).

¹⁰⁶⁷ Jordan (1996: 53).

¹⁰⁶⁸ Jordan (1996: 53).

¹⁰⁶⁹ Augustine (398-399)(1992).

¹⁰⁷⁰ Augustine (398-399)(1992).

¹⁰⁷¹ Augustine (398-399)(1992).

Augustine states God is not the cause of evil.¹⁰⁷² The creator is perfectly good,¹⁰⁷³ and it is wrong to believe otherwise.¹⁰⁷⁴ He writes that God is holy and the sovereign divine governor of the universe who is completely just in punishing evildoers,¹⁰⁷⁵ and God is not the cause of their wrong actions.¹⁰⁷⁶ God can rightly judge people because each evil person is the cause of his/her rebellion against God.¹⁰⁷⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964) notes there is not one cause of evil, but that each evil man is the cause of his own undoing.¹⁰⁷⁸ Since each human being willfully rebels against God,¹⁰⁷⁹ according to Augustine's theodicy, it is completely just for God to punish those who used their free will to disobey their creator.¹⁰⁸⁰ To Augustine, the human will is the origin of human wrongdoing, and it would be senseless to try to deduce if something is behind the human will.¹⁰⁸¹

D.C. Schindler (2002) notes Augustine does, in his writings, recognize the danger of infinite regression.¹⁰⁸² If one seeks to find what causes human will, then the cause of that cause would have to be found, and so on, and so on.¹⁰⁸³ Schindler quotes Karl Ulb in noting that in whatever way one gives account to a human action, it ultimately will end with an appeal to the human will as the original source.¹⁰⁸⁴ It seems Augustine's writings would be in agreement as he reasons human beings have a will,¹⁰⁸⁵ and it is that will that is the source of significant freedom in

¹⁰⁷² Augustine (398-399)(1992).

¹⁰⁷³ Augustine (398-399)(1992). Human beings reflected God's goodness. As a result, it is believed by Roman Catholics and most Protestant that all God created initially was good, very good in fact. Schreck (1984: 14).

¹⁰⁷⁴ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

¹⁰⁷⁵ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

¹⁰⁷⁶ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Lubac (1965)(2000: 151-152).

¹⁰⁷⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Lubac (1965)(2000: 151-152).

¹⁰⁷⁸ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Lubac (1965)(2000: 151-152).

¹⁰⁷⁹ Schreck (1984: 15).

¹⁰⁸⁰ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

¹⁰⁸¹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

¹⁰⁸² Schindler (2002: 621).

¹⁰⁸³ Schindler (2002: 621).

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ulb in Schindler (2002: 61). Human beings were given a genuinely free will by God. Schreck (1984: 21).

¹⁰⁸⁵ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36).

order to make decisions and act rightly.¹⁰⁸⁶ Augustine appears to assume a form of incompatibilism with his view of the origin of human evil.¹⁰⁸⁷ To him, human beings have been made significantly free¹⁰⁸⁸ and reject God's laws by the use of their will without any kind of significant outside interference.¹⁰⁸⁹ God has established laws of nature which Augustine calls eternal laws.¹⁰⁹⁰ Many, according to Augustine, freely and without being coerced, forced, or heavily influenced by God, disobey these laws and follow temporal laws and pursue temporal things.¹⁰⁹¹ Frederick Russell (1990) explains Augustine thought some people, by subjecting themselves to lower things, were in the voluntary human pursuit of things that constituted evil.¹⁰⁹² Augustine states God cannot be blamed for giving people free will when they could freely use these wills to seek eternal laws, but instead sought temporal laws.¹⁰⁹³ Augustine explains it is clear things are not to be blamed when a person makes evil use of them, but rather it is the person who is guilty.¹⁰⁹⁴

As Rowan A. Greer (1996) notes Augustine is arguing God is not the cause of evil,¹⁰⁹⁵ even though he gives human beings free will which they then use to commit evil actions,¹⁰⁹⁶ because God's intentions are flawless.¹⁰⁹⁷ According to Greer, Augustine believes free will is a good thing that can lead to happiness if used correctly.¹⁰⁹⁸ Free will is supposed to lead humanity to the unchangeable good and happiness of following God, and so its misuse does not affect the

¹⁰⁸⁶ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36).

¹⁰⁸⁷ This will be discussed later in this Chapter in regard to the writings of John Calvin.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Schreck (1984: 21).

¹⁰⁸⁹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

¹⁰⁹¹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

¹⁰⁹² Russell (1990: 703).

¹⁰⁹³ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

¹⁰⁹⁵ Greer (1996: 478). Augustine (398-399)(1992).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Augustine (398-399)(1992).

¹⁰⁹⁷ Greer (1996: 478).

¹⁰⁹⁸ Greer (1996: 478).

goodness of free will in itself.¹⁰⁹⁹ At the same time, the good nature of God in giving free will is not affected by its misuse.¹¹⁰⁰ To Augustine, God permits evil in order that human beings can have the use of significant free will, with some being open to God and his ultimate goodness and the happiness that would be experienced.¹¹⁰¹ However, Augustine (421)(1998) notes that God did well, even in the permission of what was evil, as he permitted it for the sake of judgment, and his justice is perfect.¹¹⁰² Augustine would not have viewed God's foreknowledge as a philosophical problem.¹¹⁰³ Augustine rejected the idea that God's prior knowledge of what a person would do in the future meant he forced that person to commit any action.¹¹⁰⁴ Thiessen writes God knows the future,¹¹⁰⁵ and that is defined as foreknowledge.¹¹⁰⁶ He also points out that God's prescience does not mean God predetermined these actions.¹¹⁰⁷ Thiessen is noting that human acts within God's prescient foreknowledge are still significantly free.¹¹⁰⁸ Leibniz has a different view than Thiessen,¹¹⁰⁹ that is deterministic and reasons that foreknowledge has to do with God's determined will and is not dependent on free human actions.¹¹¹⁰ This predetermination should not be understood as by necessity eliminating all human choice.¹¹¹¹ Erickson takes a reasonable compatibilistic position and writes God with foreknowledge sees many possibilities and influences that will be present, and then acts accordingly to his will.¹¹¹²

Augustine reasoned that when people acted rightly with God's guidance, without forcible

¹⁰⁹⁹ Greer (1996: 478).

¹¹⁰⁰ Greer (1996: 482).

¹¹⁰¹ Greer (1996: 482).

¹¹⁰² Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 96: 48).

¹¹⁰³ Augustine (426)(1958: 106).

¹¹⁰⁴ Augustine (426)(1958: 106).

¹¹⁰⁵ Thiessen (1956: 125).

¹¹⁰⁶ Thiessen (1956: 125).

¹¹⁰⁷ Thiessen (1956: 126).

¹¹⁰⁸ Thiessen (1956: 126).

¹¹⁰⁹ Thiessen (1956: 126).

¹¹¹⁰ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 147).

¹¹¹¹ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 147).

¹¹¹² Erickson (1994: 360).

influence, they would be suitable to God.¹¹¹³ Augustine explains: ‘If a man is good and cannot act rightly unless he wills to do so, then he must have free will, without which he cannot act rightly.’¹¹¹⁴ Augustine went on to indicate God is not to be thought of as giving humanity free will so evil could occur, but rather God gives it because goodness cannot occur unless human beings freely chose to follow God.¹¹¹⁵ Augustine notes no righteous act can be performed except by the choice of the free will, and that is why God granted free will.¹¹¹⁶ To Schindler, Augustine with his view of freedom and goodness equated freedom with power, in particular the power of determination.¹¹¹⁷ Schindler thinks it is impossible for human beings to be responsible agents without free will,¹¹¹⁸ and there is nothing that belongs to human beings more profound and intimate than a significantly free determined will.¹¹¹⁹

4. Corruption and Depravity

Augustine on Corruption and Privation

Augustine believes every nature, meaning substance that was not infinite, could be corrupted.¹¹²⁰ To Augustine, the term substance, particularly in regard to God, is not necessarily

¹¹¹³ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 37).

¹¹¹⁴ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36).

¹¹¹⁵ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36).

¹¹¹⁶ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 78).

¹¹¹⁷ Schindler (2002: 621).

¹¹¹⁸ Schindler (2002: 621). Augustine (388-395)(1964: 78). Freedom is required for persons to be both righteous and responsible beings.

¹¹¹⁹ Schindler (2002: 621). This freedom allows persons to turn to Christ by the grace of God within a Roman Catholic understanding. Schreck (1984: 21). This view is also commonly held among much Protestant and evangelical scholarship within an incompatibilist model. Thiessen (1956: 248).

¹¹²⁰ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116).

physical substance, but instead is the very core of a being.¹¹²¹ Each nature and substance that could become less good would still be good, and every nature would become less good when it was corrupted.¹¹²² Augustine assumed God to be perfectly good¹¹²³ and that everything God created, including the nature of rational beings, to be perfectly good in origin.¹¹²⁴ It was Augustine's belief that due to wrong choices made by humanity the race was fallen.¹¹²⁵ Augustine points out in *Enchiridion*, that there would still be goodness in humanity because evil cannot exist by itself, as it has no substance in itself.¹¹²⁶ Thomas Aquinas (1261)(1920) writes in *Summa Theologiae* that evil was only possible from a corruption of the good.¹¹²⁷ Leibniz noted that evil itself only comes from privation.¹¹²⁸

Since evil cannot exist by itself¹¹²⁹ it would be impossible, in Augustine's view, for all good to be removed from the nature of a being as there would therefore be no entirely, purely evil entity.¹¹³⁰ He went on to say that an incorruptible nature, such as that of God, would be far better than a corruptible nature,¹¹³¹ but for the corruptible nature to exist it must possess some goodness.¹¹³² Augustine explains that every nature was to some degree good.¹¹³³ He stated that every substance is either God or from God since every good is either God or from God.¹¹³⁴ To Augustine, evil and corruption lessened the good in nature, but the nature still remains somewhat

¹¹²¹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 117).

¹¹²² Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117).

¹¹²³ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117). Augustine (398-399)(1992).

¹¹²⁴ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 117).

¹¹²⁵ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

¹¹²⁶ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7).

¹¹²⁷ Aquinas (1261)(1920: 1.48.1).

¹¹²⁸ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 219). Schelling also discusses this view of Leibniz. Schelling (1845)(1936: 45).

¹¹²⁹ Aquinas (1261)(1920: 1.48.1). Leibniz (1710)(1998: 219).

¹¹³⁰ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7).

¹¹³¹ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7).

¹¹³² Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7).

¹¹³³ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117).

¹¹³⁴ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117).

good having been created by a perfectly good God.¹¹³⁵ For any creation to maintain existence, Augustine thought it had to possess some goodness, that being a reflection of God the ultimate good.¹¹³⁶ As Scott MacDonald writes, Augustine views anything that has being in creation as not being contrary to God's divine being.¹¹³⁷ In other words, any being's essential essence has to originate with God.¹¹³⁸

Frederick Russell notes that with Augustine's view evil cannot exist apart from good, even though good can exist without evil.¹¹³⁹ There has to be good in existence for there to be any evil at all.¹¹⁴⁰ Within Augustine's free will theodicy there is no means by which evil can exist on its own.¹¹⁴¹ It is dependent on the privation of the good.¹¹⁴² Atheistic philosopher, William Rowe (1996) describes privation as the philosophical idea that evil itself is only a lack of good.¹¹⁴³ Privation occurs when a created thing loses some goodness after becoming corrupted and evil by turning from the higher good of serving God.¹¹⁴⁴ Greer indicates Augustine viewed privation as meaning evil has no ontological status,¹¹⁴⁵ but from his writings Augustine does not seem that naïve.¹¹⁴⁶ T. Patrick Burke (1999) describes ontology as dealing with the doctrine of being.¹¹⁴⁷ Erickson¹¹⁴⁸ and philosopher R. Douglas Geivett (1993)¹¹⁴⁹ point out that the term ontology is also used in context of arguments for the existence of God. Augustine dealt primarily with the idea of

¹¹³⁵ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8).

¹¹³⁶ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8).

¹¹³⁷ MacDonald (1989: 50). Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8).

¹¹³⁸ MacDonald (1989: 50).

¹¹³⁹ Russell (1990: 69).

¹¹⁴⁰ Russell (1990: 69).

¹¹⁴¹ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7-8).

¹¹⁴² Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7-8).

¹¹⁴³ Rowe (1996: 648).

¹¹⁴⁴ Rowe (1996: 648).

¹¹⁴⁵ Greer (1996: 482).

¹¹⁴⁶ Greer (1996: 482). This appears to be speculation on the part of Greer.

¹¹⁴⁷ Burke (1999: 416).

¹¹⁴⁸ Erickson (1994: 272).

¹¹⁴⁹ Geivett (1993: 53).

evil as negation,¹¹⁵⁰ and I doubt he would fail to see after corruption had taken place in creation that actual beings who commit evil works do exist. He explains every human being that exists is good, but is evil where it is defective.¹¹⁵¹ Therefore within Augustine's theology and theodicy it could be stated that defective evil people do ontologically exist.¹¹⁵²

5. Natural Evils

Augustine's Perspective

Philip L. Quinn (1996) defines natural evils as the bad consequences of impersonal forces operating in nature, and this is a good secular definition.¹¹⁵³ Feinberg explains the concept of natural evils is often considered to be missing from Augustine's theodicy;¹¹⁵⁴ however, ideas taken from Augustine can shed light on his leanings.¹¹⁵⁵ Feinberg notes the fact Augustine does not deal specifically with natural evils is not a devastating problem.¹¹⁵⁶ To Feinberg, Augustine's work is successful because the free will theodicy is logically presented without contradiction,¹¹⁵⁷ and solves the moral problem of evil presented within Augustine's work.¹¹⁵⁸ It accomplishes its purpose as natural evil is not the same as moral evil,¹¹⁵⁹ and Augustine does not need to deal with natural evils in order for his theodicy to be successful.¹¹⁶⁰ Augustine wrote that humanity is in

¹¹⁵⁰ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8).

¹¹⁵¹ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7).

¹¹⁵² Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 14: 8).

¹¹⁵³ Quinn (1996: 610).

¹¹⁵⁴ Feinberg (1994: 58).

¹¹⁵⁵ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 111).

¹¹⁵⁶ Feinberg (1994: 58).

¹¹⁵⁷ Feinberg (1994: 80).

¹¹⁵⁸ Feinberg (1994: 80).

¹¹⁵⁹ Feinberg (1994: 80).

¹¹⁶⁰ Feinberg (1994: 80).

bondage to the prince of the world, Satan, who makes people subject to him through persuasion.¹¹⁶¹ Augustine understood humanity as losing its dominion over creation,¹¹⁶² and that dominion has been awarded substantially to Satan who he calls the prince of this world.¹¹⁶³ Feinberg points out that natural evils are not specifically explained by Augustine.¹¹⁶⁴ Natural evils will be discussed further in this Chapter in the context of Plantinga.

6. Calvin on Augustine

I include this section because as Augustine is listed as a forefather of free will theodicy,¹¹⁶⁵ as his ancient view would be considered incompatibilistic according to modern philosophy.¹¹⁶⁶ Calvin, however, throughout *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* claims that Augustine supports his case for a free will theory in which human beings are in bondage to sin, unable to follow God on their own.¹¹⁶⁷ As an academic I cannot, in good conscience, use both Augustine and Calvin in this thesis without dealing with this matter.¹¹⁶⁸ As Augustine wrote a free will theodicy,¹¹⁶⁹ which included the idea that human beings require the ability to freely choose or reject God, in order to please the Almighty.¹¹⁷⁰

A.N.S. Lane (1996) notes that one problem with Calvin and his use of Augustine was Calvin rejected the use of the term *free choice*.¹¹⁷¹ Calvin did state that although he rejected the

¹¹⁶¹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 111).

¹¹⁶² Augustine (388-395)(1964: 111).

¹¹⁶³ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 111).

¹¹⁶⁴ Feinberg (1994: 58). Feinberg (1994: 80).

¹¹⁶⁵ Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger (1996: 231).

¹¹⁶⁶ McCann (2001: 115). Geisler (1986: 75).

¹¹⁶⁷ Calvin (1543)(1996: 95-96).

¹¹⁶⁸ Calvin (1543)(1996: 95-96).

¹¹⁶⁹ Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger (1996: 231).

¹¹⁷⁰ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 37).

¹¹⁷¹ Lane in Calvin (1543)(1996: xix).

term,¹¹⁷² he believed his views to be in line with Augustine on human free will, that the will was free in the sense that it was not coerced but voluntary and self-determined.¹¹⁷³ Lane states that after centuries of debates between Catholic and Protestant scholars, many concluded Calvin correctly understood Augustine.¹¹⁷⁴

When reading Augustine's theodicy, it appears to be supporting incompatibilism as human beings are noted to have the ability to freely choose or reject God.¹¹⁷⁵ He states that a human being could not act rightly unless he/she willed to do so,¹¹⁷⁶ and to do that the person must have free will in order to act rightly.¹¹⁷⁷ Calvin notes that this concept of free choice by Augustine would not be applicable to a fallen will, and could only be applied to Adam and Eve before the fall in Genesis occurred.¹¹⁷⁸ This point by Calvin, however, was never clearly demonstrated in Augustine's writings; instead, Augustine has been viewed historically as a theologian who held to free will theory¹¹⁷⁹ within incompatibilist freedom in modern terms, and a strong view of God's sovereignty.¹¹⁸⁰ Feinberg believes that Augustine was not the ancient equivalent of a modern compatibilist,¹¹⁸¹ but made the error of writing a theodicy, which featured free will and incompatibilist thought, and yet held to a theory of God's sovereignty, which would necessitate some type of determinism.¹¹⁸² It would seem Augustine either made a logical error in accepting the ancient equivalents of incompatibilist human free choice and compatibilist

¹¹⁷² Lane in Calvin (1543)(1996: xix). Calvin (1543)(1996: 103).

¹¹⁷³ Calvin (1543)(1996: 103).

¹¹⁷⁴ Lane in Calvin (1543)(1996: xxiv).

¹¹⁷⁵ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36).

¹¹⁷⁶ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36).

¹¹⁷⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36).

¹¹⁷⁸ Calvin (1543)(1996: 95).

¹¹⁷⁹ Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger (1996: 231).

¹¹⁸⁰ Feinberg (1994: 98).

¹¹⁸¹ Feinberg (1994: 98).

¹¹⁸² Feinberg (1994: 98).

sovereignty for God,¹¹⁸³ or he simply failed to adequately explain the connection in particular whether or not his free will theodicy applied equally to pre-fall and post-fall humanity.¹¹⁸⁴ Lane points out that Calvin, in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, lacked the library resources needed and loosely quoted Augustine.¹¹⁸⁵ Calvin was familiar with Augustine's traditionally strong view of God's sovereignty,¹¹⁸⁶ and perhaps he rightly or wrongly interpreted that sovereignty as applying to Augustine's concept of free will.¹¹⁸⁷ I would postulate in agreement with Feinberg that Augustine's free will theodicy appears to be incompatibilistic in regard to human free will and is likely compatibilistic in regard to God's sovereignty.¹¹⁸⁸ The connection between the two concepts seems not to be adequately explained by Augustine.¹¹⁸⁹ Rowan A. Greer states that it was realized by Augustine there was a difficulty holding to free will theodicy and a strong view of God's sovereignty.¹¹⁹⁰ Greer concluded that Augustine always maintained a free will approach,¹¹⁹¹ and held that God had sovereign control in the universe to punish evildoers.¹¹⁹² Greer thought Augustine's solution to the problem that his free will theodicy perhaps contradicted his views on sovereignty, would be to restrict the concept of free will to Adam and Eve before the fall.¹¹⁹³ It should be pointed out that this is Greer's assumption¹¹⁹⁴ and, although it agrees with Calvin's idea,¹¹⁹⁵ Greer speculates that Augustine viewed his free will idea as appropriate for Adam and Eve before the fall, and not for humanity after it.¹¹⁹⁶ Greer

¹¹⁸³ Feinberg (1994: 98).

¹¹⁸⁴ Feinberg (1994: 98).

¹¹⁸⁵ Lane in Calvin (1543)(1996: xxiii).

¹¹⁸⁶ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Greer (1996: 481).

¹¹⁸⁷ Lane in Calvin (1543)(1996: xxiii).

¹¹⁸⁸ Feinberg (1994: 98).

¹¹⁸⁹ Feinberg (1994: 98). Lane in Calvin (1543)(1996: xxiii).

¹¹⁹⁰ Greer (1996: 481).

¹¹⁹¹ Greer (1996: 481).

¹¹⁹² Greer (1996: 481).

¹¹⁹³ Greer (1996: 481).

¹¹⁹⁴ Greer (1996: 481).

¹¹⁹⁵ Calvin (1543)(1996: 96).

¹¹⁹⁶ Greer (1996: 481). Calvin (1543)(1996: 96).

however, like Calvin,¹¹⁹⁷ was not able to produce a distinct Augustine reference that stated this, and so in my mind this supports the idea that it is still unknown whether or not Augustine, when discussing this idea of human freedom, was including post-fall humanity in that concept.¹¹⁹⁸ It is therefore reasonable to deduce that Augustine quite possibly held that fallen humanity still had some ability to freely choose and reject God,¹¹⁹⁹ which would place him in the incompatibilism camp in regard to human free choice.¹²⁰⁰

Regardless of Calvin's views,¹²⁰¹ in modern scholarship Augustine and his free will theodicy are primarily reviewed within incompatibilist camp.¹²⁰²

7. Plantinga

Plantinga's Background

According to Feinberg, in contemporary literature no person has done more to develop and defend the free will defence than Plantinga.¹²⁰³ Feinberg believes Plantinga logically and reasonably answers the atheistic compatibilism of Antony Flew and J.L Mackie, who shall be discussed later.¹²⁰⁴ Plantinga gives the free will defence its most thorough and sophisticated presentation;¹²⁰⁵ it is essential reading for anyone studying the problem of evil and theodicy.¹²⁰⁶ R. Douglas Geivett (1993) suggests Plantinga is 'highly celebrated'¹²⁰⁷ and contributed

¹¹⁹⁷ Calvin (1543)(1996: 96).

¹¹⁹⁸ Greer (1996: 481). Calvin (1543)(1996: 96).

¹¹⁹⁹ Feinberg (1994: 98). Lane in Calvin (1543)(1996: xxiii).

¹²⁰⁰ Feinberg (1994: 98).

¹²⁰¹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 96).

¹²⁰² Therefore Augustine is primarily reviewed as such.

¹²⁰³ Feinberg (1994: 63). Plantinga has offered the most famous modern approach to the problem of evil. Beebe (2006: 7).

¹²⁰⁴ Feinberg (1994: 63).

¹²⁰⁵ Feinberg (1994: 63).

¹²⁰⁶ Feinberg (1994: 63).

¹²⁰⁷ Geivett (1993: 59).

significantly to the development of the free will defence.¹²⁰⁸ Howard-Snyder and O’Leary-Hawthorne (1998) explain Plantinga is viewed by many scholars as one responsible for a shift in thinking, as now the concepts of God and evil are considered intellectually compatible.¹²⁰⁹ There is an intellectual consistency with the existence of both God and evil.¹²¹⁰ Plantinga has established this philosophical possibility.¹²¹¹ Pruss notes Plantinga has answered Mackie’s atheistic compatibilism objection,¹²¹² and indicates it is logically possible that even an omnipotent God may be contingently unable to create any significantly free creatures that only do what is right.¹²¹³

Plantinga’s Influences

Augustine

Augustine, as I have already discussed, is known as a forefather of the free will theodicy,¹²¹⁴ and Plantinga is considered a preeminent scholar in regard to a modern free will defence.¹²¹⁵ Their approaches are similar and it can be deduced that Augustine has influenced the approach of Plantinga.¹²¹⁶ In his book *God, Freedom, and Evil*, in the Chapter entitled ‘The Problem of Evil’ Plantinga suggests Augustine is one of the greatest and most influential philosopher-theologians in the history of the Christian Church.¹²¹⁷ Plantinga notes Augustine’s writings claim God could create a better world by permitting evil than by not doing so.¹²¹⁸

¹²⁰⁸ Geivett (1993: 59).

¹²⁰⁹ Howard-Snyder and O’Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 1).

¹²¹⁰ Howard-Snyder and O’Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 1).

¹²¹¹ Howard-Snyder and O’Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 1).

¹²¹² Pruss (2003: 211).

¹²¹³ Pruss (2003: 211).

¹²¹⁴ Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger (1996: 231).

¹²¹⁵ Feinberg (1994: 63).

¹²¹⁶ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 26).

¹²¹⁷ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 26).

¹²¹⁸ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 27).

Plantinga went on stating Augustine's view was a universe containing free creatures that committed evil was better than one that did not have free creatures at all.¹²¹⁹ Clearly Augustine's concept is the pivotal idea in Plantinga's defence, as Plantinga defines this idea as a central tenet of his free will defence, and quotes Augustine when defining it.¹²²⁰

In regard to the problem of natural evil, Plantinga likely has been influenced by Augustine.¹²²¹ Augustine was thought by Plantinga to believe that Satan rebelled against God and, along with his cohorts, caused natural evils.¹²²² Plantinga, as shall be discussed later, states a similar view.¹²²³

Defence versus Theodicy

Plantinga wrote a free will defense, with the American spelling of the word defense.¹²²⁴ Plantinga differentiated between free will defence and free will theodicy, and I will explain his reasoning.¹²²⁵ Within this work, however, I will review his defence within Chapter Two, because both defence and theodicy are dealing with a free will presentation that is trying to defend the idea of the infinite, omnipotent, and holy God,¹²²⁶ existing in a creation filled with evil.¹²²⁷ In traditional Christian theology the infinity of God would mean God is not only unlimited,¹²²⁸ but he is also unlimitable.¹²²⁹ God is deemed to be a limitless being, considered not

¹²¹⁹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 27).

¹²²⁰ Plantinga (1977)(2002:27-28).

¹²²¹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 58). Geivett (1993: 185-186).

¹²²² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 58).

¹²²³ Geivett (1993: 185-186).

¹²²⁴ For the purpose of this British thesis, I will use the British version of the word *defence*.

¹²²⁵ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28).

¹²²⁶ As discussed in Chapter One.

¹²²⁷ There is minimal difference between a defence and theodicy in my view.

¹²²⁸ Erickson (1994: 272).

¹²²⁹ Erickson (1994: 272).

to have a physical body.¹²³⁰ I would suggest, from a Reformed perspective, what God allows as an omnipotent being, he therefore wills, but remains moral and holy in nature.¹²³¹ It should be noted, however, God will not do things contrary to his nature such as opposing truth and love.¹²³² G.R. Lewis (1996) explains God does, at times, choose to work through angelic and human intermediates.¹²³³ This would be a means by which God uses evil for his good purposes. Roman Catholic theologian Alan Schreck (1984) notes that because of God's holy nature, sin is opposed to God's purity.¹²³⁴ Nothing impure or sinful can enter God's presence.¹²³⁵ Bloesch mentions that followers are to be holy by being separated by God from the world system, in a nearness to God.¹²³⁶ Bloesch deduces this is not the same as 'moral uprightness'¹²³⁷ but consists of followers living in Christ.¹²³⁸

Plantinga states his defence is mainly a logical presentation,¹²³⁹ whereas theodicy is more dogmatic in approach,¹²⁴⁰ but I view both defence and theodicy as equally speculative. Philip L. Quinn notes Plantinga's view of a defence instead of theodicy means Plantinga does not speculate on God's reasons for permitting evil, but merely argues that God's existence is logically consistent with the problem of evil.¹²⁴¹ I agree with Quinn. Plantinga is mainly arguing God's existence can be shown as logical in regard to the problem of evil with his defence;¹²⁴² however, Plantinga does speculate within his defence concerning incompatibilism, transworld

¹²³⁰ Erickson (1994: 273). Frame (2002: 520).

¹²³¹ A compatibilistic model.

¹²³² Erickson (1994: 277-278).

¹²³³ Lewis (1996: 458).

¹²³⁴ Schreck (1984: 195-196).

¹²³⁵ Schreck (1984: 195-196).

¹²³⁶ Bloesch (1987: 211).

¹²³⁷ Bloesch (1987: 211).

¹²³⁸ Bloesch (1987: 211).

¹²³⁹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28).

¹²⁴⁰ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28).

¹²⁴¹ Quinn (1996: 611).

¹²⁴² Geivett reasons Plantinga is correct to protect against presuming too much in regard to how God and evil coexist within the world. Geivett (1993: 136).

depravity and natural evils.¹²⁴³ This type of speculation is perhaps not done as forcefully as some in theodicy,¹²⁴⁴ but Plantinga is theorizing on how the problem of evil can be understood within our known world.¹²⁴⁵ For this reason, his free will defence can be reviewed under the umbrella of free will theodicy.¹²⁴⁶

Theodicy is by nature somewhat speculative, and therefore theodicy, like a defence, is also dealing with a possible reason for God to permit evil.¹²⁴⁷ A theodicy may be more dogmatic than Plantinga's defence in its assertions and arguments,¹²⁴⁸ but it is still speculative. Plantinga writes in *The Nature of Necessity*, that one who writes a theodicy assumes it is true, while one who writes a defense is stating that it is possibly true.¹²⁴⁹ However, even the person writing the theodicy does not have infinite knowledge of God's reasoning in regard to the problem, and I therefore conclude free theodicy and free will defence are both equally speculative, although perhaps not equally dogmatic.¹²⁵⁰

8. Plantinga's Free Will Defence

Incompatibilism

Plantinga, like Augustine,¹²⁵¹ is assuming a form of incompatibilism with his free will defence.¹²⁵² Augustine assumes God cannot be blamed for creating free creatures that have a

¹²⁴³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 45-59).

¹²⁴⁴ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28). D.Z. Phillips explains Plantinga views most attempts at theodicy as shallow and frivolous. Phillips (2005: 37).

¹²⁴⁵ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28).

¹²⁴⁶ As well Plantinga's work has some Augustinian influence.

¹²⁴⁷ Scripture does not exhaustively explain the problem of evil.

¹²⁴⁸ Plantinga (1982: 192).

¹²⁴⁹ Plantinga (1982: 192).

¹²⁵⁰ Plantinga (1982: 192).

¹²⁵¹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

¹²⁵² Plantinga (1982)(166-167). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 1). J.E. Barnhart mentions that even as Plantinga is from a Reformed tradition, he does not write a Calvinistic theodicy. Barnhart (1977: 2). In my view, Plantinga's presentation is not Reformed in a classic sense, but has more in common with modern evangelical free will perspectives. I reason this is demonstrated with questionnaire results.

choice to follow temporal or eternal laws, and then choose to disobey God by following temporal laws leading to evil.¹²⁵³ Plantinga believes, for human beings to have significant freedom they must be able to commit or refrain from actions without the interference of any cause, including God.¹²⁵⁴ So Plantinga did not see the concept in terms of laws but,¹²⁵⁵ like Augustine, he saw the need for human beings to commit, or refrain from committing, actions in order to have the possibility to perform right or wrong actions that are in line with God's original intentions in creation.¹²⁵⁶ Plantinga notes that an action is only morally significant when it can be understood whether an action is right or wrong, and this requires significant freedom in the area of thought.¹²⁵⁷

To Plantinga, God is not to blame for evil because no antecedent conditions or laws from an outside force, including God, can coerce, force or simultaneously determine human actions.¹²⁵⁸ If this is done, significant freedom cannot exist.¹²⁵⁹ Since this is the case,¹²⁶⁰ the fact that God is omnipotent does not mean it is possible for God to create significantly free beings without at least the potential for rebellion.¹²⁶¹ Augustine states no true human goodness can be performed except by a free choice of the human will.¹²⁶² Plantinga concludes in a similar fashion significant free will is required for humanity because a world containing significantly free creatures that perform more good actions than evil ones, is more valuable to God than a world containing no free creatures.¹²⁶³

¹²⁵³ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

¹²⁵⁴ Plantinga (1982: 166). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹²⁵⁵ Plantinga took a more philosophical perspective.

¹²⁵⁶ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 29-30).

¹²⁵⁷ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 29-30).

¹²⁵⁸ Plantinga (1982: 166-167).

¹²⁵⁹ Plantinga (1982: 166-167).

¹²⁶⁰ Plantinga (1982: 166-167).

¹²⁶¹ Plantinga (1982: 167). Moral evil must exist in order for moral good to exist. LaFollette (1980: 1)

¹²⁶² Augustine (388-395)(1964: 78).

¹²⁶³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3). Beebe (2006: 7).

Definition of Plantinga's Defence

Plantinga postulates since a world containing significantly free creatures where good outweighs evil is more valuable than a world with automatons or robots,¹²⁶⁴ it is logically possible and plausible God could not have created free creatures and, at the same time, guarantee they would only commit right actions.¹²⁶⁵ If God had done that, he would have eliminated the significant freedom within these creatures, and they would not be acting freely.¹²⁶⁶ This idea is in line with Augustine's view that a human being cannot act rightly unless he/she wills to do so.¹²⁶⁷ Augustine thought if God had created creatures that only did right actions, then these creatures would not have the option to commit wrong actions against God's will.¹²⁶⁸ Thus their obedience to God would be meaningless and not truly righteous or, to Augustine, worthy of membership in the Kingdom of God.¹²⁶⁹

Plantinga believes it apparent some of the creatures God has created make wrong decisions and commit moral evil.¹²⁷⁰ Sadly human freedom was misused.¹²⁷¹ To Plantinga, the fact this occurs, and free creatures sometimes do wrong actions,¹²⁷² is not to be counted against God, his omnipotence or his goodness.¹²⁷³ God could only have avoided the possibility of moral evil by removing the possibility of moral good, and by removing significant freedom from the

¹²⁶⁴ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30).

¹²⁶⁵ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30). Significant incompatibilist freedom requires that there are no prior/antecedent conditions that an action will or will not be performed. Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹²⁶⁶ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹²⁶⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36). Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30).

¹²⁶⁸ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 36). Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30).

¹²⁶⁹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 78).

¹²⁷⁰ Plantinga (1982: 167).

¹²⁷¹ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹²⁷² Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹²⁷³ Plantinga (1982: 167). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

creatures.¹²⁷⁴ Plantinga speculates the problem of evil is unfortunate but worthwhile because it is possibly the only way God could create truly good creatures.¹²⁷⁵ Without the use of significant freedom, creatures could not choose to be morally good and thus could not please God.¹²⁷⁶

Antony Flew's Objection

Plantinga, living some fifteen hundred years after Augustine, has a greater number of critics of free will approaches to deal with. Plantinga has dealt with Antony Flew's atheistic objection,¹²⁷⁷ but the criticism of Flew could be equally applied to Plantinga's or Augustine's approach.¹²⁷⁸ Flew's article from 1955 'Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom' in *New Essays within Philosophical Theology* states it is reasonable God could have created free creatures who are free to do what is right or wrong, but are causally determined by God to do only what is right.¹²⁷⁹ Persons could be constituted to always act uprightly.¹²⁸⁰ Feinberg notes that for Flew, unconstrained determined free will is an option instead of incompatibilist free will.¹²⁸¹ Plantinga suggests Flew's objection is utterly impossible,¹²⁸² and it is implausible for Flew to suppose God could make free creatures, and then cause and guarantee these persons only do what was right at all times.¹²⁸³

Andrew Eshleman (1997) in his article 'Alternative Possibilities and the Free Will

¹²⁷⁴ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3). Beebe (2006: 7).

¹²⁷⁵ Plantinga (1982: 167). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹²⁷⁶ Plantinga (1982: 167). Without significant human freedom, God would remove the possibility of moral good. Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹²⁷⁷ Geivett notes Flew questions the existence of an infinitely good God and his divine omnipotence in light of the problem of evil. Geivett (1993: 9).

¹²⁷⁸ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 31).

¹²⁷⁹ Flew (1955: 150-153). Plantinga (1977)(2002: 31). Human nature is somewhat determined in order that freedom does not lead to random actions. Geivett (1993: 189).

¹²⁸⁰ Geivett (1993: 159).

¹²⁸¹ Feinberg (1994: 61). Flew holds to a type of determinism, as a human being is only free within certain parameters. Geivett (1993: 189).

¹²⁸² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32).

¹²⁸³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32). The view being God could guarantee persons always act freely and rightly. Geivett (1993: 189).

Defence' explains Flew's arguments against free will incompatibilism¹²⁸⁴ have merit, but it is not true that belief in God hangs in the balance.¹²⁸⁵ In other words, even if Flew's theory is true, atheism is not necessarily true by default.¹²⁸⁶ Eshleman notes that if Flew is correct, the free will defence simply needs to become more robust.¹²⁸⁷ It seems sensible there is room for greater depth with free will approaches,¹²⁸⁸ particularly in light of the incompatibilism, compatibilism debate. I agree with Eshleman¹²⁸⁹ that rejecting incompatibilism for compatibilism does not mean one should logically hold to atheism. If Flew's theory is correct, it would simply disprove most incompatibilist free will approaches;¹²⁹⁰ however, there would still be compatibilist theodicy approaches to review before totally disregarding theism, not to overlook other types of theistic theodicy.¹²⁹¹ Plantinga's criticism of Flew seems plausible,¹²⁹² but if Flew is stating that God with the use of soft determinism¹²⁹³ can create people in a way they always act freely without being forced or coerced, then I view his understanding as tenable.¹²⁹⁴ God could seemingly create beings that freely always did what was right,¹²⁹⁵ but if by causally determining people to do what is right Flew's system requires God to use force or coercion, then clearly human actions will not have been done freely. Flew's objection is seemingly outright contradiction if he uses hard determinism,¹²⁹⁶ which would see God as the only cause of human actions.¹²⁹⁷ His atheistic

¹²⁸⁴ Flew (1955: 150-153).

¹²⁸⁵ Eshleman (1997: 286). There are compatibilistic sovereignty theodicy approaches in existence, such as Feinberg's presentation.

¹²⁸⁶ Eshleman (1997: 286).

¹²⁸⁷ Eshleman (1997: 286).

¹²⁸⁸ Eshleman (1997: 286).

¹²⁸⁹ Eshleman (1997: 286).

¹²⁹⁰ This would make Plantinga's free will approach very likely untrue.

¹²⁹¹ Besides sovereignty approaches, there are also soul making perspectives like that of John Hick. I also acknowledge there are non-Christian attempts at theodicy.

¹²⁹² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32).

¹²⁹³ Pojman (1996: 256).

¹²⁹⁴ There have been intellectual attempts to understand how determinism may work with human free will. Blackburn (1996: 102). This is a reasonable intellectual pursuit.

¹²⁹⁵ Flew (1955: 150-153).

¹²⁹⁶ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32).

determinism would not be in line with much of theistic compatibilism,¹²⁹⁸ which would view God as the cause of circumstances and events by which the human will would be determined, but without compulsion.¹²⁹⁹ Flew (1983)(1996) within his view, does not grant that God is guiding humanity.¹³⁰⁰ On the contrary, he reasons, the idea of God's divine work cannot be demonstrated in any convincing way and is meaningless.¹³⁰¹ He states concepts such as God having a plan, or God having created the world,¹³⁰² are mere assertions that are unlikely to succeed in becoming orthodox or effective because they cannot be proven empirically true or false.¹³⁰³ Flew's concept which has God determining no human beings commit a wrong act at any time,¹³⁰⁴ is not reasonable according to Plantinga;¹³⁰⁵ however, my objection to Flew would come if he uses a form of hard determinism¹³⁰⁶ and yet claims human beings would still act freely.¹³⁰⁷ This seemingly would require God to have human beings commit actions without the use of any type of free will.¹³⁰⁸ Michael Peterson supports Plantinga's view against Flew's compatibilism.¹³⁰⁹ Peterson states Flew's concept produces an illogical, impossible state of affairs, which is not reasonable.¹³¹⁰ If Plantinga and Peterson are correct, then Flew's compatibilism is not really compatibilism at all, but simply hard determinism.¹³¹¹ Flew's view would be a nonsensical¹³¹² equivalent of stating that God can have people non-freely, freely do what he wants them to,

¹²⁹⁷ Pojman (1996: 256). Therefore denying the possibility of a human secondary cause in human actions.

¹²⁹⁸ Or most Reformed perspectives which use compatibilism.

¹²⁹⁹ Pojman (1996: 256).

¹³⁰⁰ Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

¹³⁰¹ Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

¹³⁰² Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

¹³⁰³ Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

¹³⁰⁴ Flew (1955: 150-153).

¹³⁰⁵ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 31-32).

¹³⁰⁶ Pojman (1996: 256).

¹³⁰⁷ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 31-32).

¹³⁰⁸ Peterson (1982: 104).

¹³⁰⁹ Peterson (1982: 104).

¹³¹⁰ Peterson (1982: 104).

¹³¹¹ Peterson (1982: 104). Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32).

¹³¹² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32).

avoiding wrong actions.

J. L. Mackie and the Best Possible World Objection

The next objection Plantinga deals with is Mackie's atheistic compatibilism¹³¹³ which, in part, assumes a perfectly good God¹³¹⁴ should have created, if he exists, a best possible world.¹³¹⁵ Leibniz believes God had an infinite number of worlds to choose from to create, and chose the best possible world.¹³¹⁶ Mackie's 'Evil and Omnipotence' in *Mind* (1971) removes the possibility of hard determinism and postulates God could have made free creatures that only do what is right.¹³¹⁷ They do not have to be determined because God could have made people in a way they freely always chose what was right¹³¹⁸ even though, unlike Flew's determinism,¹³¹⁹ wrong actions would be a technical possibility.¹³²⁰ Plantinga admits it is logically possible, in a broad sense, there could be a world containing creatures that only do what is right.¹³²¹ Plantinga explains and rejects Mackie's concept of possible worlds and does this with two main objections.¹³²² First, no matter how wonderful a world appears to be, no matter how many incredibly happy people there are, it is always possible there is an even better world containing more people who are even happier.¹³²³ Plantinga's reasoning appears sound as any finite world God would create could always be better.¹³²⁴ Only an infinite world would be the best possible world, and it is debatable and unlikely God could create an infinite world. The fact that a world

¹³¹³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-34).

¹³¹⁴ LaFollette (1980: 2). Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-34). Phillips (2005: 3).

¹³¹⁵ LaFollette (1980: 2). Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-34).

¹³¹⁶ Leibniz (1710)(1990).

¹³¹⁷ Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

¹³¹⁸ LaFollette (1980: 2).

¹³¹⁹ Flew (1955: 150-153). Plantinga (1977)(2002: 31).

¹³²⁰ Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

¹³²¹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32).

¹³²² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-64).

¹³²³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 34).

¹³²⁴ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 34).

is created means it is not infinitely old or eternal, and so this would seemingly make the concept of a created infinite world untenable.

Plantinga's second objection to Mackie's best possible world idea concerns the concept of human free choice.¹³²⁵ Plantinga describes Paul (1) accepting an offer, or (2) rejecting an offer.¹³²⁶ Whichever choice Paul makes, either (1) or (2), God would not be able to actualize that world.¹³²⁷ If Paul would make a wrong choice at any point, the problem of evil would occur, and the world would no longer be the best possible as Mackie describes.¹³²⁸ To Plantinga, the result of God creating significantly free creatures is that their decisions did impact which type of world God created, and how much evil it would contain.¹³²⁹ God's omnipotence, to Plantinga, could not guarantee a best possible world free from evil, because there is always a possibility of human decisions that are contrary to what God would have desired.¹³³⁰ Since significantly free creatures exist, it is never up to God alone in regard to which world is actualized.¹³³¹

Augustine, like Plantinga, seemingly did assume free creatures will eventually make one wrong decision, this making Mackie's idea that human beings could always freely choose the right seem untenable to these free will proponents.¹³³² At the same time, both Augustine and Plantinga would reject Mackie's notion that if God is understood and accepted, as in traditional Christian theism, he should have created a best possible world filled with perfect creatures that never do wrong actions,¹³³³ and because God did not do this atheism would be the preferred philosophy to adopt. Both free will advocates have stated that significantly free creatures by

¹³²⁵ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 39-44). LaFollette (1980: 3).

¹³²⁶ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 40-42). There are possible worlds that God cannot actualize. LaFollette (1980: 3).

¹³²⁷ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 42).

¹³²⁸ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 42).

¹³²⁹ Plantinga (1982: 180-181). Therefore, for Plantinga some worlds cannot be actualized. LaFollette (1980: 4).

¹³³⁰ Plantinga (1982: 180-181). LaFollette (1980: 4).

¹³³¹ Geivett (1993: 196).

¹³³² Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

¹³³³ Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

definition could not be guaranteed by God to avoid wrong actions,¹³³⁴ and thus when wrong actions occur it is because of the human abuse of free will only.¹³³⁵ God is not to be blamed for creating a good thing, that being free will, which is willfully turned towards something evil by his human creation.¹³³⁶

Plantinga and Transworld Depravity

Plantinga, like Augustine, states human beings' wrong decisions and abuse of free will have led to an evil creation.¹³³⁷ Plantinga did not propagate privation but instead developed a theory of transworld depravity.¹³³⁸ The concept of transworld depravity is a further response to Mackie's possible world approach.¹³³⁹ Transworld depravity notes the idea that in any possible world, including our actual one, each person would make at least one wrong decision and the resulting bad action would lead to evil occurring within that reality.¹³⁴⁰ Persons would always choose at least one wrong action, and God could not actualize a world where this was not the case.¹³⁴¹ Plantinga describes transworld depravity as: 'A person *P* suffers from transworld depravity if and only if the following holds: for every world *W* such that *P* is significantly free to *W* and *P* only does what is right in *W*, there is an action *A* and a maximal world segment *S'* such that (1) *S'* includes *A*'s being morally significant for *P*; (2) *S'* includes *P*'s being free with respect to *A*; (3) *S'* is included in *W* and includes neither *P*'s performing *A* nor *P*'s refraining

¹³³⁴ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Plantinga (1982: 189).

¹³³⁵ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Plantinga (1982: 189).

¹³³⁶ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33). Plantinga (1982: 170-171). The free will theist that reasons evil is adequately explained is left with the religious problem of individual suffering, according to LaFollette. LaFollette (1980: 1).

¹³³⁷ Plantinga (1982: 170-171). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹³³⁸ Plantinga (1982: 184-189). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3-4). Evans (1983: 2). Also called trans-world depravity. Koons (2002: 2).

¹³³⁹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 49-53). LaFollette (1980: 5-10).

¹³⁴⁰ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3-4). Evans (1983: 2).

¹³⁴¹ LaFollette (1980: 6).

from performing; and (4) If *S'* were actual, *P* would go wrong with respect to *A*.¹³⁴² Bloesch notes that in every human system of ethics¹³⁴³ there is demonstrated a human flaw that prohibits people from fulfilling a moral requirement.¹³⁴⁴ Such a flaw¹³⁴⁵ can be philosophically and theologically considered to perhaps relate to Plantinga's theory.¹³⁴⁶

Plantinga notes if people suffered from transworld depravity, it would not be possible for God to actualize any possible world he could think of, specifically a world containing significantly free creatures that only commit good actions.¹³⁴⁷ The price, according to Plantinga, of God creating significantly free creatures would be they would eventually go wrong with an action, leading to the problem of evil existing.¹³⁴⁸ Transworld depravity, to Plantinga, would be possible and likely, even if God had created a different universe with a completely different type of rational beings with significant freedom.¹³⁴⁹ This is so because significant freedom will eventually lead to at least one wrong action being made by each person.¹³⁵⁰ Within this system, as long as one person makes a wrong decision the problem of evil will exist and the depravity caused will alienate that person from God's original plan and lead to a multiplication of wrong actions.¹³⁵¹

Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne suggest a concept of *transworld sanctity*.¹³⁵²

They demonstrate that transworld sanctity is no less intellectually possible than is transworld

¹³⁴² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 48). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3-4).

¹³⁴³ Bloesch (1987: 34). Bloesch is discussing ethical systems and not a defence or theodicy, but still the concepts of human nature and actions relate.

¹³⁴⁴ Bloesch (1987: 34).

¹³⁴⁵ Bloesch (1987: 34).

¹³⁴⁶ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53). Plantinga (1982: 189). Every ethical system fails because of human moral failure. Bloesch's commentary on human ethics could also be connected to Reformed compatibilistic concepts of depravity.

¹³⁴⁷ Plantinga (1982: 189). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3-4). There would be a high risk of moral evil occurring. Koons (2002: 3).

¹³⁴⁸ Plantinga (1982: 189). LaFollette (1980: 6).

¹³⁴⁹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

¹³⁵⁰ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

¹³⁵¹ Plantinga (1982: 186-187). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹³⁵² Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 5).

depravity.¹³⁵³ This would be a hypothetical world where persons do not commit wrong actions.¹³⁵⁴ The authors do not present transworld sanctity as their held view,¹³⁵⁵ as they are incompatibilists as is Plantinga,¹³⁵⁶ but reason that Plantinga's view on transworld depravity intellectually fails and is false.¹³⁵⁷ It is not obviously necessary that some persons in a given world are blessed with transworld sanctity, they argue.¹³⁵⁸ It is also not necessary that some persons in a world have transworld depravity.¹³⁵⁹ Plantinga does not demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that all persons suffer with transworld depravity.¹³⁶⁰ The authors therefore strongly doubt Plantinga's free will defence.¹³⁶¹ They do acknowledge that other philosophers will counter that Plantinga is only presenting the possibility of transworld depravity,¹³⁶² and that is a reasonable point.

9. Natural Evils

Plantinga's Perspective

Plantinga, although a modern philosopher, postulated the existence of satanic beings that were involved in causing the problem of evil.¹³⁶³ He emphasized cautiously that significantly

¹³⁵³ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 5).

¹³⁵⁴ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 5).

¹³⁵⁵ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 5).

¹³⁵⁶ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

¹³⁵⁷ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 1). Aleksander S. Santrac also suggests that Plantinga overlooks the horrendous human sufferings that occur and the possibility of God's love to counter. Santrac (2008: 1-132). Could not, in certain circumstances, God's love assist one in avoiding wrong actions within transworld depravity?

¹³⁵⁸ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 9).

¹³⁵⁹ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 9).

¹³⁶⁰ LaFollette (1980: 8).

¹³⁶¹ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 1). Plantinga does not know that his defence is true, and LaFollette reasons it is false. LaFollette (1980: 9). As noted, Plantinga claims to write a defence that is logically possible only. He does not claim it is true. Plantinga (1977)(2002: 27-29).

¹³⁶² Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 14). Plantinga argues for the possibility of transworld depravity only, strictly speaking. It is theory. Plantinga (1982: 184-189).

¹³⁶³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 58). The existence of satanic beings are a logical possibility for Plantinga. Geivett (1993: 186).

free actions of non-human persons/devils were quite possibly responsible for natural evils,¹³⁶⁴ so his theory would be in line with basic assumptions of Augustine, and were likely influenced by Augustine.¹³⁶⁵ Certainly such beings as devils would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove empirically.¹³⁶⁶ However, it seems Augustine's and Plantinga's beliefs that demonic beings could be involved in natural evils are plausible for at least the following reasons: (1) If material human beings were made significantly free¹³⁶⁷ and rebelled against an immaterial God¹³⁶⁸ then it is logical and reasonable God could create significantly free immaterial beings¹³⁶⁹ that could rebel against him. (2) A traditional approach to Biblical interpretation tends to lead to an acceptance of the existence of satanic beings.¹³⁷⁰ Erickson explains these beings are understood as Biblical, literal, and historical.¹³⁷¹ Roman Catholic scholar Peter Kreeft, working with Ronald K. Tacelli, states Satan is a deceiver of humanity,¹³⁷² and this implies the assumption that Satan has personality.¹³⁷³ There is of course a debate between those of traditional conservative perspectives and those of liberal, progressive, mainline perspectives on the existence of satanic beings.¹³⁷⁴ It would be far beyond the scope of this thesis to exhaustively debate the strengths and weaknesses of arguments of both sides.¹³⁷⁵ The conservative, traditional position claims that the context of the Scripture allows for Satan and his demons to be understood as literal, historical beings, and

¹³⁶⁴ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 58).

¹³⁶⁵ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 58). Augustine (388-395)(1964: 111). Natural evils for Plantinga could be caused by immoral actions of superhuman fallen angels. Koon reasons the existence of these beings unlikely and postulates the existence of God unlikely. Koon (2002: 3).

¹³⁶⁶ Phillips documents the idea that Plantinga does at times demonstrate a desire to deal with the problem of evil practically and not just with abstract philosophy. Phillips (2005: 56). Plantinga's comments on natural evils may be an indicator that he at least intellectually can admit that empirical natural evils are a serious concrete problem.

¹³⁶⁷ As within both theistic compatibilism and incompatibilism.

¹³⁶⁸ God is spirit, as noted in John 4: 24. Erickson (1994: 267).

¹³⁶⁹ Sharing God's immaterial nature.

¹³⁷⁰ Within that Biblical worldview which accepts the possibility of fallen angels, for Plantinga natural evils are as compatible with the existence of God as are moral evils. Geivett (1993: 186).

¹³⁷¹ Erickson (1994: 445-451).

¹³⁷² Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 294).

¹³⁷³ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 294).

¹³⁷⁴ Richardson (1999: 521-522). Erickson (1994: 446). Thiessen (1956: 201-202).

¹³⁷⁵ Richardson (1999: 521-522). Erickson (1994: 446). Thiessen (1956: 201-202).

referencing Greek scholars such as Strong,¹³⁷⁶ which was done previously, allows this as an academic and intellectual possibility.¹³⁷⁷ Greek scholar, Walter Bauer (1979) in agreement with Strong,¹³⁷⁸ describes ‘Satan’ or ‘Satanas’ as the Adversary, enemy of God and those who belong to God.¹³⁷⁹ Bauer goes on to note that Revelation, Chapter 2, verse 13, is describing Satan as persecuting the Church.¹³⁸⁰ It appears by studying the Greek copies of the New Testament and assuming a type of contextual, literal hermeneutical method of examining Scripture, it is possible to view satanic beings as literal and historical beings,¹³⁸¹ and this makes Augustine’s and Plantinga’s deduction that satanic beings may be involved in natural evils as at least an intellectual possibility to consider academically.¹³⁸² The liberal, progressive, mainline perspectives can point out that there is no empirical evidence for such satanic beings,¹³⁸³ and that it is not a satisfactory explanation for evil.¹³⁸⁴ I can also understand how some within a mainline tradition in the post Enlightenment era,¹³⁸⁵ would view it as more beneficial to deal with the empirical human problem of evil,¹³⁸⁶ as opposed to a hypothetical satanic one.¹³⁸⁷ Erickson writes that it would be wrong to too quickly credit physical and psychological phenomena with satanic beings.¹³⁸⁸ I agree with this assertion and the human problem of evil should be the main focus of Christian churches and ministries as opposed to a possible satanic problem.¹³⁸⁹

¹³⁷⁶ Strong (1890)(1986: 152).

¹³⁷⁷ Strong (1890)(1986: 152).

¹³⁷⁸ Strong (1890)(1986: 152).

¹³⁷⁹ Bauer (1979: 744).

¹³⁸⁰ Bauer (1979: 745).

¹³⁸¹ Strong (1890)(1986: 152). Bauer (1979: 744).

¹³⁸² Augustine (388-395)(1964: 111). Plantinga (1977)(2002: 58).

¹³⁸³ Richardson (1999: 521-522).

¹³⁸⁴ Richardson (1999: 521-522).

¹³⁸⁵ Richardson (1999: 521-522).

¹³⁸⁶ And to deal with everyday human problems based in science and psychology, along with Scripture.

¹³⁸⁷ Richardson suggests demonic beings provide a pictorial description of evil in the universe. Richardson (1999: 521-522). Demonic beings would serve as metaphor.

¹³⁸⁸ Erickson (1994: 450).

¹³⁸⁹ I therefore do not hold to a fundamentalistic position on demonology. In other words, I am not ‘looking for Satan around every corner.’

10. Summary and Practical Theology

Three practical theological ramifications of an acceptance of free will theodicy will be briefly discussed. This will of course be done prior to the gathering of empirical data, but some practical reflections would be valuable.

First, Plantinga states that practical theological issues need to be dealt with practically and not philosophically.¹³⁹⁰ I accept this point; however, I would deduce that for someone who accepts either incompatibilism or compatibilism there could be different ways of examining personal suffering.¹³⁹¹ The incompatibilist believes that God cannot simultaneously influence human actions or force or coerce human beings to commit free actions.¹³⁹² A person who holds to this type of view¹³⁹³ may place more emphasis on human free will decisions in regard to their own human suffering than would a compatibilist. The compatibilist or soft-determinist states although God causes actions,¹³⁹⁴ created beings are responsible where they act voluntarily.¹³⁹⁵ The incompatibilist may deny that God is causing particular suffering¹³⁹⁶ and would instead understand God as merely allowing it to occur. The compatibilist, on the other hand, may view God as directly willing evil and suffering for the greater good¹³⁹⁷ and not merely allowing it to occur.¹³⁹⁸ Leibniz explains that God permits and promotes evil without distracting from divine

¹³⁹⁰ Plantinga (1982: 195).

¹³⁹¹ There are different emphases.

¹³⁹² Feinberg (1994: 64).

¹³⁹³ Feinberg (1994: 64).

¹³⁹⁴ Pojman (1996: 596).

¹³⁹⁵ Pojman (1996: 596).

¹³⁹⁶ Feinberg (1994: 64).

¹³⁹⁷ Feinberg (1994: 64). Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

¹³⁹⁸ Feinberg (1994: 64). Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

holiness and supreme goodness.¹³⁹⁹ Incompatibilists may tend to place more blame on human decisions for the existence of evil without denying God's allowance of such evil,¹⁴⁰⁰ and compatibilists may admit God is the primary cause of evil actions while human beings are a secondary cause.¹⁴⁰¹ A potential danger of incompatibilism is denying God's ultimate plans in all things¹⁴⁰² while a danger in compatibilism is overlooking human decision to sin within God's ultimate plans.¹⁴⁰³

Second, Augustine's view of privation places emphasis on evil being the absence of good.¹⁴⁰⁴ Greer alludes to the danger which he reasons Augustine overlooked, that being the idea evil is actually a thing in itself.¹⁴⁰⁵ Although, as stated, I am not sure that Augustine was this naïve, Greer has a good point to consider.¹⁴⁰⁶ Evil does exist, and even if privation theory is correct and every evil thing has to possess good to exist,¹⁴⁰⁷ evil is still very real and dangerous.¹⁴⁰⁸ Human and natural evils in our world are not made any more intellectually palatable because, technically speaking, with privation theory¹⁴⁰⁹ there still must be some good in all evil things. Evil and suffering are real and terrible things¹⁴¹⁰ despite any related ontological goodness attached.

Third, although I do not hold to incompatibilism and free will theodicy, it is logically

¹³⁹⁹ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

¹⁴⁰⁰ Augustine (398-399)(1992).

¹⁴⁰¹ Pojman (1996: 596).

¹⁴⁰² There is also a danger of at times putting too much emphasis on human actions in a particular situation.

¹⁴⁰³ There is the danger of assuming that God's allowance of sin means a person that sins in a situation is not as guilty as perhaps they are in reality. The idea that 'God made me do it', or for that matter, 'The devil made me do it' is an intellectual cop-out.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117).

¹⁴⁰⁵ Greer (1996: 482).

¹⁴⁰⁶ Greer (1996: 482).

¹⁴⁰⁷ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8).

¹⁴⁰⁸ Greer (1996: 482).

¹⁴⁰⁹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117).

¹⁴¹⁰ Greer (1996: 482).

consistent as compatibilist John Feinberg admits.¹⁴¹¹ Free will theodicy holds to a form of modified rationalism that states God did not have to create any world at all, nor did he have to create a best possible world.¹⁴¹² Free will theodicy logically and reasonably presents the theory that God, out of his own free will, created a world that was not the best possible, but simply good¹⁴¹³ even though it became corrupted by significantly free human acts.¹⁴¹⁴ Those that hold to free will theodicy can minimally claim to hold to a reasonable explanation for the problem of evil, and can find comfort in this pastorally.¹⁴¹⁵

¹⁴¹¹ Feinberg (1994: 97).

¹⁴¹² Feinberg (1994: 36).

¹⁴¹³ Feinberg (1994: 36).

¹⁴¹⁴ Plantinga (1982: 167-184).

¹⁴¹⁵ Although Augustine and especially Plantinga's approaches are not primarily pastoral.

CHAPTER THREE

SOVEREIGNTY THEODICY

1. Introduction

Reformed Theology and Methodology

The Bible

John R. Franke (2005)¹⁴¹⁶ provides, within *The Character of Theology*, a recent academic method of examining and explaining Christian and Reformed theology¹⁴¹⁷ which are reasoned to exist, in part through Biblical revelation.¹⁴¹⁸ This approach by Franke and others is an appropriate precursor to a discussion of Feinberg's Reformed sovereignty approach.¹⁴¹⁹ Franke

¹⁴¹⁶ Franke is of Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, Pennsylvania.

¹⁴¹⁷ Relevant to this thesis, in particular which is attempting to examine Reformed concepts within a questionnaire.

¹⁴¹⁸ Franke desires to explain the nature, task and purpose of theology from a Reformed perspective in particular. Franke (2005: 9). Cornelius Van Til explains that Reformed theology presupposes the God that reveals himself. Van Til (1969: 18).

¹⁴¹⁹ It provides a Reformed methodology.

mentions that some evangelicals¹⁴²⁰ will have difficulties with his approach that takes a non-traditional look at theology and not only a traditional Biblical approach.¹⁴²¹ He reasons that what is Biblical should not just be assumed and should be a subject of intellectual scrutiny,¹⁴²² and on this point I fully agree.¹⁴²³ Otto Weber (1955)(1981) mentions the problem of ‘Biblicism’¹⁴²⁴ that as an approach within some evangelical churches reviews the Bible out of context at times with rigid literalness of interpretation.¹⁴²⁵ This approach often negates theology as irrelevant.¹⁴²⁶ Franke desires an approach that has one ‘truly disciplined by the Word of God.’¹⁴²⁷ He maintains a commitment to truth,¹⁴²⁸ Scripture¹⁴²⁹ and ‘ecumenical Christian orthodoxy.’¹⁴³⁰ Edward E. Hindson, as a Professor of Religion, wrote the ‘Introduction’ to Presbyterian theologian William G.T. Shedd’s (1874-1890)(1980) text *Dogmatic Theology* and charges that Shedd’s ‘profound insight into theological truth was no mere matter of casual intellectual

¹⁴²⁰ Franke (2005: 8). I consider myself primarily Reformed as opposed to primarily evangelical. Many evangelicals will struggle with the compatibilism accepted within this thesis. This is an intellectual divider, and shall be demonstrated by questionnaire results.

¹⁴²¹ Franke (2005: 8). Theology must always be contemporary. Erickson (1994: 21). I agree. Harold Lindsell analyses the issue of Scripture philosophically and acknowledges that within the Christian community there have been other non-traditional ways to look at the Bible. There have been debates within the Church over inerrancy, as in the Bible being without error. He states that the term infallible can be considered a synonym of the word inerrant in the context of the Bible. Lindsell (1976: 27). This section of my thesis is discussing the Reformed approach to Scripture, but certainly there are confessing Christian groups that can perhaps be considered liberal and progressive that do claim the Bible as the word of God but still reason that it is not necessarily inerrant or infallible.

¹⁴²² Franke (2005: 8). Erickson explains theology is to use the tools and methods of Biblical research. Erickson (1994: 21).

¹⁴²³ The questionnaire serves as one way to scrutinize theological approaches to theodicy.

¹⁴²⁴ Weber (1955)(1981: 17).

¹⁴²⁵ John Frame recognizes in light of Biblicism that there is still value in traditions, confessions and church history, although he believes in the sufficiency of the Scripture. Frame (2002: 10). Biblicism is a wrong extreme but Frame desires that Scripture be correctly understood.

¹⁴²⁶ Weber (1955)(1981: 17). Weber makes an excellent point as through academic theological blogging, for example, I have found that some evangelical fundamentalists downplay the use of theology and any scholarship. They prefer a plain literal read of the Bible and are sceptical of any scholarship that may challenge their views.

¹⁴²⁷ Franke (2005: 8).

¹⁴²⁸ Franke (2005: 9).

¹⁴²⁹ Franke (2005: 9). Franke reasons that, with his approach, existing theological models will not be forced upon the Scripture.

¹⁴³⁰ Franke (2005: 9). Although Christian orthodoxy is important Robert H. Gundry points out that the New Testament covers a time period of less than a century, while the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) covers thousands of years of history. Gundry (1981: iii). Christian doctrine and orthodoxy needs to correctly understand the Hebrew Bible in context and not ‘read’ the New Testament into the original text.

reflection.¹⁴³¹ This is a correct and reasonable approach to the difficult academic field of theology and Reformed theology. Careful and thorough scholarship is required.¹⁴³² Theology is not to be done at the expense of the Scripture,¹⁴³³ but within a correct study of that Scripture.¹⁴³⁴ Shedd reasons that ‘methods of investigation are continually undergoing correction and modification’¹⁴³⁵ and this can lead to better organization of the subject.¹⁴³⁶ Methodologically, ‘theology is disciplined consideration and exploration of the content of divine revelation.’¹⁴³⁷ Franke cautions that although there is truth in this definition, human knowledge of God is not sufficient without a proper knowledge of humanity while this theology is being considered.¹⁴³⁸ Theology is always considered in the light of cultural and historical setting of the day,¹⁴³⁹ the implication being that a culture will influence theology and therefore theology needs to be scrutinized with this concept always in mind.¹⁴⁴⁰

The doctrine of *sola scriptura*¹⁴⁴¹ is the Reformed and Protestant counter to the traditionalism of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁴⁴² This concept was originally applied by Reformers to particular Roman Catholic doctrines assumed to be over influenced by tradition.¹⁴⁴³ Franke with a strong statement indicates the Reformers reasoned that Christian theology must be subject only to the direct authority of God through the Scripture, and not by any human authority

¹⁴³¹ Hindson (1874-1890)(1980: iv).

¹⁴³² Hindson (1874-1890)(1980: iv). This is the case in all theological writing and especially in academic writing and research.

¹⁴³³ Hindson (1874-1890)(1980: iv). Frame (2002: 10).

¹⁴³⁴ Scripture is also not to be evaluated in isolation as various Scripture needs to be compared. Erickson (1994: 21).

¹⁴³⁵ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 4 Volume 1).

¹⁴³⁶ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 4 Volume 1).

¹⁴³⁷ Franke (2005: 13).

¹⁴³⁸ Franke (2005: 14).

¹⁴³⁹ Franke (2005: 14).

¹⁴⁴⁰ Franke (2005: 14). Cultural influences and how learning is done always relates to how theology is understood by the reader. Erickson (1994: 21).

¹⁴⁴¹ Scripture alone. Schreck (1984: 41). Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 108). Clements (1999: 546). This is the English translation from Latin.

¹⁴⁴² Franke (2005: 147). Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 108).

¹⁴⁴³ Franke (2005: 147). John Calvin warns of the danger of appealing to tradition at the expense of Scripture. He implies this insults the Holy Spirit. Calvin (1543)(1996: 50).

or creeds.¹⁴⁴⁴ Their hope was to minimize human interpretation of Scripture.¹⁴⁴⁵ Weber reasons the Reformation standard of *sola scriptura* firmly upheld Reformed views against counter propositions.¹⁴⁴⁶ The Scripture is authoritative because it is the vehicle by which the Holy Spirit speaks, and therefore has divine authority.¹⁴⁴⁷ The Bible is the product of the Christian community that produced it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁴⁸ As Anglican Rowan Williams states, ‘Revelation is the statement of God’s autonomy.’¹⁴⁴⁹ God explains who he is and becomes his own ‘alter ego’ as Christ.¹⁴⁵⁰ Roman Catholic theologian Alan Schreck states his Church agrees that the Bible is the inspired word of God,¹⁴⁵¹ but does not believe that the Bible is the only source of Revelation and spiritual guidance for Christians.¹⁴⁵² A dividing point between Protestants and Catholics comes with Schreck’s idea that God within Catholic thought continues to select certain individuals that teach with God’s authority through the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁵³ Protestant and those within the Reformed camp have, at times throughout history disagreed, with the Biblical and theological interpretations of certain Roman Catholic leaders, in particular the Pope,¹⁴⁵⁴ believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁵⁵

¹⁴⁴⁴ Franke (2005: 149). This is somewhat overstated, although true in general terms. For example, Calvin appeals to Augustine and tradition in his defence against free will theory and Albert Pighius. Tradition has a function in Reformed theology but is to be tested by Scripture at all times. Calvin (1543)(1996: 64).

¹⁴⁴⁵ Franke (2005: 149). Calvin (1543)(1996: 64).

¹⁴⁴⁶ Weber (1955)(1981: 113-114).

¹⁴⁴⁷ Franke (2005: 150). Lindsell (1976: 28-40).

¹⁴⁴⁸ Franke (2005: 151). Lindsell (1976: 28-40).

¹⁴⁴⁹ Williams (2007: 116).

¹⁴⁵⁰ Williams (2007: 116).

¹⁴⁵¹ Schreck (1984: 41).

¹⁴⁵² Schreck (1984: 42). Strictly speaking as noted, those in Reformed theology do trust in non-Biblical truths for spiritual guidance. Calvin admitted this in the context of Scripture and tradition. Calvin (1543)(1996: 64). I should also add that any reliance on philosophy and philosophy of religion is not strictly Biblical and I and many Reformed scholars look to philosophy for truth.

¹⁴⁵³ Schreck (1984: 42).

¹⁴⁵⁴ Calvin explains, within *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, his opinion that at that point in history the Papacy was beyond Reform. Calvin (1543)(1996: 17).

¹⁴⁵⁵ Schreck (1984: 42).

The Trinity

The central concern with Christian theology is the ‘nature, character and actions of God.’¹⁴⁵⁶ Within the Christian worldview, theology of God is revealed through Jesus Christ¹⁴⁵⁷ and the Trinity as in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁵⁸ Roman Catholic theologian Alan Schreck demonstrates the Catholic view is quite similar to Reformed on this issue as he explains it is a central belief of his Church,¹⁴⁵⁹ and that the early Church comprised the word Trinity from the Biblical idea for the one God consisting of three equal and distinct divine persons.¹⁴⁶⁰ The word ‘Trinity’ is not found in Scripture, and neither is it fully developed in the Biblical text.¹⁴⁶¹ Apologist Robert M. Bowman (1990) admits to those that claim Christian belief, but deny the Trinity, that the word is not in the Bible.¹⁴⁶² Instead, the trinitarian doctrine was formulated in the patristic era.¹⁴⁶³ Bowman explains that the teaching of the Church Fathers was generally trinitarian.¹⁴⁶⁴ By the fourth century the Trinity had become a ‘nonnegotiable aspect of the gospel’ as it properly contained the Biblical concept of God.¹⁴⁶⁵ The Trinity was a formulation of the theological concept of the lordship of Jesus, an experience with the Holy Spirit and a

¹⁴⁵⁶ Franke (2005: 45).

¹⁴⁵⁷ We are only able to understand the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ that worked through the Holy Spirit. Weber (1955)(1981: 349).

¹⁴⁵⁸ Franke (2005: 45). God discloses himself to persons in Scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Weber (1955)(1981: 350). Within *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Barth explains God has been revealed as a ‘threeness’ of one God. Barth (1932-1968: 361).

¹⁴⁵⁹ Schreck (1984: 14).

¹⁴⁶⁰ Schreck (1984: 14). God within the Trinity is of one essence Barth explains in his section on the Trinity from *Church Dogmatics*. Barth (1932-1968: 371). God is of one nature, not three. Trinitas is the Latin word meaning threeness and the Christian doctrine of trinitas consists of an idea of the threeness of God. Packer (1973: 57).

¹⁴⁶¹ Franke (2005: 46).

¹⁴⁶² Bowman (1990: 22). In Bowman’s case this would be groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses also known as the Watchtower Society, and as well the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Theologian Gregory A. Boyd deals with similar objections concerning the Trinity and ‘unbiblical terminology’ in regard to Oneness Pentecostals. He correctly points out that all kinds of new unbiblical terminology is created in order that one does not have to preach and teach from the original Biblical Hebrew and Greek texts. Boyd (1992: 59-60).

¹⁴⁶³ Franke (2005: 46).

¹⁴⁶⁴ Bowman lists major Church fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria of the second-century, and Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen in the third century as trinitarian thinkers. There was not, however, complete agreement among Church Fathers on exact terminology. Bowman (1990: 27-34).

¹⁴⁶⁵ Franke (2005: 46).

commitment to the one God of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴⁶⁶

Admittedly the Trinity is a difficult concept,¹⁴⁶⁷ and Franke acknowledges that some, such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, view the Trinity as not a primary but secondary Christian doctrine.¹⁴⁶⁸ The doctrine is a systemized one and not a primary witness of the Christian faith.¹⁴⁶⁹ Although I would not negate the Trinity to a secondary doctrine,¹⁴⁷⁰ I agree with Bowman that the finite human being can only potentially apprehend and not comprehend the doctrine.¹⁴⁷¹ Franke reasons the Trinity is a method of self-disclosure of God to and within creation.¹⁴⁷² It is centrally concerned with the coming of Christ and his work, and the work of the Holy Spirit and the concept of everlasting life for believers.¹⁴⁷³ Jesus Christ in his atoning work was not only a man,¹⁴⁷⁴ although he did take upon himself full humanity.¹⁴⁷⁵ His atoning death was that of a God-man¹⁴⁷⁶ that can save those that a mere man or creature could not.¹⁴⁷⁷ The Trinity therefore takes on philosophical importance within human salvation.¹⁴⁷⁸ Both Christ's humanity and deity played central roles in his atoning work¹⁴⁷⁹ and resurrection.¹⁴⁸⁰

Christology

¹⁴⁶⁶ Franke (2005: 51).

¹⁴⁶⁷ The Trinity is quite difficult to understand, in part because as Barth states in *The Doctrine of Creation*, God is non-temporal, non-historical, eternal and yet triune. Barth (1932-1968: 68). God and his triune nature cannot be empirically studied or known by history. God and the triune divine nature accepted by Christianity is primarily understood through Biblical Studies and theology.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Franke (2005: 59). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 751).

¹⁴⁶⁹ Franke (2005: 59). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 751).

¹⁴⁷⁰ Franke (2005: 59). Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 751).

¹⁴⁷¹ Bowman (1990: 22).

¹⁴⁷² Franke (2005: 65).

¹⁴⁷³ Franke (2005: 65).

¹⁴⁷⁴ Christ was incarnate and not a creature created by God. Bowman (1990: 19).

¹⁴⁷⁵ Bowman (1990: 19). Thiessen (1956: 299). Hughes (1990: 55).

¹⁴⁷⁶ Bowman (1990: 19). Christ remained an incarnated true man even as he was resurrected immortal. Hughes (1990: 55).

¹⁴⁷⁷ Bowman (1990: 19-20). A mere human being could not accomplish the mission and work Christ did. Schreck (1984: 16).

¹⁴⁷⁸ Bowman (1990: 19-20).

¹⁴⁷⁹ Bowman (1990: 19-20).

¹⁴⁸⁰ Hughes (1990: 55).

A Biblical and orthodox explanation concerning Jesus Christ demonstrates that his person and work are tied together.¹⁴⁸¹ In the person and work of Christ, God discloses and reveals himself to his creation, and this includes reconciliation and redemption.¹⁴⁸² The work of Christ in ministry and, in particular his death, are essential for Christianity.¹⁴⁸³ Christ's human life and death must, for historical accuracy, be connected to his salvific act.¹⁴⁸⁴ He conquered¹⁴⁸⁵ through his suffering and death, and revealed 'the bankruptcy of the world's values.'¹⁴⁸⁶ Jesus Christ the person is held in extremely high regard as is his ministry, atoning work and resurrection, and his person and work cannot be separated in importance.¹⁴⁸⁷ He is understood as one person with two natures, meaning that both his deity and humanity are aspects of his person.¹⁴⁸⁸ He was and is fully God and fully human.¹⁴⁸⁹ He is not simply a man blessed with a very special relationship with God, nor is he a divine being that appears to be human but really is not.¹⁴⁹⁰ Weber explains that only God could bring peace to God and humanity, and this takes place through Christ.¹⁴⁹¹ Christ stood completely with human beings and yet was God.¹⁴⁹² Thiessen suggests that 'no exact psychological analysis of the unique personality of Christ is possible.'¹⁴⁹³ Jürgen Moltmann (1993) admits there is a mystery in regard to Christ and his incarnation.¹⁴⁹⁴ There is a

¹⁴⁸¹ Franke (2005: 72). Christ was by nature an incessant worker with what his Father required. Thiessen (1956: 311).

¹⁴⁸² Weber (1955)(1981: 381-382).

¹⁴⁸³ Thiessen (1956: 314).

¹⁴⁸⁴ Williams (2007: 129).

¹⁴⁸⁵ Sin and death.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Bloesch (1987: 16). The world system was shown to have a futile set of values that could not save humanity.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Franke (2005: 72). The New Testament not only demonstrates the witness of the redeeming act of God in Christ, but is also the summation of the man that is the word of God. Hughes (1990: 38).

¹⁴⁸⁸ Franke (2005: 72). Christ is the 'image of the invisible God.' Even as incarnated. Moltmann (1993: 88).

¹⁴⁸⁹ Schreck (1984: 16).

¹⁴⁹⁰ Franke (2005: 72). With his two natures, there is no other person like Christ. Thiessen (1956: 33-34).

¹⁴⁹¹ Weber (1955)(1981: 383).

¹⁴⁹² Weber (1955)(1981: 383).

¹⁴⁹³ Thiessen (1956: 305). J.S. Whale explains that Christ is unique and to explain him leaves one in paradoxes. Whale (1958: 106).

¹⁴⁹⁴ Moltmann (1993: 88). Christ has two natures in one person and there is an attempt to correlate the human and divine in Christ, but it remains a mystery. Whale (1958: 105).

mysterious incarnation of God into a reality that is ‘temporal, decaying, transitory existence in which men live and die.’¹⁴⁹⁵ The eternal presence of God somehow in the incarnation exists among persons as God takes on ‘transitory, mortal being’ in order to become and cause humanity to become ‘intransitory’¹⁴⁹⁶ and immortal, never facing death once again.¹⁴⁹⁷ The New Testament depicts Christ as full deity with full divine power, and at the same time presents him as having the results of human finitude and mortality.¹⁴⁹⁸ His deity should not be asserted in a way that negates his humanity and vice-versa.¹⁴⁹⁹ Christ is equal to the Father in essence and nature as God,¹⁵⁰⁰ and yet as human being he submitted to the Father in order to accomplish his earthly mission. Jesus Christ has a determination to be God, our God, and to be the reconciler of the world.¹⁵⁰¹

Pneumatology

Franke suggests that at the heart of traditional Christian and Reformed theology is the idea of the Holy Spirit guiding the community of faith into the truth of the gospel and God’s plan for the Church and the world.¹⁵⁰² The Holy Spirit is therefore very important within Reformed theology. Pneumatology is the aspect of Christian doctrine dealing with the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁰³ The word comes from the Greek words *pneuma*¹⁵⁰⁴ and *logos*¹⁵⁰⁵ and pneumatology discusses the

¹⁴⁹⁵ Moltmann (1993: 88).

¹⁴⁹⁶ Moltmann (1993: 88). Lasting forever.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Moltmann (1993: 88).

¹⁴⁹⁸ Franke (2005: 72).

¹⁴⁹⁹ Franke (2005: 72).

¹⁵⁰⁰ Bavinck (1918)(2006 : 276 Volume 2). Barth (1932-1968: 371).

¹⁵⁰¹ Williams (2007: 130).

¹⁵⁰² Franke (2005: 113).

¹⁵⁰³ Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 92). Browning (1997: 298).

¹⁵⁰⁴ ‘A current of air, breath, a spirit, vital principle, mental disposition, ghost, life, spirit, mind.’ Strong (1890)(1986: 78). Breath or spirit. Browning (1997: 298). As spirit. Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 92). Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 185).

divine person and work of the Holy Spirit,¹⁵⁰⁶ including its work in human salvation.¹⁵⁰⁷

Pneumatology can only be ventured into and understood properly under the umbrella of Christian theology.¹⁵⁰⁸ The doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit is important as it answers questions concerning how persons can believe in God as Lord, prior to thoughts of Christ.¹⁵⁰⁹ The Holy Spirit, provides persons with the ability to know Christ, that was previously unknown.¹⁵¹⁰ The Spirit speaks as the authority concerning Christ, and this is done freely by human beings through a gift of the Spirit.¹⁵¹¹

Franke writes that in the era of the Church Fathers there was a theological debate concerning the Holy Spirit as Arian thought was that the Holy Spirit was the first creature preceding from God the Son.¹⁵¹² This view was countered by the Church Fathers by taking the position that the Holy Spirit was fully God, like the Son and Father.¹⁵¹³ The Father, Son and Holy Spirit possess one divine essence and nature.¹⁵¹⁴ The Holy Spirit played a key part in the transformation of persons into Christian believers.¹⁵¹⁵ It is in fact an aspect of God's

¹⁵⁰⁵ The 'teaching about.' Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 92). Word, reason or meaning. Browning (1997: 230). Logos is also defined as 'something said' and 'the divine expression' in general terms. Strong (1890)(1986: 59).

¹⁵⁰⁶ Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 92). Pneumatology is an aspect of theology. Browning (1997: 298).

¹⁵⁰⁷ This work is ongoing. Franke (2005: 65). The Holy Spirit guides a person to the truth and assists a believer to understand revelation. Thiessen (1956: 45). Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 92).

¹⁵⁰⁸ Franke (2005: 65). It can also be studied within Reformed theology.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Williams (2007: 120). William writes from a very reasonable and yet Anglican perspective which is with this point in line with Reformed thought.

¹⁵¹⁰ Williams (2007: 120).

¹⁵¹¹ Williams (2007: 120).

¹⁵¹² Franke (2005: 52). Arianism was primarily founded on the teaching of Arius who died within 335-336. Thiessen suggests Arius may have been born in 280. Thiessen (1956: 284). Christ was viewed as the highest created being of the Father, and so was not Almighty God. These views on Christ were condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling (1999: 15). Arian views that the Holy Spirit was a creature subordinated to God the Son, were condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381. Thiessen (1956: 145). Jehovah's Witnesses have similar views on the Son and Holy Spirit and their views are likely influenced by Arian thought. Martin (1965)(1997: 116).

¹⁵¹³ Franke (2005: 52).

¹⁵¹⁴ Franke (2005: 53). The Holy Spirit, Biblically, by basis of association is considered as deity as are the Father and Son. The baptism formula of Matthew 28: 19 is a prime Biblical example. Erickson (1994: 859).

¹⁵¹⁵ Franke (2005: 53). The Spirit brings persons into the Church. Thiessen (1956: 410).

participating in his creation and human salvation.¹⁵¹⁶ It proceeds from the Father and the Son,¹⁵¹⁷ and is the supreme agent of grace.¹⁵¹⁸ Calvin suggests outward human preaching ‘strikes only the ears’ while the inward instruction of the Holy Spirit is how a person is enlightened in Christ.¹⁵¹⁹ Human preaching is valuable in that it works at times in conjunction with the Holy Spirit transforming individuals.¹⁵²⁰ There is a traditional Christian and Reformed concept and theology that the Holy Spirit is God and does the work that only God can do. The Holy Spirit works directly upon a human mind, in a sense remaking a person and creating a person after the image of Christ.¹⁵²¹ Lutheran Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963) explains the Holy Spirit brings Christ to each and every member of the Church and Christ has a presence in the Church through the Holy Spirit.¹⁵²² The Spirit creates fellowship,¹⁵²³ and God lives through his people.¹⁵²⁴ This would be in agreement with traditional Christian and Reformed views.

The Holy Spirit as an aspect of God works within Scripture,¹⁵²⁵ and as well individual regenerated Christians which I shall discuss later in this section. Within Reformed thought the Holy Spirit definitively relates to the Biblical, Scriptural witness.¹⁵²⁶ The presentation of Biblical witnesses is considered to exist by the virtue of the work of the Spirit and this legitimizes the Scripture as God’s word.¹⁵²⁷ This is a doctrine of Biblical inspiration¹⁵²⁸ as the Holy Spirit

¹⁵¹⁶ Franke (2005: 53).

¹⁵¹⁷ Whale (1958: 124). Packer (1973: 59).

¹⁵¹⁸ Whale (1958: 124). In the context of salvation.

¹⁵¹⁹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 233).

¹⁵²⁰ Calvin (1543)(1996: 233).

¹⁵²¹ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 171).

¹⁵²² Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 272).

¹⁵²³ Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 272).

¹⁵²⁴ Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 272).

¹⁵²⁵ Weber (1955)(1981: 240-241). Lindsell (1976: 30).

¹⁵²⁶ Weber (1955)(1981: 228). Packer (1973: 62). Lindsell (1976: 30). Erickson reasons that the Holy Spirit gives Scripture. Erickson (1994: 867).

¹⁵²⁷ Weber (1955)(1981: 229). Packer (1973: 62).

¹⁵²⁸ Weber (1955)(1981: 229). Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 72 Volume 1). Lindsell (1976: 30). Calvin writes the Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit for teaching, refutation of error and for instruction. Calvin (1543)(1996: 57).

testifies through the witness of Biblical writers.¹⁵²⁹ Inspiration is supernatural divine influence from the Holy Spirit upon the writers of Scripture.¹⁵³⁰ Based on Scriptural analysis, many theologians of the early Christian Church viewed Scripture as the manifested revelation of God.¹⁵³¹ The Biblical writers were reasoned to somehow be part of a miraculous procedure.¹⁵³²

Thiessen dismisses the idea of a dictation theory of Scriptural inspiration, as the writers of Scripture were not persons that merely had divine information dictated to them.¹⁵³³ The writers of Scripture were not ‘mere secretaries’ that wrote words dictated to them by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵³⁴ It can therefore be reasoned it is not the Holy Spirit’s grammar being used.¹⁵³⁵ The distinctive style of Biblical writers based on the study of original languages makes the dictation theory quite unlikely.¹⁵³⁶ The concept of Biblical inspiration, with the Holy Spirit serving as guidance for the Biblical writer, seems both orthodox and reasonable.¹⁵³⁷ The Biblical authors had full use of their intellect and used their own grammar, but were guided to write God’s word without error and omission.¹⁵³⁸ The Holy Spirit guided the thoughts of Biblical writers.¹⁵³⁹ Shedd names this basic theory of Biblical inspiration as ‘plenary inspiration’ meaning writers were moved by the Holy Spirit in respect to thought and language and were kept from error.¹⁵⁴⁰

Modern theology needs to correctly discern what the Spirit is stating through the Bible and this

¹⁵²⁹ Weber (1955)(1981: 229). Packer (1973: 63). Franke explains that the Holy Spirit is the final authority speaking in and through Scripture. Franke (2005: 132).

¹⁵³⁰ Erickson (1994: 199). Lindsell (1976: 30).

¹⁵³¹ Weber (1955)(1981: 230). The Spirit spoke to New Testament era Christians and now continues to speak within the Biblical canon. Franke (2005: 132).

¹⁵³² Weber (1955)(1981: 230).

¹⁵³³ Thiessen (1956: 106).

¹⁵³⁴ Lindsell (1976: 32).

¹⁵³⁵ Thiessen (1956: 106). People were not robotically inspired to write Scripture.

¹⁵³⁶ Erickson (1994: 207).

¹⁵³⁷ Thiessen (1956: 106). Lindsell (1976: 30).

¹⁵³⁸ Thiessen (1956: 106). The Scripture was presented accurately via inspiration, states Erickson. Erickson (1994: 199). J.I. Packer reasons God and Christ sent the Holy Spirit to teach his people the truth and to save them from error. Packer (1973: 61).

¹⁵³⁹ Erickson (1994: 215).

¹⁵⁴⁰ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 72 Volume 1).

needs to be done through proper research techniques.¹⁵⁴¹

Although this section concerns the Reformed methodology in regard to how the Holy Spirit inspires Scripture, ‘intuition theory’¹⁵⁴² is another approach to the Bible that is separate from traditional theory and dictation theory mentioned. I shall discuss it briefly. James Martineau (1889) presents the intuition view¹⁵⁴³ which is popular among some within the liberal progressive segment of the Church,¹⁵⁴⁴ the view being that some are spiritually gifted with intuition and able to write religious literature as were some within the Hebrew people.¹⁵⁴⁵ There would be persons of various religious backgrounds also having this gifting.¹⁵⁴⁶ This idea would mean the Hebrew Bible and New Testament are not necessarily the only legitimate divine Scripture.¹⁵⁴⁷ Many persons of different religious viewpoints could have superior insights into morality and religious truth,¹⁵⁴⁸ and they would possess a spiritual genius of higher order.¹⁵⁴⁹ Schleiermacher and his related view on Biblical inspiration¹⁵⁵⁰ reasons that the Holy Spirit would not be providing within Scripture a set of perfectly inspired doctrines, but would rather have God

¹⁵⁴¹ Franke (2005: 133). A student of Scripture must attempt to be more true to what the Scripture actually states than to prior theological positions. As noted previously, many within the Christian community from a liberal and progressive position claim a trust in the Bible but do not view it as without error as in infallible and inerrant. Since the original Scriptural autographs are all missing, even with many largely accurate copies and parts of copies, there is room for legitimate debate and serious study of Scripture in the original languages and as translated. Lindsell admits that only the original autographs are free from all error, and I agree. Lindsell (1976: 30). A fundamentalist and naïve approach to Scripture through the eyes of a Western reader devoid of serious study of contexts and background has always been strongly rejected by this writer. This type of fundamentalist approach is also not an aspect of legitimate Reformed scholarship, even as I admit this thesis is not in the field of Biblical Studies but rather Theology and Philosophy of Religion.

¹⁵⁴² Martineau (1889: 168-171). Lindsell (1976: 33). Erickson (1994: 206).

¹⁵⁴³ Martineau (1889: 168-171).

¹⁵⁴⁴ Erickson (1994: 206).

¹⁵⁴⁵ Martineau (1889: 168-171).

¹⁵⁴⁶ Erickson (1994: 206).

¹⁵⁴⁷ The Bible would not so much be the word of God, but a word of God, or more precisely a word from those that intuitively and naturally understand God to some extent. Browning suggests there are contradictions and inconsistencies within the Bible that threaten any traditional view of inspiration. Browning (1997: 186). Kreeft and Tacelli reason that modernist reviewers of the Scripture take a sceptical attitude toward it, especially in regard to the supernatural. Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 205). A disbelief in a supernaturally inspired Scripture free from spiritual error would in my mind logically fit within some modern approaches. But, I do not reason this means these types of modern thinkers would therefore necessarily all completely abandon the Bible as a divine book in any sense.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Thiessen (1956: 105).

¹⁵⁴⁹ Lindsell (1976: 33).

¹⁵⁵⁰ Thiessen (1956: 106).

interact spiritually with persons open to this divine religious experience.¹⁵⁵¹ This approach allows for the possible revision of Biblical doctrines over time as needed via human experience with God and his Spirit.¹⁵⁵²

John Murray (1937-1966)(1977) explains that the Holy Spirit ‘summons men into union and fellowship with his Son so that, united to him in whom all spiritual blessings are treasured, they come to possess Christ and all that belongs to him in his capacity as Saviour and Redeemer.’¹⁵⁵³ Regeneration¹⁵⁵⁴ takes place which is a powerful change in the human being via the Holy Spirit,¹⁵⁵⁵ which transforms one corrupt and in sin in opposition to God,¹⁵⁵⁶ to one pleasing to God and trusting in God. It is a new ‘vital principle, a new habit, the law of God, and a divine nature’ are framed in a human heart.¹⁵⁵⁷ Herman Bavinck (1918)(2006) equates the term regeneration with rebirth.¹⁵⁵⁸ In John 3, Jesus does not literally speak of one being born a second time, but literally insists one be born from above.¹⁵⁵⁹ Regeneration consists of a person being converted from a life of giving in to temptation to one living in relationship with God.¹⁵⁶⁰ It is the communication of divine life to a soul.¹⁵⁶¹ At the instance of regeneration the Holy Spirit begins a new inclination within the fallen human will.¹⁵⁶² The human being is given a divine inclination, not of self, as it is contrary to the his or her fallen inclination, by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁶³

¹⁵⁵¹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 125). Grenz and Olson (1992: 45-47).

¹⁵⁵² Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 390). Grenz and Olson (1992: 45-47).

¹⁵⁵³ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 167).

¹⁵⁵⁴ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 171).

¹⁵⁵⁵ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 171).

¹⁵⁵⁶ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 168-169). Soren Kierkegaard states that ‘sin is man’s destruction.’ Kierkegaard (1847-1848)(1955)(1966: 108).

¹⁵⁵⁷ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172).

¹⁵⁵⁸ Bavinck (1918)(2006: 46).

¹⁵⁵⁹ Bavinck (1918)(2006: 46).

¹⁵⁶⁰ Erickson (1994: 600).

¹⁵⁶¹ Thiessen (1956: 367). Although this does not make a person divine, but rather one guided by God.

¹⁵⁶² Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 136 Volume 2).

¹⁵⁶³ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 136 Volume 2). Packer views regeneration as the new birth and an inner re-creating of the fallen human nature through and by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Packer (1996: 924). I would not use the

Within Reformed theology, regeneration is viewed as an initial one time act of the Holy Spirit in a person,¹⁵⁶⁴ and a person is therefore understood to be converted and therefore able to freely believe.¹⁵⁶⁵ My view is that it is indeed God's choice alone to regenerate and therefore he alone is active in regeneration,¹⁵⁶⁶ but simultaneously as a person is regenerated they believe in Christ. Therefore although I view God as the initiator of regeneration I reason that logically, in order to avoid any suggestion of force or coercion,¹⁵⁶⁷ as God regenerates the saved person, he or she simultaneously believes.¹⁵⁶⁸ There is 'no compulsion of the will in regeneration.' states Shedd.¹⁵⁶⁹ Calvin reasons that a person is not forced or coerced to believe in the gospel.¹⁵⁷⁰ I would view conversion as taking place simultaneously with regeneration in a person, although again I state that God alone via the Holy Spirit causes the regeneration process.¹⁵⁷¹ This means as God chooses to regenerate a person he simultaneously persuades one to freely believe.¹⁵⁷² Murray states that regeneration is logically antecedent to any conscious response,¹⁵⁷³ and I reason that God's choice to commit the act of regeneration must be antecedent due to the corrupt and sinful nature of persons.¹⁵⁷⁴ The work of salvation was confined to God's part in the calling.¹⁵⁷⁵ This does not prohibit God from causing a compatibilistic human choice within conversion at the

term re-create, but instead view regeneration as a process by which God begins to transform an individual to be Christ-like, as in ultimately being a sinless human being. This culminates in the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172). Erickson (1994: 249).

¹⁵⁶⁵ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172).

¹⁵⁶⁶ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172). I agree with Murray on this point.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Compatibilism allows for limited but significant human freedom. Kierkegaard suggests that Christianity is a religion of freedom and Christians are convinced to voluntarily give up all contrary to Christ. Kierkegaard (1847-1848)(1955)(1966: 186). The term convinced is a good one and I reason this is a work of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁵⁶⁸ This is my compatibilist theory which is in line with that of Feinberg and which will be discussed later in this Chapter.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 136-137 Volume 2).

¹⁵⁷⁰ Calvin (1543)(1996: 68).

¹⁵⁷¹ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172).

¹⁵⁷² This allows for a limited but significant human freedom within the salvation process that is not incompatibilism. Salvation remains alone a work of God. Weber writes that God with his freedom effects both human freedom and human bondage as he reaches out to a saved person through the Word of God. Weber (1955)(1981: 245). This would be a work of the Spirit.

¹⁵⁷³ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172).

¹⁵⁷⁴ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 168-169).

¹⁵⁷⁵ Bavinck (1918)(2006: 53).

moment that God's initial eternal choice to regenerate¹⁵⁷⁶ becomes a divine act of regeneration.¹⁵⁷⁷

As persons were regenerated they would hear the call of salvation, repent and believe in Christ.¹⁵⁷⁸ I would view conversion as an aspect of regeneration, which is the beginning of the Christian experience.¹⁵⁷⁹ Regeneration was to encompass the entire divine plan of recreation from the initial change in persons to the ultimate culmination of a new heaven and new earth.¹⁵⁸⁰

For balance, I will briefly discuss two other important views of regeneration within the Christian Church, admitting from my review of Reform approaches that there is not complete agreement on the issue.¹⁵⁸¹ Schleiermacher views regeneration as the turning point where the earlier life breaks and a new life begins.¹⁵⁸² Regeneration requires a change of consciousness of the individual,¹⁵⁸³ and as this occurs a person no longer faces God with any type of enmity as a holy and righteous God, but instead experiences God's love.¹⁵⁸⁴ A new life is introduced to the Christian,¹⁵⁸⁵ and through the 'impartation of God in Christ and the Holy Spirit,'¹⁵⁸⁶ the human 'God-consciousness is renewed and made perfect.'¹⁵⁸⁷ Bavinck states the major difference between a Reformed view on regeneration and Schleiermacher's view is that with the latter

¹⁵⁷⁶ As God is eternal this choice could be viewed as such. Humans of course are not eternal.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Persons have via the Holy Spirit been molded and transformed in order to freely believe. Thiessen, an incompatibilist, states that in regeneration the human is passive and is active in conversion. Thiessen (1956: 367). I agree concerning regeneration, and I can agree in regard to conversion, only if by active the human being is convinced freely via the Holy Spirit and is not assumed to have incompatibilist free will.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Bavinck (1918)(2006: 53).

¹⁵⁷⁹ Franke notes that the Scripture explains that the Holy Spirit continued to guide the earliest Christians. Franke (2005: 132). The Spirit continues to work in regenerated/converted believers that embrace the gospel.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Bavinck (1918)(2006: 53).

¹⁵⁸¹ My review and comments demonstrates that my understanding of compatibilism and regeneration, although generally Reformed, would certainly not be in agreement with Reformed exemplars cited on every point. How regeneration works exactly is still a subject for open-minded metaphysical debate. As well, certainly Christian incompatibilists could provide me with different viewpoints.

¹⁵⁸² Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 106-109). Bavinck (1918)(2006: 60-61).

¹⁵⁸³ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 106-109). Bavinck (1918)(2006: 60-61).

¹⁵⁸⁴ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 106-109). Bavinck (1918)(2006: 60-61).

¹⁵⁸⁵ Bavinck (1918)(2006: 61).

¹⁵⁸⁶ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 728).

¹⁵⁸⁷ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 728).

approach the need for a legal justification¹⁵⁸⁸ is eliminated as persons would lose any guilt toward God and would, as stated previously, no longer have any enmity toward the Almighty.¹⁵⁸⁹

Concerning the idea of baptismal regeneration, Schreck explains that Roman Catholics view infant baptism ‘as normally the first step in accepting God’s salvation.’¹⁵⁹⁰ He admits that the New Testament does not explicitly state whether or not infants or children were baptized,¹⁵⁹¹ but it is possible they were as ‘whole households’ are mentioned in the New Testament as receiving baptism.¹⁵⁹² He reasons that there is no solid evidence that before the third century infants and children were baptized in the Church,¹⁵⁹³ but by the fifth century this practice was universal in the Church.¹⁵⁹⁴ The theological hope with the practice of infant baptism is that the initial stages of regeneration have taken place through the faith of the parents,¹⁵⁹⁵ as Schreck notes ‘Jesus does respond in this way when infants and children are baptized.’¹⁵⁹⁶ In the baptism process it is Christ that saves, and therefore salvation is not merited.¹⁵⁹⁷ Whale reasons infant baptism demonstrates that Christ did something for a person, without waiting for human approval.¹⁵⁹⁸ Rebaptism¹⁵⁹⁹ would never be needed as although baptized Roman Catholics can

¹⁵⁸⁸ Erickson provides a Reformed position that justification is God’s actions through Christ in legally pronouncing sinners righteous. Erickson (1994: 954). Schreck discusses the Roman Catholic concept and states that justification and salvation are free gifts of God not earned by any work or even faith. Those who are justified, however, should keep the commandments. Roman Catholics are to persevere in faith and good works, even though works do not save a person. Works are a fruit of true faith. Schreck (1984: 26-27).

¹⁵⁸⁹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1928)(1976: 106-109). Bavinck (1918)(2006: 60-61).

¹⁵⁹⁰ Schreck (1984: 124).

¹⁵⁹¹ Schreck (1984: 126).

¹⁵⁹² Schreck (1984: 126).

¹⁵⁹³ Schreck (1984: 127). G.W. Bromiley writes that Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200) and Origen (ca. 185-ca. 254) were Church Fathers that could be traced back to the Apostles, and these men practiced infant baptism. Bromiley (1999: 116). Ferguson and Kroeger are cited for the dates of Irenaeus and Origen respectively. Ferguson (1999: 569) Kroeger (1999: 803). If Irenaeus did practice infant baptism, this would trace the practice to the second century.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Schreck (1984: 127).

¹⁵⁹⁵ Schreck (1984: 128).

¹⁵⁹⁶ Schreck (1984: 128).

¹⁵⁹⁷ Schreck (1984: 128).

¹⁵⁹⁸ Whale (1958: 158).

¹⁵⁹⁹ Or Believer’s Baptism as it is known within Baptist and Anabaptist theology.

turn from the faith, if they do turn back to Christ the initial baptism is sufficient.¹⁶⁰⁰ The sacrament of infant baptism is one of the ‘foundational stones of Church.’¹⁶⁰¹ Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard reason it is not Biblically clear what type of baptism should be practiced.¹⁶⁰² Infant baptism is not taught in Scripture directly,¹⁶⁰³ and therefore it can be deduced the same could be stated for the associated concepts of baptismal regeneration with Roman Catholics¹⁶⁰⁴ and Eastern Orthodox¹⁶⁰⁵ Churches. However, legitimate theological inference leads to concepts of infant baptism,¹⁶⁰⁶ and so there are also historical arguments for baptismal regeneration within the Christian community which includes Catholic,¹⁶⁰⁷ Eastern Orthodox,¹⁶⁰⁸ and even in some cases Presbyterian,¹⁶⁰⁹ Lutheran and Episcopal.¹⁶¹⁰

Sovereignty Approach Definition

John Calvin (1539)(1998) writes humanity has nothing on its own, but depends totally on God.¹⁶¹¹ God bestows on humanity what he wills.¹⁶¹² Arthur Pink (1968) defines God’s sovereignty as meaning that God is the almighty, the possessor of all power in heaven and earth, and no one can defeat his counsels.¹⁶¹³ Norman Geisler explains the Bible teaches that God is in

¹⁶⁰⁰ Schreck (1984: 129).

¹⁶⁰¹ Whale (1958: 158). Whale does not view infant baptism as mere dedication or as a rite effecting regeneration and so his position is not identical to Schreck’s, although he does support the sacrament being practiced.

¹⁶⁰² Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 140).

¹⁶⁰³ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 140).

¹⁶⁰⁴ Schreck (1984: 124).

¹⁶⁰⁵ Kavanagh (1999: 300).

¹⁶⁰⁶ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 140).

¹⁶⁰⁷ Schreck (1984: 124).

¹⁶⁰⁸ Kavanagh (1999: 300).

¹⁶⁰⁹ John Calvin raised the possibility that in some cases baptismal regeneration could take place in infants. Calvin (1539)(1998: Book IV, Chapter 14, 17-20). There are some Presbyterians that take this view. However, I am a member of a Presbyterian Church in America that believes in infant baptism, but not in baptismal regeneration.

¹⁶¹⁰ Kavanagh (1999: 300). In Lutheran theology infant baptism and baptismal regeneration must be accompanied by the faith of the parents or future faith of the infant at a more mature age. Some Lutherans and Presbyterians would reject any concept of baptismal regeneration. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 19).

¹⁶¹¹ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 1: 2).

¹⁶¹² Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 1: 2).

¹⁶¹³ Pink (1968: 20).

control of the entire universe, including human events.¹⁶¹⁴ According to Jay Green (1971), in the ‘Forward’ of his book *Five Points of Calvinism*, many scholars within Christian theism, in particular those from Reformed¹⁶¹⁵ and Calvinist¹⁶¹⁶ positions, reason that God has sovereign control over his creation, and God’s ultimate plan is being accomplished throughout.¹⁶¹⁷ Green explains that Calvinists do not necessarily see themselves as followers of John Calvin.¹⁶¹⁸ They do recognize Calvin as a great exegete and one who systemized Scripture, and a vast number of the doctrines that came from Calvin’s work are within the system known as Calvinism.¹⁶¹⁹ Calvinist Millard J. Erickson writes that sovereignty is a major tenet within Calvinism as God is considered the Lord of all things, and is free to do as he wills.¹⁶²⁰ Jonathan Edwards (1729)(2006) writes that God has the power to bestow upon anyone of his creatures good, evil, or indifference for the greater good.¹⁶²¹ This sovereign control is accepted despite the obvious problem of evil occurring in God’s creation.¹⁶²² Attempts to harmonize strong concepts of God’s divine control over his creation, with the apparent corrupt nature of what he has made in regard to the problem of evil, will be described within this thesis as sovereignty theodicy.¹⁶²³

David Ray Griffin vigorously challenges Calvinistic notions of sovereignty in regard to

¹⁶¹⁴ Geisler (1986: 63).

¹⁶¹⁵ Jay Green explains that Reformed theology was not attempting to replace previous Christian theology, but instead was clarifying the Biblical doctrines of the Church Fathers and the Scriptures. Green (1971: 7). The Reformed theological movement went from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries and was a break from Roman Catholic leadership and teaching. Divine sovereignty was an important emphasis of this movement. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 101).

¹⁶¹⁶ Calvinism is a system which attempts to use Scripture to understand God’s divine theological plan for the ages. Green (1971: 7). This system stems from the work of John Calvin (1509-1564). Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 23).

¹⁶¹⁷ Green (1971: 7).

¹⁶¹⁸ Green (1971: ii).

¹⁶¹⁹ Green (1971: ii).

¹⁶²⁰ Erickson (1994: 915).

¹⁶²¹ Edwards (1729)(2006: 414).

¹⁶²² Edwards (1729)(2006: 414).

¹⁶²³ Feinberg (1994: 124-143).

theodicy.¹⁶²⁴ Griffin claims that God cannot be shown to be perfectly moral for three reasons.¹⁶²⁵ One, God cannot be understood to be morally perfect because God is an alleged deity and his morality cannot be demonstrated.¹⁶²⁶ Two, since with a Calvinistic view God wills all things, including evil acts, God must be immoral.¹⁶²⁷ Three, since Calvinists believe that God bases all things on eternal decisions, God is not truly free and is therefore amoral.¹⁶²⁸ The Calvinist could reply to Griffin with the words of Calvin himself in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, that God is moral and as evil human actions occur God is willing a good thing and the sinner another.¹⁶²⁹ This type of explanation needs to be presented in a logical and reasonable way,¹⁶³⁰ and a central goal of this Chapter is to present a sovereignty theodicy that is philosophically reasonable.¹⁶³¹

Pinnock explains that there is a tension in the Biblical text between God determining things and human freedom.¹⁶³² Contrary to strongly Calvinistic or sovereignty orientated approaches,¹⁶³³ there is within the Bible the idea that God has the power to create any possible universe, including ones with significantly free creatures.¹⁶³⁴ Such a universe would ultimately be under the sovereign control of God, but this does not mean that everything occurring is according to God's intentions.¹⁶³⁵ Pinnock states that God did not create a world where he determines every detail,¹⁶³⁶ and therefore the Biblical idea of God's sovereignty is not as deterministic as the Calvinistic concept. Pinnock's idea is similar to Plantinga's free will

¹⁶²⁴ Griffin (1976: 116-130).

¹⁶²⁵ Griffin (1976: 130).

¹⁶²⁶ Griffin (1976: 130).

¹⁶²⁷ Griffin (1976: 130).

¹⁶²⁸ Griffin (1976: 130).

¹⁶²⁹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37).

¹⁶³⁰ While at the same time seriously examining criticisms of the view.

¹⁶³¹ And to also test this approach empirically.

¹⁶³² Pinnock (1986: 143).

¹⁶³³ Pinnock (1986: 143).

¹⁶³⁴ Pinnock (1986: 145).

¹⁶³⁵ Pinnock (1986: 145).

¹⁶³⁶ Pinnock (1986: 145).

philosophy discussed in the previous Chapter,¹⁶³⁷ the conclusion being that if God creates a world with significantly free creatures, the creatures will eventually commit wrong actions.¹⁶³⁸

John Sanders explains that general sovereignty is a concept in contrast to a Calvinistic specific sovereignty¹⁶³⁹ that has God allowing general structures to be set up by which human significant freedom and resulting choices allows persons to input on how things turn out.¹⁶⁴⁰ With general sovereignty, God takes risks in governing the world,¹⁶⁴¹ but he does not take risks with the concept of specific sovereignty.¹⁶⁴² Sanders deduces here that when God wants to bring about human acts within the general sovereignty framework he persuades people, whereas Sanders views specific sovereignty as using hard determinism to force people to commit acts.¹⁶⁴³ Bruce Reichenbach (1986) explains that the sovereign cannot compel his subjects to freely follow him.¹⁶⁴⁴ This understanding would be held by Feinberg,¹⁶⁴⁵ and in general terms, accepted by most scholars that hold to theistic compatibilism within a Reformed tradition.¹⁶⁴⁶

Providence

Oliver Boulnois (2002) defines providence as the manner by which God governs the world.¹⁶⁴⁷ In other words, providence would be the method that God uses to rule his creation in his sovereignty.¹⁶⁴⁸ It could be understood that providence would be the method by which God

¹⁶³⁷ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

¹⁶³⁸ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

¹⁶³⁹ Sanders (1998: 212).

¹⁶⁴⁰ Sanders (1998: 213).

¹⁶⁴¹ Sanders (1998: 213-214).

¹⁶⁴² Sanders (1998: 213-214).

¹⁶⁴³ Sanders (1998: 214).

¹⁶⁴⁴ Reichenbach (1986: 105).

¹⁶⁴⁵ Feinberg, would deny that God would force persons to commit acts, instead it is God's sovereign plan that certain unconstrained actions should occur. Feinberg (2001: 637).

¹⁶⁴⁶ Feinberg (2001: 637). Frame (2002: 153). Berkouwer (1962: 333). Calvin (1543)(1996: 68).

¹⁶⁴⁷ Boulnois (2002: 444).

¹⁶⁴⁸ Boulnois (2002: 444). God uses his providence as he 'transcends temporal categories.' Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 108).

has sovereign control over his creation,¹⁶⁴⁹ and as Calvin notes, God's providence has him work through persons.¹⁶⁵⁰ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes (1990) explains that through God's providence the world is dependent,¹⁶⁵¹ for if God did not maintain it, it would cease to exist.¹⁶⁵² In *Law of Nature*, Edwards (1731-1733)(2006) explains that providence is the means by which God governs the world as the supreme judge of the universe.¹⁶⁵³ Reichenbach notes that providence is how God guides and cares for his creation.¹⁶⁵⁴ He further reasons that God on one hand possesses wisdom in order to direct his creation within his plans, and on the other hand has the power by which he attempts to implement his plans.¹⁶⁵⁵ Reichenbach deduces that God's providential plans allow for significant human freedom and choices to occur.¹⁶⁵⁶

Within 'The Doctrine of Creation' in *Church Dogmatics*, Volume III, Karl Barth defines God's providence as dealing with the history of created beings, in the sense that in every way through this entire span of time, this providence takes place under the care of God the creator.¹⁶⁵⁷ This includes those that are in Christ in the covenant between God and humanity.¹⁶⁵⁸ It is God's fatherly Lordship over the entire world.¹⁶⁵⁹ Natural events that take place are very personal for God.¹⁶⁶⁰ God's providence includes the 'superior dealings of the Creator with his creation, the wisdom, omnipotence and goodness with which He maintains and governs in time this distinct reality according to the council of his own will.'¹⁶⁶¹ God knows all things appropriately and

¹⁶⁴⁹ Boulnois (2002: 444).

¹⁶⁵⁰ Calvin (1543)(1996: 36).

¹⁶⁵¹ Hughes (1990: 45).

¹⁶⁵² Hughes (1990: 45).

¹⁶⁵³ Edwards (1731-1733)(2006: 553).

¹⁶⁵⁴ Reichenbach (1986: 115).

¹⁶⁵⁵ Reichenbach (1986: 115).

¹⁶⁵⁶ Reichenbach (1986: 118).

¹⁶⁵⁷ Barth (1932-1968: 3). We cannot escape from God, he is everywhere. Frame (2002: 102).

¹⁶⁵⁸ Barth (1932-1968: 3).

¹⁶⁵⁹ Barth (1932-1968: 28). God's providence demonstrates 'preservation and government.' Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 527 Volume 1).

¹⁶⁶⁰ Frame (2002: 52).

¹⁶⁶¹ Barth (1932-1968: 3). God always accomplishes what he sets out to do. Frame (2002: 47).

therefore acts in a proper way in relation to each and every creature.¹⁶⁶² In the act of creation, God associates himself with his creature as the ‘Lord of its history’¹⁶⁶³ and acts in the appropriate manner.¹⁶⁶⁴ Both the creator and creation possess types of freedom,¹⁶⁶⁵ and this does not simply leave God’s creatures with a type of freedom¹⁶⁶⁶ but causes the creature to share in the divine glory and the opportunity to serve God.¹⁶⁶⁷ God can provide his human creation with protection and guardianship along with human purpose and joy.¹⁶⁶⁸ Schelling, although not noted as a Christian theologian, within *Of Human Freedom* states that all earthly creatures are dependent on God.¹⁶⁶⁹ If God ‘withdrew his power for an instant, man would cease to be.’¹⁶⁷⁰ There exists ‘nothing before or outside of God.’¹⁶⁷¹ Shedd explains that God’s work of providence demonstrates he is the ‘most holy,’ ‘wise’ and ‘powerful’ as he governs his creatures and their actions.¹⁶⁷² God works in the material universe with its nature and laws.¹⁶⁷³ Phillips explains that a Reformed view is that God has the freedom to act as he wants.¹⁶⁷⁴ This would be God’s sovereign providence, but Hume is skeptical of this concept.¹⁶⁷⁵ People throughout the world view certain evils, which may be rectified in other regions of the world or in the future, and understand these good events as being connected to general laws and the existence of a good

¹⁶⁶² Barth (1932-1968: 5).

¹⁶⁶³ Barth (1932-1968: 12).

¹⁶⁶⁴ Barth (1932-1968: 12).

¹⁶⁶⁵ Barth (1932-1968: 12). The human being has freedom, but participates within the life of God. Schelling (1845)(1936: 11). G.C. Berkouwer reasons that God wants a free man, not a mechanical tool or creature than can be maneuvered as the Almighty sees fit. Berkouwer (1962: 333). I reason human freedom always operates within the framework of God’s sovereignty and providence.

¹⁶⁶⁶ God governs and maintains the creation, in order that it exists by means of its own ‘inherent properties and laws.’ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 528 Volume 1).

¹⁶⁶⁷ Barth (1932-1968: 12).

¹⁶⁶⁸ Barth (1932-1968: 13).

¹⁶⁶⁹ Schelling (1845)(1936: 11).

¹⁶⁷⁰ Schelling (1845)(1936: 11). Schelling is noted within the ‘Introduction’ to believe in a divine personality and denied that God’s personality was incomprehensible. Schelling did reason wisdom could be found in God. Gutmann (1845)(1936: xxv).

¹⁶⁷¹ Schelling (1845)(1936: 32).

¹⁶⁷² Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 527 Volume 1). Frame (2002: 274).

¹⁶⁷³ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 528 Volume 1).

¹⁶⁷⁴ Phillips (2005: 22).

¹⁶⁷⁵ Hume (1779)(2004: 50).

deity.¹⁶⁷⁶ Hume suggests that these are superstitions,¹⁶⁷⁷ and questions whether in many cases a ‘cause can be known but from its known effects?’¹⁶⁷⁸ The idea is then presented that if God is benevolent his providence should lead to a world without suffering and wickedness.¹⁶⁷⁹

Sanders writes that the Calvinist view on providence is meticulous providence that assumes nothing can stymie God’s will, and that God is in control of every detail.¹⁶⁸⁰ Compatibilists deny meticulous providence prohibits significant human free will,¹⁶⁸¹ but Sanders, as an incompatibilist, rejects the compatibilist argument concerning providence.¹⁶⁸² He instead suggests that a risk model of providence is a better idea.¹⁶⁸³ Within the risk model, God does not control everything that happens, but controls many things.¹⁶⁸⁴ God alone is responsible for completing his divine plans and these will be completed in a general sense, but that does not mean every specific event is within his plans.¹⁶⁸⁵ Sander’s risk model is logical and well worth considering, but I question if there is a difficulty with the fact that he states God controls some things and not others.¹⁶⁸⁶ If God’s control of all things in a Calvinistic/Reformed model is rejected because it would force people to do things, according to Sanders,¹⁶⁸⁷ then how can God control some things?¹⁶⁸⁸ Does God not influence significant human freedom at some specific points in time in order to bring about his ultimate plans, such as saving rebellious persons? If

¹⁶⁷⁶ Hume (1779)(2004: 50).

¹⁶⁷⁷ Hume (1779)(2004: 50).

¹⁶⁷⁸ Hume (1779)(2004: 50).

¹⁶⁷⁹ Hume (1779)(2004: 50).

¹⁶⁸⁰ Sanders (1998: 212). Frame would agree as God is thought to ‘direct the entire universe.’ Frame (2002: 274).

¹⁶⁸¹ Frame explains that the freedom is not libertarian, but persons make significantly free choices within divine causation. Frame (2002: 153).

¹⁶⁸² Sanders (1998: 212).

¹⁶⁸³ Sanders (1998: 215).

¹⁶⁸⁴ Sanders (1998: 215).

¹⁶⁸⁵ Sanders (1998: 215-217).

¹⁶⁸⁶ Sanders (1998: 215).

¹⁶⁸⁷ Sanders (1998: 212). The concept of God forcing and/or coercing persons to commit actions would be denied by many within Reformed theology. Frame (2002: 153). Berkouwer (1962: 333). Calvin (1543)(1996: 68).

¹⁶⁸⁸ Would God only control the most vital events that must occur in order for his Kingdom to culminate? If so, what happens to concepts of incompatibilistic free will in these cases?

God influences significant human freedom at some points in time in order to guarantee that his ultimate plans occur, such as a culminated Kingdom, is this not in the end a form of compatibilism?¹⁶⁸⁹

Author's Viewpoints

A sovereignty theodicy with its use of compatibilism is a logical and reasonable approach to the problem of evil.¹⁶⁹⁰ Calvinist theologian John S. Feinberg will be my main exemplar in this Chapter as he has produced a modern defence within the *Many Faces of Evil* from 1994, which appears to be a standard within compatibilism at this time.¹⁶⁹¹ I agree with Feinberg that God can accomplish his ultimate purposes without canceling out a modified, yet significant human freedom.¹⁶⁹² Compatibilism can hold reasonably and without contradiction that God can fulfill his purposes in all situations and still allow that human beings freely choose to commit or refrain from committing actions.¹⁶⁹³

In *No One Like Him* from 2001, Feinberg echoing his work in *The Many Faces of Evil*, equates his compatibilism with soft determinism,¹⁶⁹⁴ meaning that God will at times bring about states of affairs where the human being freely commits or refrains from committing actions,¹⁶⁹⁵ and in a sense could not do otherwise because of God's personal influence on the person, and other circumstantial influences.¹⁶⁹⁶ I do not disagree that a human being, in a sense, could not do

¹⁶⁸⁹ God can interject in human affairs and influence human decisions.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Feinberg (1994: 124-143).

¹⁶⁹¹ Feinberg (1994: 124-143).

¹⁶⁹² Feinberg (1986: 24-25).

¹⁶⁹³ Feinberg (1994: 76).

¹⁶⁹⁴ Feinberg (2001: 636-638).

¹⁶⁹⁵ Feinberg (2001: 636-638).

¹⁶⁹⁶ Feinberg (2001: 636-638).

otherwise¹⁶⁹⁷ as long as it is understood that God does not coerce or force an individual to commit or refrain from committing an action.¹⁶⁹⁸ Seemingly it is possible the infinite, omnipotent God could persuade an individual and change the human nature¹⁶⁹⁹ in such a way that Feinberg's compatibilism would be true.¹⁷⁰⁰ Once God would change a person's very being and circumstances, it may become virtually impossible for that individual to commit certain actions in given situations.¹⁷⁰¹ God would know how to influence particular situations to meet his ends through the use of divine foreknowledge¹⁷⁰² and a perfect understanding of each individual person.

My view, like Feinberg's, assumes that God could persuade and change an individual in such a way that they would commit desired actions in a certain circumstance.¹⁷⁰³ It is reasonable God can influence and mould an individual in such a way that, in a given circumstance, a person can reasonably deduce that choice *A* which is God's desire for them is far better than choice *B* or *C*, etcetera, which is not God's desire for them.¹⁷⁰⁴ If God, in his infinite power through the use of persuasion and the changing of the individual,¹⁷⁰⁵ demonstrates that one choice in a circumstance is far superior to others, it is possible this person would freely make this choice while under the divine influence and moulding of God,¹⁷⁰⁶ as God determines and influences the very nature and desires of the person.¹⁷⁰⁷ Kreeft and Tacelli note that some, but not all, forms of

¹⁶⁹⁷ Feinberg (2001: 636-638).

¹⁶⁹⁸ Feinberg (1986: 24-25). Or else hard determinism takes place. A human being must not simply be passive via the causal power of God. Schelling (1845)(1936: 11).

¹⁶⁹⁹ Through regeneration. Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172). Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 101). Erickson (1994: 600).

¹⁷⁰⁰ Feinberg (1986: 24-25).

¹⁷⁰¹ Feinberg (1986: 24).

¹⁷⁰² Thiessen (1956: 125). Leibniz (1710)(1998: 144). This foreknowledge does imply the use of divine force. Augustine (426)(1958: 106).

¹⁷⁰³ Feinberg (1986: 24-25).

¹⁷⁰⁴ Feinberg (2001: 636-638).

¹⁷⁰⁵ Feinberg (1986: 24-25).

¹⁷⁰⁶ Feinberg (2001: 636-638).

¹⁷⁰⁷ Feinberg (1986: 24-25).

Calvinism subscribe to a view of hard determinism that denies any human free will.¹⁷⁰⁸ I would reason that in light of their statement¹⁷⁰⁹ that most Calvinists are not hard determinists.¹⁷¹⁰ Norman Geisler denies that Feinberg is a moderate Calvinist, but instead explains that he is presenting strong Calvinistic determinism.¹⁷¹¹ However, the fact remains that whether or not Feinberg's view is correct,¹⁷¹² within his own writings he does allow for significant human freedom within his understanding¹⁷¹³ and does not view God as using compulsion on persons to achieve his divine ends.¹⁷¹⁴ As a moderate Calvinist, I subscribe to a sovereignty view that uses compatibilism without hard determinism.¹⁷¹⁵ My tentative position is a form of compatibilism and is not incompatibilism because, like Feinberg's approach, I view God as simultaneously willing significantly free human actions and this is rejected by incompatibilist theory.¹⁷¹⁶

Feinberg's Background

Glenn R. Kreider (2003) writes that John S. Feinberg is chairman and professor of Biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Divinity School in Illinois.¹⁷¹⁷ Feinberg is well respected as one within evangelical and Reformed theology who is familiar with historical, philosophical, theological, and Biblical literature.¹⁷¹⁸ In particular, Feinberg is known for his

¹⁷⁰⁸ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 137).

¹⁷⁰⁹ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 137).

¹⁷¹⁰ My research demonstrates that hard determinism is problematic for the majority of Calvinists and those within Reformed theology because Scripture (Romans 1-3, for example) condemns persons for sin and holds them morally accountable. Therefore, persons must at least freely embrace their own actions within soft determinism in order for punishment to be just.

¹⁷¹¹ Geisler (1986: 47).

¹⁷¹² Geisler (1986: 47).

¹⁷¹³ Feinberg (2001: 637).

¹⁷¹⁴ Feinberg (2001: 637).

¹⁷¹⁵ God does not force or coerce human actions and then hold persons morally accountable for committing them.

¹⁷¹⁶ Feinberg (2001: 635-636).

¹⁷¹⁷ Kreider (2003: 1).

¹⁷¹⁸ Kreider (2003: 1).

research on God's nature and the problem of evil from a sovereignty perspective.¹⁷¹⁹ He has written *The Many Faces of Evil* (1994),¹⁷²⁰ which explains his sovereignty theodicy, and *No One Like Him* (2001), which deals with some of his ideas in regard to theodicy and the problem of evil.

Feinberg's Influences

Calvinism

Kreider in his review of Feinberg's text *No One Like Him* in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, explains that Feinberg is writing from a Protestant Reformed tradition and deals with moral and natural evils within a Calvinistic system.¹⁷²¹ As shall be seen in this Chapter, a few of Feinberg's important views are in line with those of John Calvin (1509-1564)¹⁷²² and his writings on the following points: humanity was created with a perfectly good nature;¹⁷²³ human rebellion against God caused evil;¹⁷²⁴ human beings presently exist in a fallen corrupt state;¹⁷²⁵ and that human nature can only be restored and perfected by God.¹⁷²⁶ Although Feinberg and Calvin do share some basic theological ideas, Calvin did not write a defence or theodicy in regard to the problem of evil,¹⁷²⁷ and therefore his writings were not necessarily as influential on Feinberg's presentation as was historical Calvinistic theology, which has developed over the centuries.¹⁷²⁸

¹⁷¹⁹ Feinberg (1994: 124-143).

¹⁷²⁰ The key text for his sovereignty perspective for this thesis.

¹⁷²¹ Kreider (2003: 110-111).

¹⁷²² Cairns (1981: 308). Cairns provides the dates of birth and death of Calvin.

¹⁷²³ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 2, 7). Feinberg (1994: 126-127).

¹⁷²⁴ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 2, 7). Feinberg (1994: 126-127).

¹⁷²⁵ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 2, 7). Feinberg (1994: 126-127).

¹⁷²⁶ Calvin (1552)(1995: Chapter 28: 415). Feinberg (1994: 411).

¹⁷²⁷ Calvin is a theologian and Biblical scholar and not a philosopher of religion, in my mind. Calvin was not familiar with the modern academic concept of the problem of evil within secular philosophy or religion.

¹⁷²⁸ Feinberg (1986: 19-43).

As well, Calvin without a written theodicy does not support and influence the theodicy of Feinberg in a similar way that Augustine's free will theodicy supports and influences Plantinga's free will defence.¹⁷²⁹ Calvin is not an expert on theodicy, but is rather a major overall theological influence on Feinberg, as Feinberg admits he uses a Calvinistic model for synthesizing divine sovereignty and human freedom¹⁷³⁰ I therefore shall not review Calvin and Feinberg separately. Jay Green in his 'Forward' in the text *Five Points of Calvinism*, explains that Calvinism in desiring to treat Scriptures fairly¹⁷³¹ has clearly emphasized the sovereignty of God and his unlimited power in dealing with humanity.¹⁷³² This Calvinistic Reformed view on God's sovereignty is apparent throughout Feinberg's presentation¹⁷³³ as he seeks to logically work this view out with a modified concept of human freedom.¹⁷³⁴ To Feinberg, this freedom and all human attributes had been tainted by the corruption of humanity in the fall.¹⁷³⁵

Martin Luther

Martin Luther (1483-1546)¹⁷³⁶ is known as the father of the German Reformation¹⁷³⁷ and preceded Calvin in the Reformation movement.¹⁷³⁸ After reading Romans 1:17 he was convinced that only faith in Christ could make one just before God.¹⁷³⁹ His core theology became that believers were justified by faith in Christ alone¹⁷⁴⁰ and that Scripture was the only authority for

¹⁷²⁹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 27-28).

¹⁷³⁰ Feinberg (1986: 19).

¹⁷³¹ Green (1971: ii).

¹⁷³² Green (1971: ii).

¹⁷³³ Feinberg (1986: 19).

¹⁷³⁴ Feinberg (1986: 19-43).

¹⁷³⁵ Feinberg (1994: 126-127).

¹⁷³⁶ Cairns (1981: 288-296).

¹⁷³⁷ Cairns (1981: 288-296).

¹⁷³⁸ Cairns (1981: 288-296).

¹⁷³⁹ Cairns (1981: 289).

¹⁷⁴⁰ Cairns (1981: 289-290).

people seeking salvation.¹⁷⁴¹ Luther (1516)(1968) writes concerning Romans 1:17 that only the gospel reveals the righteousness of God and that a person becomes righteous by trusting in the Word of God, Jesus.¹⁷⁴² Luther believed that the righteousness of God was the cause of human salvation,¹⁷⁴³ not primarily since God was righteous, but because the believer is justified by God through faith in the gospel of the righteous Christ.¹⁷⁴⁴ He reasoned that the righteousness of God was contrary to the human righteousness of works,¹⁷⁴⁵ instead when a human being received justification by God the person could then commit truly good works.¹⁷⁴⁶

In 1525 Luther wrote *The Bondage of the Will*, which was a debate with a Catholic scholar named Desiderius Erasmus (ca.1466-1536)¹⁷⁴⁷ who was an advocate of the free will theory.¹⁷⁴⁸ Luther reasons that since human beings were fallen and abandoned God, they could not *will good* but only turned in the direction of their own desires.¹⁷⁴⁹ He comments that human beings were perverted and evil,¹⁷⁵⁰ but this can be used by God for his purposes, although people can do nothing but oppose God by the use of their own will.¹⁷⁵¹ He dogmatically assumes that there is no middle way between God's grace and human free will,¹⁷⁵² and postulates that human free will should be theologically denied and everything should be ascribed to God.¹⁷⁵³ Luther's sovereignty perspective¹⁷⁵⁴ may place less emphasis on the human will than the later writings of Calvin and Feinberg. However, even the title of Luther's book *The Bondage of the Will* shows

¹⁷⁴¹ Cairns (1981: 289-290).

¹⁷⁴² Luther (1516)(1968: 25).

¹⁷⁴³ Luther (1516)(1968: 25).

¹⁷⁴⁴ Luther (1516)(1968: 25).

¹⁷⁴⁵ Luther (1516)(1968: 25).

¹⁷⁴⁶ Luther (1516)(1968: 25).

¹⁷⁴⁷ Cairns (1981: 263).

¹⁷⁴⁸ Erasmus (1525)(1972: 20).

¹⁷⁴⁹ Luther (1525)(1972: 128-130).

¹⁷⁵⁰ Luther (1525)(1972: 128-130).

¹⁷⁵¹ Luther (1525)(1972: 128-130).

¹⁷⁵² Luther is far more forceful in presentation than is Calvin and especially Feinberg. He is very forceful in his debate with Erasmus. I would provide the opinion that he seems closed-minded.

¹⁷⁵³ Luther (1525)(1972: 133).

¹⁷⁵⁴ Luther (1525)(1972: 123).

that he likely influenced Calvin somewhat in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*. Jay Green writes that Luther can be viewed as an early and continual influence on Calvinism,¹⁷⁵⁵ and it is reasonable to deduce that Luther is perhaps a minor historical influence on Feinberg's sovereignty theology.¹⁷⁵⁶ Green points out that Luther's views on theistic determinism are only accepted by a minority of Calvinists today.¹⁷⁵⁷

Defence Versus Theodicy

Feinberg (1994) described his sovereignty approach as a defence and not a theodicy.¹⁷⁵⁸ Like Plantinga and the free will defence,¹⁷⁵⁹ Feinberg with his sovereignty approach prefers the term *defence* to describe his undertaking because it is a less dogmatic term than is theodicy.¹⁷⁶⁰ However, Feinberg's defence, in my mind, would be no more speculative if he wrote a theodicy and it seems fair and scholarly to review this defence under the umbrella of sovereignty theodicy.¹⁷⁶¹ As discussed in Chapter Two, a defence may be a more cautious approach to the problem of evil,¹⁷⁶² but it is still hopefully offering possible,¹⁷⁶³ reasonable and logical solutions to the problem of evil.¹⁷⁶⁴ No scholar alive, that we know of, has been directly informed by God of his reasons for allowing the problem of evil,¹⁷⁶⁵ so a defence or theodicy would basically be equally speculative, even though a theodicy may be more assertive with its argumentation.¹⁷⁶⁶

¹⁷⁵⁵ Green (1971: 7).

¹⁷⁵⁶ Feinberg is far more sympathetic to differing viewpoints than is Luther.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Green (1971: 7).

¹⁷⁵⁸ Feinberg (1994: 124).

¹⁷⁵⁹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28).

¹⁷⁶⁰ Feinberg (1994: 124).

¹⁷⁶¹ Feinberg (1994: 124).

¹⁷⁶² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28). Feinberg (1994: 124).

¹⁷⁶³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28). Feinberg (1994: 124).

¹⁷⁶⁴ In the context of Alvin C. Plantinga's 'Free Will Defense'.

¹⁷⁶⁵ I do not doubt that there have been some religious persons that claim special knowledge from God and this could include theodicy issues. However, the validity of these would be questioned as the era of the New Testament canon has closed.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 28). Feinberg (1994: 124).

2. God's Sovereignty and Human Nature

Feinberg on God's Intent in Creating Humanity

Feinberg thought God originally wanted to create human beings with the ability to reason which possessed emotions, compatibilistic freedom, desires, intentions,¹⁷⁶⁷ and the ability to commit actions via bodily movements.¹⁷⁶⁸ The world created by God would be suitable for humanity to live within their limitations.¹⁷⁶⁹ Millard J. Erickson comments that human finiteness is not an evil in itself,¹⁷⁷⁰ but from a Calvinistic perspective it can lead to sin within human beings if they do not accept their limitations and follow God.¹⁷⁷¹ Alfred North Whitehead (1967)(1986) explains in *Adventures of Ideas*, that human finiteness does not take away from human perfection.¹⁷⁷² The finite human nature is not imperfect or immoral in itself as Forest Wood, Jr. (1986) notes within *Whiteheadian Thought as a Basis for a Philosophy of Religion*.¹⁷⁷³ Feinberg states that human beings are intended to always be finite and would not have the potential to become gods, superhuman, or subhuman.¹⁷⁷⁴ To Feinberg, God would not eliminate the problem of evil by contradicting any of his plans just described¹⁷⁷⁵ because it was a greater good for God to follow through with his original intent for humanity.¹⁷⁷⁶ Feinberg's approach adopts the idea that God could not remove evil and solve the problem of evil without (1) contradicting other plans God had in place,¹⁷⁷⁷ (2) negating and contradicting claims God made in Scripture,¹⁷⁷⁸ (3)

¹⁷⁶⁷ Feinberg (2001: 788).

¹⁷⁶⁸ Feinberg (2001: 788).

¹⁷⁶⁹ Feinberg (2001: 788).

¹⁷⁷⁰ Erickson (1994: 491-492).

¹⁷⁷¹ Erickson (1994: 491-492).

¹⁷⁷² Whitehead in Wood (1967)(1986: 256).

¹⁷⁷³ Wood (1986: 5).

¹⁷⁷⁴ Feinberg (2001: 788).

¹⁷⁷⁵ Feinberg (1994: 126). Feinberg's approach is highly speculative as he attempts to reason out a divine plan. Flew, an atheist at the time, doubts on empirical terms concerning concepts of the intentions of God, and Clarence Darrow reasons humanity is on its own in the universe. Flew (1983)(1996: 92). Darrow (1932)(1973: 453).

¹⁷⁷⁶ Feinberg (1994: 126).

¹⁷⁷⁷ Feinberg (1994: 126).

¹⁷⁷⁸ Feinberg (1994: 126).

performing actions that human beings would neither desire nor require God to do.¹⁷⁷⁹ His defence is tied into these three assumptions.¹⁷⁸⁰

Feinberg holds to modified rationalism which was explained in Chapter Two as the idea that God was not obligated to create anything, including a world, but chose to create purely from his own desires.¹⁷⁸¹ Within modified rationalism, the concept of a best possible world is denied in favour of the view that God chose to create the present world which was initially perfectly good.¹⁷⁸² The fact that the problem of evil exists would be seen within modified rationalism as a result of the free choice of human beings to rebel against God in both free will and sovereignty theodicy which both deny the notion of best possible world.¹⁷⁸³ Modified rationalism would oppose the best possible world concepts of Leibniz from the Enlightenment era, and Mackie from the modern era.¹⁷⁸⁴

Feinberg Appeals to Desires Over Freewill

Feinberg's next point in his sovereignty approach is an explanation of how human sin occurs.¹⁷⁸⁵ He thinks that it is not primarily from the use of human free will as with free will approaches,¹⁷⁸⁶ although he notes that the human will is instrumental in causing moral evil.¹⁷⁸⁷

¹⁷⁷⁹ Feinberg (1994: 126).

¹⁷⁸⁰ Feinberg (1994: 126).

¹⁷⁸¹ Feinberg (1994: 36).

¹⁷⁸² Plantinga (1982: 167-189). Feinberg (1994: 36).

¹⁷⁸³ Plantinga (1982: 167-189). Feinberg (1994: 36).

¹⁷⁸⁴ Leibniz (1710)(1990). Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33).

¹⁷⁸⁵ Feinberg (1994: 128). Sin defined as in traditional orthodox and Reformed concepts, such as unacceptable human actions to God, missing the mark, lawlessness, and moral depravity. Browning (1997: 345-346). Feinberg does not primarily accept modern, progressive concepts of sin mentioned by J.C. O'Neill such as the idea that people are not corrupted but only deceived. O'Neill (1999: 540). John Ankerberg and John Weldon in their work on world religions note that in Buddhism sin is primarily looked at as ignorance. Ankerberg and Weldon (1999: 46). The same can be noted within Religious Science/Science of mind movements. Ankerberg and Weldon (1999: 391). Some aspects of Hinduism also view sin as ignorance. Ankerberg and Weldon (1999: 578).

¹⁷⁸⁶ This is consistent with a compatibilistic/soft determinism position. S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters call soft determinism a reconciling position between free will and hard determinism. Benn and Peters: (1959: 100). This position is likely an objective of Feinberg.

Feinberg makes it clear that he does not want to appeal to free will for fear that his sovereignty approach would be confused with the free will approach which he attempts to counter in his presentation.¹⁷⁸⁸ To avoid an apparent contradiction, by his own estimation,¹⁷⁸⁹ Feinberg wants to instead postulate on a prior cause behind the will that would explain why human beings eventually, with the use of their wills, disobeyed God.¹⁷⁹⁰ His conclusion is that desires and not free will are the cause of human rebellion against God.¹⁷⁹¹ Feinberg theorizes that human beings have natural God given desires that are not evil in themselves.¹⁷⁹² For example, if at a certain point in time a desirable object comes to the attention of a person, and if it is prohibited by God's moral laws, then the person is left with the choice of following their desires or obeying God.¹⁷⁹³ Feinberg notes that once the bodily movement to carry out the desired action against God's will occurs,¹⁷⁹⁴ so would the problem of evil as God would have been disobeyed.¹⁷⁹⁵

Feinberg is basically presenting a very speculative view on human desires¹⁷⁹⁶ which in reality involves the larger issue of consciousness.¹⁷⁹⁷ Millard J. Erickson notes that Feinberg rejects the incompatibilism and free will approaches to human freedom, and then virtually

¹⁷⁸⁷ The human will would be the secondary cause in human decisions. Persons would still therefore be morally responsible for moral actions. Pojman (1996: 596). Feinberg (1994: 128).

¹⁷⁸⁸ Feinberg (1994: 128). Erickson (1994: 424). Feinberg in particular does not want to have his sovereignty approach confused with Plantinga's free will defence.

¹⁷⁸⁹ Feinberg (1994: 129). Erickson (1994: 424).

¹⁷⁹⁰ Feinberg (1994: 128).

¹⁷⁹¹ Feinberg (1994: 128). Erickson (1994: 424).

¹⁷⁹² Feinberg (1994: 129). Desire is strong emotion that *could* turn to evil. Browning (1997: 98). Strong emotion is not an evil intrinsically.

¹⁷⁹³ Feinberg (1994: 129). Browning (1997: 98).

¹⁷⁹⁴ Luther reasons that since human beings were fallen and distanced from God, they therefore turned in the direction of their own corrupted desires. Luther (1525)(1972: 130).

¹⁷⁹⁵ Feinberg (1994: 129).

¹⁷⁹⁶ Feinberg (1994: 128). Erickson (1994: 424).

¹⁷⁹⁷ Feinberg's view is limited, and is theological, philosophical and non-scientific. S.A. Nigosian provides the idea that from an Eastern religious perspective, individuals have 'fixed and besetting images' that are ascribed to an internal source known as insight, awareness, or consciousness. Nigosian (1994: 4). Walter Martin writes that there is also the idea of cosmic consciousness which is a spiritual and mystical concept that all in the universe is one. Martin (1989: 126). This is similar to monism that views reality as unified and whole. Martin (1989: 130). These Eastern views too are religious, unscientific approaches.

reinstates them in a mild form with his concept of human desires.¹⁷⁹⁸ This is a reasonable¹⁷⁹⁹ criticism from one Reformed theologian, Erickson,¹⁸⁰⁰ of Feinberg's approach.

Consciousness

Sir John Houghton (1995) defines consciousness as 'a quality possessed by human beings' and the extent that it may be possessed by higher animals is the subject of debate.¹⁸⁰¹ Although the human brain is sometimes compared to a computer,¹⁸⁰² the human brain seems different as it thinks, feels, and demonstrates the property of self-awareness and consciousness.¹⁸⁰³ Rocco J. Gennaro (2006) of Indiana State University documents grammatically that the main term under review, consciousness is derived from the Latin *con* (with)¹⁸⁰⁴ and *scire* (know).¹⁸⁰⁵ Michael Winkelman (2004) of the American Anthropological Association writes that common understanding of a model of consciousness includes attention-awareness, phenomenal experiences, self-referencing, learning and the use of information, interpreting meanings, having goals, and systems of social reference.¹⁸⁰⁶ It is suggested that consciousness manifests itself through the physical properties of the brain.¹⁸⁰⁷ John Perry (1998) within 'Circumstantial Attitudes and Benevolent Cognition' suggests *desires*, beliefs and other

¹⁷⁹⁸ Erickson (1994: 424).

¹⁷⁹⁹ Although I think Feinberg does point out some crucial and major differences between his overall view and Plantinga's which are discussed particularly in Chapters Two and Three within this thesis.

¹⁸⁰⁰ Erickson (1994: 424).

¹⁸⁰¹ Houghton (1995: 219).

¹⁸⁰² Houghton (1995: 92).

¹⁸⁰³ Houghton (1995: 92).

¹⁸⁰⁴ Gennaro (2006: 1).

¹⁸⁰⁵ Gennaro (2006: 1).

¹⁸⁰⁶ Winkelman (2004: 1).

¹⁸⁰⁷ Winkelman (2004: 1).

cognitive aspects of persons are associated with mental states.¹⁸⁰⁸ These mental states¹⁸⁰⁹ relate by implication to human consciousness. There are strands of thought that *desires* and related functions may be found within human consciousness.¹⁸¹⁰ David M. Rosenthal (2007) in ‘Philosophy, and the Study of Consciousness’ states that a person or creature is conscious when it can be awake and respond to ‘sensory stimulation.’¹⁸¹¹ Being conscious also relates to a creature that senses and perceives about a thing or has a thought about that thing being present.¹⁸¹² It is also defined as the state of being aware in contrast to being unaware.¹⁸¹³ Wade Novin (2004) in his journal article on quantum physics and consciousness explains consciousness is a ‘unique problem for the sciences’.¹⁸¹⁴ Cognitive science has recently made advances in understanding the structures and process of sensory input leading to bodily functions, but still little is known about consciousness.¹⁸¹⁵ It is noted that presently it is difficult to explain the need for consciousness within physical organisms within a physical, natural world.¹⁸¹⁶ Consciousness is considered as part of natural phenomenon because it is reasoned to exist, but not because any scientific theory can predict or explain its emergence.¹⁸¹⁷ Peter Carruthers (2001)(2007) documents that modern higher-order theories¹⁸¹⁸ concerning

¹⁸⁰⁸ Perry (1998: 1).

¹⁸⁰⁹ Perry (1998: 1).

¹⁸¹⁰ Biologist Alfred Gierer from Tübingen suggests that consciousness appears as ‘a system’s feature of our brain with neural processes strictly following the laws of physics’. Gierer (2003: 1). Gierer explains that there is not however, a general and exhaustive theory of human consciousness. Gierer (2003: 1). E. Ordunez, I. Badillo, and E. Peon state the basic conjecture is that matter, energy and related information within the universe activates brain function and the nervous system and the human experiences of ‘memory, logic, sentiments, awareness, perception, cognition’, and other processes. Ordunez, Badillo, and Peon (2008: 1).

¹⁸¹¹ Rosenthal (2007: 1).

¹⁸¹² Rosenthal (2007: 1). This would include an imagination of something possible.

¹⁸¹³ Rosenthal (2007: 1).

¹⁸¹⁴ Novin (2004: 1).

¹⁸¹⁵ Novin (2004: 1-2).

¹⁸¹⁶ Novin (2004: 2).

¹⁸¹⁷ Novin (2004: 2). Neil C. Manson writes that there is unlikely to be a simple, direct way to connect mental discourse to ultimate conclusions concerning the nature of consciousness. Manson (2002: 1).

¹⁸¹⁸ Carruthers (2001)(2007: 1). Higher-order thought will allow one to be conscious of his/her own state. Rosenthal (2007: 9-11). See also Ned Block of New York University. Block (2008: 1-2) and Gennaro (2006: 1-2).

consciousness attempts to reason out the distinctive properties of consciousness in regard to higher-order representation of sorts as in the ‘subjective dimensions’ of feelings.¹⁸¹⁹ Within the *International Journal of Philosophy*, Isabel Gois (2001) suggests that in written work consciousness is often viewed as a mystery.¹⁸²⁰ She seeks to make consciousness less mysterious through the use of scientific inquiry.¹⁸²¹ Some philosophers and many scientists are skeptical concerning human ability to explain how the brain works in regard to the shape of events, thoughts and feelings.¹⁸²² There is a common view that no matter how detailed and complete a scientific theory of consciousness may be it will not be able to explain why the human ‘conscious experiences alone have an apparent quality to their occurrences’ while unconscious processes do not.¹⁸²³ Gois thinks this is a mistaken perspective¹⁸²⁴ and instead reasons that science should ‘either provide physical evidence for the truth of those introspective impressions, or bow to the conclusion that it can never know our minds as well as they know themselves’.¹⁸²⁵ She suggests that most reason that the second option is the more likely one, although she disagrees and reasons science can one day empirically understand consciousness.¹⁸²⁶ Sir John Houghton writes that we should not expect to find extra material as part of the brain called

¹⁸¹⁹ Carruthers (2001)(2007: 1).

¹⁸²⁰ Gois (2001: 3). However, Gierer notes that most scientists reason mental states are clearly linked to the empirical physical states of the human brain. Gierer (2003: 6).

¹⁸²¹ Gois (2001: 3-4).

¹⁸²² Gois (2001: 4). Many philosophers and scientists are sceptical that human consciousness can be properly explained. Houghton admits it is difficult for many observers to accept that consciousness can be defined in a meaningful way or to describe it in terms of other things. Houghton (1995: 92-93).

¹⁸²³ Gois (2001: 4).

¹⁸²⁴ Gois (2001: 4).

¹⁸²⁵ Gois (2001: 4). Gierer reasons one of the difficulties with the problem of understanding human consciousness and understanding humanity is the question of human free will. Gierer (2003: 13). Consciousness allows a person to have knowledge and understanding of self and environment and, therefore to have a perception of both good and evil. Ordunez, Badillo, and Peon (2008: 2).

¹⁸²⁶ Gois (2001: 4). Marco Biagini, an Italian scientist with a PhD in Solid State Physics that operates the Center of Scientific Divulcation of Consciousness comments consciousness is ‘directly observable phenomena.’ Biagini (2009: 1-4). He takes a more optimistic approach to the idea of coming to scientific conclusions concerning consciousness. Houghton admits that consciousness will require new scientific theories and insights. Houghton (1995: 210).

‘consciousness or self-awareness’ which ‘pervades the brain without being a part of it,’¹⁸²⁷ and I accept this is as a sound statement.

Consciousness is not a new intellectual subject, as David Hume (1711-1776)¹⁸²⁸ writes in the article ‘A Treatise of Human Nature’ that most philosophers think personal identity begins with consciousness, which is reflected thought or perception.¹⁸²⁹ Although the exact nature of human consciousness is not known, it does work with human thought and perception.¹⁸³⁰ Hume found no theory of consciousness provided him with intellectual satisfaction.¹⁸³¹ Rene Descartes (1596-1650)¹⁸³² in *Conversation with Burman*, defined consciousness as the possible internal source of knowledge concerning a person’s own thoughts or mental occurrences.¹⁸³³ To have consciousness was to be able to understand one’s own thoughts.¹⁸³⁴ Descartes, previous to Hume, was also speculative concerning the nature of human consciousness, but it was perceived to have an influence on the human thought process.¹⁸³⁵ Biologist Alfred Gierer (2003) writes that consciousness is primarily accessed through human self-awareness and human to human communication.¹⁸³⁶ He doubts formal and complete objective definitions of consciousness can be made and therefore cannot be fully explained scientifically.¹⁸³⁷

With Feinberg’s terminology concerning desires and will,¹⁸³⁸ consciousness could

¹⁸²⁷ Houghton (1995: 70).

¹⁸²⁸ Pojman (1996: 56). Blackburn (1996: 179). Hume is known as an exemplar of ‘enlightened scepticism.’ Grenz and Olson (1992: 318).

¹⁸²⁹ Hume (1739-1740)(1973: 193).

¹⁸³⁰ Hume (1739-1740)(1973: 193). For Gierer the human will is only available to external empirical observation within limits. Gierer (2003: 1). Perry reasons mental states are traced back to contingent circumstances which vary from person to person. Perry (1998: 1).

¹⁸³¹ Hume (1739-1740)(1973: 193).

¹⁸³² Pojman (1996: 115).

¹⁸³³ Descartes in Lormand (1648)(1996: Volume 3: 335).

¹⁸³⁴ Descartes in Lormand (1648)(1996: Volume 3: 335).

¹⁸³⁵ Descartes in Lormand (1648)(1996: Volume 3: 335).

¹⁸³⁶ Gierer (2003: 9).

¹⁸³⁷ Gierer (2003: 9).

¹⁸³⁸ Feinberg (1994: 129).

possibly and hypothetically be located behind desires, but in light of scientific ambiguity,¹⁸³⁹ Feinberg's theory¹⁸⁴⁰ remains very speculative. E. Ordunez, I. Badillo, and E. Peon (2008) reason that no one for certain understands what consciousness is,¹⁸⁴¹ as within it exists sensations which include desires, emotions, ideas, thoughts, beliefs and intentions.¹⁸⁴² There is no clear understanding despite the fact consciousness, desires and related are studied within philosophy, religion, psychology and psychiatry.¹⁸⁴³ The term and concept of consciousness has not been developed with enough clarity from scientists and others with related expertise.¹⁸⁴⁴ It can be reasoned that possibly consciousness is the starting point where the human being has self-awareness and an understanding that they are an individual apart from any other entity.¹⁸⁴⁵ Consciousness is a difficult subject,¹⁸⁴⁶ but psychologist and philosopher William James (1904) states that if the idea of consciousness in understanding human thought is eliminated there is not an explanation for brain function.¹⁸⁴⁷ If human consciousness is rejected because it is not completely understood,¹⁸⁴⁸ then other ideas need to be invented which probably are not as intellectually satisfying. I view the idea of a human consciousness occurring within a human nature¹⁸⁴⁹ as a reasonable proposition, although in light of modern views within philosophy and science¹⁸⁵⁰ speculative views such as Feinberg's¹⁸⁵¹ should definitely not be accepted

¹⁸³⁹ Gierer (2003: 9). Ordunez, Badillo, and Peon (2008: 2).

¹⁸⁴⁰ Feinberg (1994: 129).

¹⁸⁴¹ Ordunez, Badillo, and Peon (2008: 2).

¹⁸⁴² Ordunez, Badillo, and Peon (2008: 2).

¹⁸⁴³ Ordunez, Badillo, and Peon (2008: 2).

¹⁸⁴⁴ Ordunez, Badillo, and Peon (2008: 2). Houghton (1995: 210).

¹⁸⁴⁵ Descartes in Lormand (1648)(1996: Volume 3: 335). Hume (1739-1740)(1973: 185). Gierer (2003: 9).

¹⁸⁴⁶ Gierer (2003: 9). Gois (2001: 4).

¹⁸⁴⁷ James (1904: 477-491).

¹⁸⁴⁸ James (1904: 477-491).

¹⁸⁴⁹ Descartes in Lormand (1648)(1996: Volume 3: 335). Hume (1739-1740)(1973: 185).

¹⁸⁵⁰ Gois (2001: 3). Novin (2004: 1-2).

¹⁸⁵¹ Feinberg (1994: 128). Erickson (1994: 424).

dogmatically.¹⁸⁵²

3. God's Sovereignty and Eliminating Evil

Feinberg's Eight Ways God Could Eliminate Evil

Feinberg lists eight ways that God could possibly eliminate the problem of evil from his creation,¹⁸⁵³ but he states they would all create greater problems for God and humanity,¹⁸⁵⁴ and contradict the three basic claims of his sovereignty approach,¹⁸⁵⁵ which are (1) contradicting other plans God had in place,¹⁸⁵⁶ (2) negating and contradicting claims God made in Scripture,¹⁸⁵⁷ (3) performing actions that human beings would neither desire nor require God to do.¹⁸⁵⁸ I should point out that although his ideas and explanations are reasonable there is similarity between his points and explanations for them.¹⁸⁵⁹ His approach can be criticized as being too repetitive.¹⁸⁶⁰ In my view, the work should have been shortened.

First, God could eliminate the problem of evil by annihilating humankind.¹⁸⁶¹ Feinberg points out that this would contradict God's intention to create humanity.¹⁸⁶² It seems if God did possess foreknowledge to know that humanity would fall, it would make more sense for him to plan to restore at least some of humanity rather than destroy it, since he had bothered to create

¹⁸⁵² Erickson (1994: 424). Clarence Darrow reasons consciousness is limited to this temporal life. Darrow (1928)(1973: 265). None of my research has produced any definitive connection between consciousness and a notion of a spirit. This connection would therefore potentially take place primarily within philosophical and theological deductions.

¹⁸⁵³ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁸⁵⁴ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁸⁵⁵ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁸⁵⁶ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁸⁵⁷ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁸⁵⁸ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁸⁵⁹ Feinberg (1994: 130-136).

¹⁸⁶⁰ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁸⁶¹ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁸⁶² Feinberg (1994: 131). In light of the criticisms of Flew and Mackie, the critic could suggest that God need not annihilate humanity but could have simply created it differently or even now caused persons to act differently as in a far more moral fashion, more of the time.

human beings in the first place.¹⁸⁶³ Pinnock points that God created the world with significant free creatures, and sustains the world in a way not to negate its character and structure.¹⁸⁶⁴ From this idea God would not now destroy what he already made within his plans.¹⁸⁶⁵ Erickson writes that God plans to eventually eliminate evil from the culminated Kingdom of God which will not contain sin or evil of any kind.¹⁸⁶⁶ From a Reformed, Calvinistic perspective for this Kingdom to be inhabited by human beings as God created them there is first a period of time, the duration only known by God, for which the problem of evil exists. To destroy humanity would also end all of God's plans for a completed Kingdom of God.¹⁸⁶⁷ Norman Geisler (1999) writes in his article on 'The problem of evil' that some critics have suggested it would have been better for God not to create a world or humanity at all.¹⁸⁶⁸ A non-existent world without humanity would not have a human problem of evil,¹⁸⁶⁹ and neither would a world where humanity was destroyed.¹⁸⁷⁰ Geisler writes that one cannot compare something to nothing or a world to a non-world.¹⁸⁷¹ Therefore with Geisler's idea, if God annihilated humanity it would not be possible to know whether or not things would be better because although there would not be a problem of evil, there also would not be a potential for human good.¹⁸⁷² Jürgen Moltmann reasons that metaphysical atheism sees an unjust and absurd world where the problem of evil is triumphant.¹⁸⁷³ The atheist does not view God as showing favour to the world,¹⁸⁷⁴ but views

¹⁸⁶³ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁸⁶⁴ Pinnock (1986: 144).

¹⁸⁶⁵ Pinnock (1986: 144).

¹⁸⁶⁶ Mounce (1990: 368-397). Erickson (1994: 1228). Phillips rejects this idea noting that 'Those who are crushed by life's afflictions are not going to enter a state where all this is to be put right.' Phillips (2005: 273).

¹⁸⁶⁷ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁸⁶⁸ Geisler (1999: 2).

¹⁸⁶⁹ Geisler (1999: 2).

¹⁸⁷⁰ Geisler (1999: 2).

¹⁸⁷¹ Geisler (1999: 2).

¹⁸⁷² Geisler (1999: 2).

¹⁸⁷³ Moltmann (1993: 219-220). Suffering is not undone. Phillips (2005: 273).

¹⁸⁷⁴ Moltmann (1993: 219-220). Phillips (2005: 273).

reality as one of nothingness.¹⁸⁷⁵ Moltmann explains that philosophical arguments for the existence of God will not convince these atheists because the devil is a more plausible cause of this evil world than is God.¹⁸⁷⁶ Moltmann's explanation of metaphysical atheism could challenge Feinberg's claim that God would not annihilate the world because God has good ultimate purposes to fulfill.¹⁸⁷⁷ These complaints tie in with Griffin's idea that the Calvinist God would be immoral or amoral if he existed because of the evil within creation.¹⁸⁷⁸ The atheistic critic may claim there is no evidence that God, contrary to Feinberg's notion, has eventual good plans for his creation,¹⁸⁷⁹ but Moltmann writes Christ in his work on the cross shows that God's being is in suffering and suffering is in God's being.¹⁸⁸⁰ The idea that God is love is demonstrated through Christ's work on the cross.¹⁸⁸¹ Moltmann makes a fine point as ultimately if Feinberg's claim concerning God's future good plans make any sense, God must be shown within his creation to have acted in a positive loving way¹⁸⁸² to rid the creation of the problem of evil and the atoning work of Christ, and the resurrection is reasonable explanation of God's plans.

Second, Feinberg postulates that God could eliminate all objects of desire.¹⁸⁸³ This would pertain to all physical things, including the human body and perhaps the mind,¹⁸⁸⁴ because Feinberg views these as things that people could desire.¹⁸⁸⁵ He concludes this could only be done by destroying all of creation.¹⁸⁸⁶ It is unlikely human beings that possess free will and do not

¹⁸⁷⁵ Moltmann (1993: 219-220).

¹⁸⁷⁶ Moltmann (1993: 220-221). And because these arguments are not empirically based. Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

¹⁸⁷⁷ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁸⁷⁸ Griffin (1976: 116-130).

¹⁸⁷⁹ Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

¹⁸⁸⁰ Moltmann (1993: 227).

¹⁸⁸¹ Moltmann (1993: 227).

¹⁸⁸² Moltmann (1993: 227).

¹⁸⁸³ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁸⁸⁴ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁸⁸⁵ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁸⁸⁶ Feinberg (1994: 131).

have desires, could please God.¹⁸⁸⁷ These persons would have a self-realization that they were individual entities, and without any desire to follow God they could only obey him in a mechanical instinctive way, which would not consist of sincere love or a sense of wanting to follow and be like God. Alfred R. Mele (1996) in ‘Extrinsic Desire’ explains that there are two types of human desire, and these seem applicable here.¹⁸⁸⁸ The first would be extrinsic desire, which is a desire for something conducive for obtaining something else a person desires.¹⁸⁸⁹ An example would be to desire to own personal possessions that would lead to happiness.¹⁸⁹⁰ Possessions would be desired in order that the greater desire of happiness could be fulfilled.¹⁸⁹¹ The second would be intrinsic desires which were the ultimate desires that the fulfillment of extrinsic desires accomplished.¹⁸⁹² For example, the ultimate goal of happiness achieved by owning some nice possessions would be intrinsic desire.¹⁸⁹³ Kreeft and Tacelli approach desires in a similar way as they state that human beings have innate desire for natural things such as food and drink,¹⁸⁹⁴ and external desires such as sports cars and political office.¹⁸⁹⁵ Kreeft and Tacelli’s innate desires concept would somewhat correspond to Mele’s intrinsic ones as these would be the inner most human desires.¹⁸⁹⁶ Kreeft and Tacelli’s external desires would be similar to Mele’s extrinsic desires,¹⁸⁹⁷ which would be secondary desires fulfilled in order to fulfill the deepest human desires.¹⁸⁹⁸

¹⁸⁸⁷ The assumption being that God desires a passionate love from his creation.

¹⁸⁸⁸ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁸⁸⁹ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁸⁹⁰ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁸⁹¹ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁸⁹² Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁸⁹³ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁸⁹⁴ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 78).

¹⁸⁹⁵ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 78).

¹⁸⁹⁶ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 78).

¹⁸⁹⁷ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁸⁹⁸ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 78).

In regard to the Kingdom of God, both types of desires¹⁸⁹⁹ may be needed in order for a person to please God. For example, if the intrinsic desire¹⁹⁰⁰ of followers of God was to glorify God and have ultimate happiness, then an extrinsic desire,¹⁹⁰¹ such as wanting to study Scripture and learn more about God, would be required to take place. The most inner desires of human beings would not occur unless secondary desires, the objects of desire, also occurred.¹⁹⁰² Feinberg's point that eliminating desires would contradict God's plan for creating human beings¹⁹⁰³ seemingly is reasonable as people would need to desire to please, follow and learn more about their creator to make their existence useful to him in a relationship context.¹⁹⁰⁴

Third, Feinberg's next option for having God eliminate moral evil would be to eliminate desires.¹⁹⁰⁵ Since Feinberg assumes desires lead to choice,¹⁹⁰⁶ he believes that if God prevented human desires, no moral evil could exist.¹⁹⁰⁷ Additionally, Feinberg notes that without desires human beings would not have the will to acquire things essential for life, and the human race would eventually cease to exist.¹⁹⁰⁸ This, of course, would have contradicted God's plans.¹⁹⁰⁹ If human desire was eliminated completely¹⁹¹⁰ an important aspect of human freedom would vanish, that being the potential human desire to freely follow God. It seems reasonable that humanity would have to desire to freely return love to their creator, as it would be questionable whether or not true love could exist merely instinctively and without desire. C.A. Campbell (1951)(1973)

¹⁸⁹⁹ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁹⁰⁰ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁹⁰¹ Mele (1996: 259).

¹⁹⁰² Mele (1996: 259). Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 78).

¹⁹⁰³ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁹⁰⁴ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹⁰⁵ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹⁰⁶ Feinberg (1994: 132). As discussed there is a debate on how human consciousness works in regard to desires. Ordunez, Badillo, and Peon (2008: 2). Houghton (1995: 210). Feinberg's views here are quite speculative in regard to desires in light of scientific and philosophical research.

¹⁹⁰⁷ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹⁰⁸ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹⁰⁹ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹¹⁰ Feinberg (1994: 132).

notes there is no good reason to contemplate that a human being would choose any other course than their strongest desire.¹⁹¹¹ The strongest desire notion is simply a reflection of the person's character.¹⁹¹² If human beings did not have desires then it would be impossible within a Calvinist Reformed model for God, with the use of compatibilism, to mould and persuade a person in character in such a way that God would be the strongest desire.¹⁹¹³ Alexandre Kojève (1969) provides his personal concepts within his work on consciousness and desire¹⁹¹⁴ as he explains that the very being of a person, the self-consciousness, implies and presupposes desire.¹⁹¹⁵ From this perspective a human being without desire would be unable to understand self¹⁹¹⁶ or God¹⁹¹⁷ and would, therefore, not fit within God's plans to create rational loving creatures. A human being must be able to understand the concept of *I* in order to have an understanding of reality.¹⁹¹⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)¹⁹¹⁹ states within *Philosophy of the Mind* (1807)(2006) that a self-possessed and healthy person has a consciousness of the surrounding world which includes the ability to desire.¹⁹²⁰ Without a conscious understanding of reality,¹⁹²¹ and the ability to desire anything including God, I cannot see how a human being can be open to following God. Feinberg is likely correct that it would contradict God's plans to create a loving humanity by eliminating desire.¹⁹²²

¹⁹¹¹ Campbell (1951)(1973: 79).

¹⁹¹² Campbell (1951)(1973: 79).

¹⁹¹³ Without desire a human being could be determined with hard determinism to have certain thoughts and commit certain actions.

¹⁹¹⁴ Kojève (1969: 1).

¹⁹¹⁵ Kojève (1969: 1).

¹⁹¹⁶ Kojève (1969: 1).

¹⁹¹⁷ Kojève (1969: 1).

¹⁹¹⁸ Kojève (1969: 1).

¹⁹¹⁹ Blackburn (1996: 168).

¹⁹²⁰ Hegel (1807)(2006: 408).

¹⁹²¹ Hegel (1807)(2006: 408).

¹⁹²² Feinberg (1994: 132). Although God cannot reasonably eliminate significant desires and maintain significantly free creatures, it still is a reasonable question why at times does not God alter a human desire to prevent a particular evil from taking place. Phillips suggests that God could curtail certain human freedoms at times when it is

Fourth, Feinberg postulates God could have made human beings in such a way that they had desires, but never immoral ones.¹⁹²³ He thought that for God to minimize human desires in this way would be damaging human individuality¹⁹²⁴ and creating people that were stereotypical of each other.¹⁹²⁵ Pinnock explains that God has backed off from dominating his human creatures and has given them the ability to live as they choose.¹⁹²⁶ God's lack of dominance over humanity would seemingly allow for human individual thought.¹⁹²⁷ Feinberg theorized that for God to create human beings with no possibility of moral evil due to desires,¹⁹²⁸ they would have to quite likely be superhuman possessing great moral and intellectual ability to limit themselves to desires within God's will,¹⁹²⁹ or God would have to supernaturally prevent immoral desires from taking place.¹⁹³⁰ Feinberg states that if God created superhumans they would not be the same human beings in existence and it would contradict God's plans.¹⁹³¹ It seems apparent that if God would somehow create superhuman beings with greater intellectual and moral ability,¹⁹³² one would think they would need at least the degree of freedom that human beings currently have, and it appears, with Feinberg's scenario to prohibit the problem of evil, they would need to be limited by God and would have less freedom than human beings as we know them.¹⁹³³ Also, if these superhuman beings were given significant freedom, and they did rebel against God, perhaps their potential for evil could be even more severe than the potential for evil in our

obviously needed. Phillips (2005: 106). I reason that God does do as Phillip's suggests through circumstances often, but this does not fully explain situations where human evil is allowed to greatly flourish.

¹⁹²³ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹²⁴ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹²⁵ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹²⁶ Pinnock (1986: 151).

¹⁹²⁷ Pinnock (1986: 151). This relates to the concept of epistemic distance that will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Hick in Davis (2001: 48). Phillips (2005: 164).

¹⁹²⁸ Feinberg (1994: 132-133).

¹⁹²⁹ Feinberg (1994: 132-133).

¹⁹³⁰ Feinberg (1994: 132-133).

¹⁹³¹ Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹³² Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹³³ Feinberg (1994: 132).

current situation because of the greater intellect.¹⁹³⁴

J.L. Mackie (1955)(1996) was discussed primarily in Chapter Two as a counter to free will theodicy, but his comments can be applied here.¹⁹³⁵ Mackie writes that God being omnipotent could surely make persons in a way that they always did what was good.¹⁹³⁶ Plantinga as an incompatibilist disagrees with this idea.¹⁹³⁷ Feinberg as a compatibilist does not think Plantinga defeats Mackie on this point,¹⁹³⁸ but rather Plantinga merely points out the differences between incompatibilism and compatibilism.¹⁹³⁹ If Feinberg sees it reasonable God could have made human beings in a way that they were significantly free and yet always committed right actions,¹⁹⁴⁰ could not God have created human beings that were significantly free but always had right desires and not immoral ones?¹⁹⁴¹ Feinberg would appear to somewhat concede this point as a possibility¹⁹⁴² and remains theologically consistent, but he reasons that God would have to constantly interrupt human lives to prevent wrong desires.¹⁹⁴³ He seems to overlook the possibility God could simply make free creatures that would never desire to do wrong things.¹⁹⁴⁴ Feinberg deduces that if wrong moral desires were prohibited by God the human life would consist of a constant changing in direction and course *ad infinitum*,¹⁹⁴⁵ because God would have to be constantly preventing persons from having wrong desires and these people

¹⁹³⁴ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹³⁵ Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

¹⁹³⁶ Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-251). Or as noted significantly free human beings as exist presently can be prohibited from committing certain evil acts. Phillips (2005: 106). Human desires can fully exist but be stymied by God and evil acts not allowed to occur.

¹⁹³⁷ Plantinga (1982: 189).

¹⁹³⁸ Feinberg (1994: 64-65).

¹⁹³⁹ Feinberg (1994: 64-65).

¹⁹⁴⁰ Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁴¹ Feinberg (1994: 133). Flew and Mackie too could rightly raise this objection based on their views. Flew (1955: 150-153). Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

¹⁹⁴² Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁴³ Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁴⁴ This would be consistent with compatibilism.

¹⁹⁴⁵ This term is from the Latin, meaning to infinity. Blackburn (1996: 7).

would not progress as creatures.¹⁹⁴⁶ My deduction would be that God could have made human beings that had significant freedom and would not have wrong desires.¹⁹⁴⁷ It could be reasoned though that hypothetical human beings in that scenario are not within God's plans.¹⁹⁴⁸

Calvin writes that God bends and directs the soul,¹⁹⁴⁹ and therefore by implication the desires of some towards God.¹⁹⁵⁰ Rather than eliminating wrong desires completely in all of humanity,¹⁹⁵¹ perhaps God prefers with the use of soft determinism to mould and persuade persons via the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁵² Erwin W. Lutzer (2000) writes that God being omnipotent could have created perfect human beings that did not have the desire to sin.¹⁹⁵³ He then goes on to state that clearly God with all his power certainly would not create a universe in which something might happen contrary to his plans.¹⁹⁵⁴ It appears that God from a Reformed, Calvinistic model created human beings, even though he knew they would at times have wrong desires that would lead to wrong actions.¹⁹⁵⁵

Fifth, for this point Feinberg attempts to separate desires from intentions, noting that intentions are actions fueled by those desires.¹⁹⁵⁶ Feinberg states that God could eliminate human intentions; however, eliminating the intentions, or restricting them, would be just as problematic as God eliminating desires.¹⁹⁵⁷ However, the objection could be raised once again that within a compatibilistic system significantly free beings could be made in order not to have wrong

¹⁹⁴⁶ Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁴⁷ They could be determined through nature and God's Holy Spirit not to ever sin and become corrupted in nature.

¹⁹⁴⁸ Feinberg (1994: 130).

¹⁹⁴⁹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 204).

¹⁹⁵⁰ Calvin (1543)(1996: 204).

¹⁹⁵¹ Feinberg (1994: 132).

¹⁹⁵² Calvin (1543)(1996: 204).

¹⁹⁵³ Lutzer (2000: 143).

¹⁹⁵⁴ Lutzer (2000: 144).

¹⁹⁵⁵ Lutzer (2000: 144).

¹⁹⁵⁶ Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁵⁷ Feinberg (1994: 133).

intentions.¹⁹⁵⁸ Feinberg reasons that prohibiting human intentions would greatly limit human freedom¹⁹⁵⁹ and a race that had no intentions would not commit significantly free actions of value to God.¹⁹⁶⁰ Reichenbach explains that God cannot control human behaviour without taking away the human freedom he has originally provided.¹⁹⁶¹ For God to control human intentions would perhaps stymie the ability of human beings to function as God would like.¹⁹⁶² Feinberg's concept of intentions is similar to what Calvin described as human impulse.¹⁹⁶³ Human impulses to Calvin appeared to be fueled by desires and led to human actions.¹⁹⁶⁴ Calvin noted God had to reform the impulses of those outside of Christ in order that they could begin to be compliant with the impulses of the spirit of God.¹⁹⁶⁵ A reformation of human impulses and resulting actions would, to Calvin,¹⁹⁶⁶ be an aspect of God's solution to human evil. Calvin did not believe that God would eliminate human impulse, but rather God would have the impulse of a person he desired subject to the spirit of God.¹⁹⁶⁷

Sixth, Feinberg notes that God could only allow people to will good things and not bad things.¹⁹⁶⁸ Feinberg then points out that the restrictions on human freedom would, once again, work against God's plan.¹⁹⁶⁹ Some may question God's goodness by not creating human beings

¹⁹⁵⁸ In light of Flew and Mackie's compatibilistic criticisms discussed Flew (1955: 150-153) Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253). I would reason that God could create significantly free human beings with only good intentions, in the same way persons could be formed to only have good desires and do good actions. God knowingly created beings that he knew would freely fall and planned to save some through the atoning and resurrection work of Christ. Feinberg's lack of clarity concerning the issues of desire and intentions are a weakness with his theodicy, although not devastating to his primary concepts in regard to presenting a logical and reasonable sovereignty theodicy.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁶⁰ Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁶¹ Reichenbach (1986: 105).

¹⁹⁶² Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁶³ Calvin (1543)(1996: 225).

¹⁹⁶⁴ Calvin (1543)(1996: 225).

¹⁹⁶⁵ Calvin (1543)(1996: 225).

¹⁹⁶⁶ Calvin (1543)(1996: 225).

¹⁹⁶⁷ Calvin (1543)(1996: 225).

¹⁹⁶⁸ Feinberg (1994: 133).

¹⁹⁶⁹ Feinberg (1994: 133). Feinberg's arguments in my view become somewhat redundant at this point.

with less freedom,¹⁹⁷⁰ as according to Mackie, God could have formed some type of beings that obeyed him without committing any wrong actions.¹⁹⁷¹ These types of beings would possibly be more preferable than human beings as we know them, which cause the problem of evil.¹⁹⁷²

Griffin explains the Calvinistic God, being omnipotent could have simply prevented human wickedness and evil in the first place.¹⁹⁷³ I do not doubt that both Mackie and Griffin are correct that God could have created a world where some type of human beings were not evil,¹⁹⁷⁴ but I doubt it was God's will to create such beings.

In contrast, Thiessen from an incompatibilist position writes that God does not want to create automaton type beings with no choice in whether or not they would glorify God.¹⁹⁷⁵ For Thiessen, humanity can only truly glorify God by choosing to do so while still having the opportunity to choose not to glorify God in disobedience.¹⁹⁷⁶ This concept appears on the surface to be primarily in line with noted incompatibilism and free will approaches almost verbatim.¹⁹⁷⁷ However, within a compatibilistic, type sovereignty approach, God cannot truly be glorified by the devotion of his creatures unless it is significantly and freely willed as a secondary cause by these persons.¹⁹⁷⁸ For the compatibilist and those like-minded before the modern term was used,¹⁹⁷⁹ true human devotion to God does not come through compulsion as Calvin admits,¹⁹⁸⁰ stating that although he does not use the term free will in order to avoid confusion, he maintains

¹⁹⁷⁰ Or as noted, limiting human freedom at certain key points to avoid horrendous evil. Phillips (2005: 106).

¹⁹⁷¹ Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-251).

¹⁹⁷² Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-251).

¹⁹⁷³ Griffin (1976: 122).

¹⁹⁷⁴ Griffin (1976: 122). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-251).

¹⁹⁷⁵ Thiessen (1956: 248).

¹⁹⁷⁶ Thiessen (1956: 248).

¹⁹⁷⁷ Geisler (1986: 76-77).

¹⁹⁷⁸ Calvin (1543)(1996: 68).

¹⁹⁷⁹ Such as John Calvin and many within the Reformed camp.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Calvin (1543)(1996: 68).

that choice is free if opposed to coercion.¹⁹⁸¹

Compatibilist approaches would not view a human automaton¹⁹⁸² as being able to bring acceptable glory to God.¹⁹⁸³ Christopher Miles Coope (2001) speculates that the Bible teaches the trustworthiness of God,¹⁹⁸⁴ and human ideas of what goodness is could be faulty,¹⁹⁸⁵ and thus God may be correct in how he is dealing with the problem of evil.¹⁹⁸⁶ God as infinite, omnipotent and omniscient, could reasonably know how to properly deal with the problem of evil caused by his finite creations.¹⁹⁸⁷ It is possible God understands the imperfect human beings that presently exist are more valuable creations than the hypothetical ones that would have never rebelled against him.¹⁹⁸⁸ The development and ultimate restoration of a number of these imperfect human beings may be worth the problem of evil in God's estimation.¹⁹⁸⁹

Seventh, God could prohibit bodily movements that lead to immoral actions being committed.¹⁹⁹⁰ This could be done by natural or supernatural means.¹⁹⁹¹ In other words, human beings would have built within their bodies the inability to do actions that lead to immorality,¹⁹⁹² or God could simply intervene supernaturally and prevent wrong actions from occurring.¹⁹⁹³ Martin Luther writes, in his commentary on Romans, that the body through corruption has been

¹⁹⁸¹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 68).

¹⁹⁸² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30). Thiessen (1956: 248).

¹⁹⁸³ Although views that espouse hard determinism may see the good actions of non-significantly free human creatures as pleasing to God. I disagree reasoning God made human beings and likely angelic beings to have significant freedom in order to glorify God. Animals, for example, may still to a lesser degree glorify God even without the use of significant freedom within God's plans for these creatures.

¹⁹⁸⁴ Coope (2001: 385).

¹⁹⁸⁵ Coope (2001: 385).

¹⁹⁸⁶ Coope (2001: 385).

¹⁹⁸⁷ Coope (2001: 385).

¹⁹⁸⁸ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁹⁸⁹ Feinberg (1994: 131).

¹⁹⁹⁰ Feinberg (1994: 133-134).

¹⁹⁹¹ Feinberg (1994: 133-134).

¹⁹⁹² Feinberg (1994: 133-134).

¹⁹⁹³ Feinberg (1994: 133-134).

changed from its original use so that it now dishonoured God.¹⁹⁹⁴ He states that each human being is either under the control of a corrupt nature or God's spirit.¹⁹⁹⁵ Clearly to Luther, bodily movements that lead to immoral actions could only begin to be halted through God's grace,¹⁹⁹⁶ but Luther did not claim that this would be done immediately by God, and noted that a person needed to flee from sinful bodily movements through devout prayer.¹⁹⁹⁷

The notions of Feinberg and Luther take a spiritual approach that strongly connects the mind and body in unity;¹⁹⁹⁸ however, there are secular approaches with different perspectives from Reformed, Calvinistic thinking.¹⁹⁹⁹ According to John R. Burr and Milton Goldinger (1976) there is a debate within the scientific community whether or not human beings are wholly physical.²⁰⁰⁰ I readily admit that the existence of the human spirit is not empirically verifiable,²⁰⁰¹ and its existence from a Christian perspective would primarily rely on Scripture.²⁰⁰² Burr and Goldinger correctly point out if it can be scientifically demonstrated that human beings are nothing more than machines, then a view of persons having immaterial souls must be given up.²⁰⁰³ With this secular approach,²⁰⁰⁴ contrary to Reformed and Calvinistic thought,²⁰⁰⁵ there would be no spiritual way to overcome the body's movements that lead to wrong actions. Richard Taylor (1969)(1976) writes that the idea of an immortal soul cannot be seen as necessarily false.²⁰⁰⁶ However, he reasons that if there is difficulty explaining how the body can

¹⁹⁹⁴ Luther (1516)(1968: 31).

¹⁹⁹⁵ Luther (1516)(1968: 31).

¹⁹⁹⁶ Luther (1516)(1968: 31).

¹⁹⁹⁷ Luther (1516)(1968: 31).

¹⁹⁹⁸ Feinberg (1994: 133-134). Luther (1516)(1968: 31).

¹⁹⁹⁹ As can be seen with the review of consciousness within scientific and philosophical literature there is a question concerning whether a non-physical human consciousness is required. Novin (2004: 1-2).

²⁰⁰⁰ Burr and Goldinger (1976: 319).

²⁰⁰¹ Novin (2004: 1-2). Burr and Goldinger (1976: 319).

²⁰⁰² Thiessen (1956: 227).

²⁰⁰³ Burr and Goldinger (1976: 319).

²⁰⁰⁴ Burr and Goldinger (1976: 319).

²⁰⁰⁵ Feinberg (1994: 133-134). Luther (1516)(1968: 31).

²⁰⁰⁶ Taylor (1969)(1976: 334-336).

do certain things,²⁰⁰⁷ it would be no less difficult explaining how a soul could do certain things.²⁰⁰⁸

This idea has merit since even if the idea of a human soul/spirit unity with a body is granted, bodily actions leading to wrong actions cannot be separated from the spiritual condition²⁰⁰⁹ that leads to these actions. Even if Feinberg is correct and God could prohibit wrong bodily actions and does not,²⁰¹⁰ the mere prevention of bodily movement would be an indicator of deeper spiritual problems indicated.²⁰¹¹ Taylor is correct that the physical body is perhaps easier to understand than a hypothetical soul/spirit, and is certainly empirically easier to comprehend.²⁰¹² I do not deny that science and philosophy should look at solving the problem of evil on physical levels as well, with issues such as the cures for diseases.

Eighth, Feinberg notes that God could supernaturally prohibit wrong human actions.²⁰¹³ This would greatly change life as it is known.²⁰¹⁴ This could cause fear in people not knowing if the acts they were about to commit or not, would be prohibited by God.²⁰¹⁵ Feinberg thought this could leave the world non-functional, and not a better world than the one in existence,²⁰¹⁶ and he deduces that if God did have to miraculously intervene to prohibit all human immorality, God would seem unwise.²⁰¹⁷ It would seem unwise God would create people that he had to constantly supernaturally forcefully determine to commit right actions,²⁰¹⁸ and the value of these types of beings to God would be questionable.²⁰¹⁹ Kreeft and Tacelli note if God did not allow

²⁰⁰⁷ Taylor (1969)(1976: 334-336).

²⁰⁰⁸ Taylor (1969)(1976: 334-336).

²⁰⁰⁹ That of assumed corruption and imperfection. Luther (1516)(1968: 31). Calvin (1543)(1996: 26). Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

²⁰¹⁰ Feinberg (1994: 133).

²⁰¹¹ Luther (1516)(1968: 31). Calvin (1543)(1996: 26). Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

²⁰¹² Taylor (1969)(1976: 336).

²⁰¹³ Feinberg (1994: 134).

²⁰¹⁴ Feinberg (1994: 135).

²⁰¹⁵ Feinberg (1994: 135).

²⁰¹⁶ Feinberg (1994: 135).

²⁰¹⁷ Feinberg (1994: 135).

²⁰¹⁸ Feinberg (1994: 135).

²⁰¹⁹ Feinberg (1994: 135).

human beings the option to misuse their freedom, they would not be human but animal or machine²⁰²⁰ having less value than creatures that had the potential to be persuaded by God to follow him, and turn from wrong doing.²⁰²¹ Again Griffin's objection²⁰²² is reasonable, as it must be considered why within the Reformed, Calvinistic system God did not create people in such a way that supernatural intervention would not be needed to prevent evil.²⁰²³ If God is omnipotent it remains within the realm of possibility that he could create human beings who were not like animals or machine,²⁰²⁴ but still did not commit evil actions. Feinberg's redundant stock answer for this objection is that it would contradict God's plans.²⁰²⁵ Feinberg explains that God could remove evil, but further problems would arise.²⁰²⁶

Feinberg concludes that God could not both create a utopia and, at the same time, human beings as they are presently in a good world without constraining persons.²⁰²⁷ However, some critics such as Bertrand Russell, would deny that God will ever bring about a utopia,²⁰²⁸ and would deny that the world is a just place presently.²⁰²⁹ Bertrand Russell (1957)(1976) states that since the universe often lacks justice presently there is no good scientific reason to believe that God would eventually bring about justice.²⁰³⁰ To Feinberg, if God had used any of the eight methods described, the world would not be as good as it is presently.²⁰³¹ God in his sovereignty

²⁰²⁰ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 138).

²⁰²¹ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 138). This assumes incompatibilism but it is true that human beings would be vastly different with significantly less freedom due to divine determining factors.

²⁰²² Griffin (1976: 122).

²⁰²³ Griffin (1976: 122).

²⁰²⁴ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 138).

²⁰²⁵ Feinberg (1994: 136).

²⁰²⁶ Feinberg (1994: 136).

²⁰²⁷ Feinberg (1994: 136).

²⁰²⁸ Russell (1957)(1976: 120).

²⁰²⁹ Russell (1957)(1976: 120).

²⁰³⁰ Russell (1957)(1976: 120).

²⁰³¹ Feinberg (1994: 136).

has dealt with his creation in the correct manner, including with the problem of evil.²⁰³² There is within Feinberg's theodicy the assumption that God has brought about a good, worthwhile world despite the problem of evil.²⁰³³ Feinberg, unlike Russell,²⁰³⁴ assumes that the world contains a level of goodness and justice that makes the idea of the Christian God as creator reasonable.²⁰³⁵

4. Restoration

Why Later?

Sovereignty approaches such as those of Feinberg, state that God was just and perfect in how he dealt with creation.²⁰³⁶ These claim that a good God created a good world and that human rebellion and the problem of evil existed for a good reason.²⁰³⁷ Yet sovereignty approaches believe that God would ultimately culminate his Kingdom of God²⁰³⁸ and eliminate the problem of evil.²⁰³⁹ As Phillips notes, 'Theodacists want happy endings.'²⁰⁴⁰ Feinberg admits the difficulty with his approach because it defends God allowing the problem of evil in his

²⁰³² Feinberg (1994: 136). Augustine, Plantinga and Hick as well would reason God was good in these dealings. Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Plantinga (1982: 167). Hick (1970: 217).

²⁰³³ Feinberg (1994: 136).

²⁰³⁴ Russell (1957)(1976: 120).

²⁰³⁵ Feinberg (1994: 136).

²⁰³⁶ Feinberg (1994: 136).

²⁰³⁷ Feinberg (1994: 136). Phillips questions this type of reasoning as there is often a lack of correlation between suffering and virtue. Phillips (2005: 81-82). Humanly speaking this can be granted, but God, traditionally understood at least, could make these correlations.

²⁰³⁸ Mounce (1990: 368-397).

²⁰³⁹ Feinberg (1994: 141). These theories are often viewed with ideas of optimism and progress. Phillips (2005: 82).

²⁰⁴⁰ Phillips (2005: 247).

creation for a time period that is unknown to human beings,²⁰⁴¹ and at the same time claims that God would eventually restore his creation.²⁰⁴² He notes that free will and evolutionary theistic approaches to the problem of evil also assume that God would restore his creation, and so this was a common theistic assumption.²⁰⁴³ The fact that his sovereignty approach accepts restoration of the creation within it in no way makes his presentation internally inconsistent.²⁰⁴⁴ Phillips explains that this general type of approach views God as compensating persons for the sufferings in life.²⁰⁴⁵ Evil and suffering is therefore redeemed in some way.²⁰⁴⁶ Evil and suffering would be worthwhile within a Christian world view where Christ prevails. Phillips warns that at its worst Christianity can push one to back the right supernatural force,²⁰⁴⁷ as in not backing Satan.²⁰⁴⁸ Phillips suggests that no one wants to back a loser and so Christians should logically, within their worldview, back God and not Satan.²⁰⁴⁹ God becomes a means and not an end within this type of Christian approach.²⁰⁵⁰ It should be interjected that Christianity should not be primarily about being on the winning side, rather it should be concerned, for the most part, with doing God's will obediently in love.²⁰⁵¹ Phillips views it as problematic that Jesus stated his Kingdom was not of this world and yet in the Second Coming establishes his Kingdom on this earth.²⁰⁵²

Feinberg thought it was not his objective to answer why God allowed the problem of evil

²⁰⁴¹ Feinberg (1994: 141).

²⁰⁴² Feinberg (1994: 141). Phillips doubts a notion of life after death makes sense. He uses as example comparing death to being asleep or unconscious. Phillips (2005: 85).

²⁰⁴³ Feinberg (1994: 141).

²⁰⁴⁴ Feinberg (1994: 141).

²⁰⁴⁵ Phillips (2005: 81).

²⁰⁴⁶ Phillips (2005: 81).

²⁰⁴⁷ Phillips (2005: 247).

²⁰⁴⁸ Phillips (2005: 247).

²⁰⁴⁹ Phillips (2005: 247). A decent point is made, however, in light of Reformed views on compatibilism, Christians are not going to primarily choose God, but are chosen by God.

²⁰⁵⁰ Phillips (2005: 247).

²⁰⁵¹ For example, Matthew 22 and Mark 12 has Christ instructing the reader to love God first and foremost, and others as much as self. Jesus in John 15 tells his disciples to love one another just as he loved them.

²⁰⁵² Phillips (2005: 247). Jesus' Kingdom is not of this temporal world, not of this present realm. The world shall be changed and restored. Mounce (1990: 368-397).

and would eventually bring restoration, and I view this as a weakness.²⁰⁵³ Rather, Feinberg believes he was successful in presenting an approach that showed God was good,²⁰⁵⁴ as was his creation.²⁰⁵⁵ Calvin writes that God would begin anew in humanity by abolishing the fallen will, leaving the human will in its original state.²⁰⁵⁶ God would turn evil to good, according to Calvin,²⁰⁵⁷ thus bringing a new humanity which was a new creation.²⁰⁵⁸ This human restoration and rebirth, Calvin (1552)(1995) notes,²⁰⁵⁹ would lead to the culmination of the Kingdom of God, and the ultimate blessing of immortality.²⁰⁶⁰

Within a sovereignty approach, I deduce a theoretical, possible and suitable reason why God created a good world and allowed human beings to rebel against him.²⁰⁶¹ My theory is that human beings that are saved through Christ with the use of compatibilism will eventually have greater spiritual maturity than Adam and Eve did prior to a fall from God. If the idea of a literal Adam and Eve is rejected, as was mentioned by Jackson and Fretheim²⁰⁶² it can be reasoned that those within the culminated Kingdom of God will surpass those first persons in spiritual maturity as well. This would be so because those God saves will have experienced their own sin, death, and the atoning work of Christ and his resurrection applied to them. These would be citizens of the culminated Kingdom of God.²⁰⁶³ Persons cannot be created with experience, even if made with a level of initial maturity.²⁰⁶⁴ Those within the culminated Kingdom of God would not

²⁰⁵³ Feinberg (1994: 141).

²⁰⁵⁴ Feinberg (1994: 141).

²⁰⁵⁵ Feinberg (1994: 141).

²⁰⁵⁶ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 3, 6).

²⁰⁵⁷ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 3, 6).

²⁰⁵⁸ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 3, 6).

²⁰⁵⁹ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 3, 6).

²⁰⁶⁰ Calvin (1552)(1995: 13).

²⁰⁶¹ This is logical and reasonable and also open to refinement in the future. But I reason this explanation is a superior approach to Feinberg's non-explanation.

²⁰⁶² Jackson (1941)(2006: 1). Fretheim (1994: 152).

²⁰⁶³ Moltmann (1993: 256). Calvin (1552)(1995: 415).

²⁰⁶⁴ God can create a perfect person, but God cannot logically create a perfect person with experience as such. The act of creating implies newness and inexperience. Admittedly, God could hypothetically create a being with false

possess the initial inexperience and immaturity of the first persons. It is reasonable to deduce that the problem of evil is possibly God's means of developing certain individuals to eventual Christ-like stature,²⁰⁶⁵ not sharing Christ's divinity in nature²⁰⁶⁶ but becoming like Christ in a mature and moral manner, combined with an unbreakable devotion to God.²⁰⁶⁷ It is believed that Christ will be God's lieutenant in this godless world²⁰⁶⁸ and bring about, through his crucifixion and resurrection, the promise of a better future, which includes hope.²⁰⁶⁹ The Kingdom of God was present in Christ and this has been defined in history.²⁰⁷⁰

The Resurrection

The resurrection is a complex subject that is far beyond the scope of this thesis and could easily be a topic of a large work.²⁰⁷¹ However, the traditional Reformed, Calvinistic perspective accepts the concept of an actual physical resurrection of Christ,²⁰⁷² and the eventual physical resurrection of humanity.²⁰⁷³ Erickson writes that Scripture teaches the resurrection of those who believe in Christ.²⁰⁷⁴ He also reasons it is likely that unbelievers too will be raised,²⁰⁷⁵ although this concept is not as clearly explained as is the idea of the raising of those who trust in Christ.²⁰⁷⁶

Thiessen bases the traditional Christian belief in physical resurrection in the texts from both

memories of a perfect life, but this would not be the same as having experience. I deduce the results would not be the same.

²⁰⁶⁵ Finite moral perfection and goodness but not infinite, God-like moral perfection and goodness.

²⁰⁶⁶ Isaiah 43 makes it clear there was no God formed before God and there will be no God formed after. Isaiah 44-46 make similar statements. The New American Standard Version Bible (1984: 816-821).

²⁰⁶⁷ By the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

²⁰⁶⁸ Moltmann (1993: 256).

²⁰⁶⁹ Moltmann (1993: 256).

²⁰⁷⁰ Moltmann (1993: 263).

²⁰⁷¹ The resurrection can be debated, and as shall be discussed there are progressive liberal views within Christian society, such as Gebara that will question traditional doctrines. Gebara (2002: 121). It can also be denied outright by critics. Darrow (1928)(1973: 266-267). Phillips provides a negative atheistic critique of eschatological Christian concepts in his Chapter, 'Last things.' Phillips (2005: 247-275).

²⁰⁷² Erickson (1994: 776-779).

²⁰⁷³ Erickson (1994: 1194).

²⁰⁷⁴ Erickson (1994: 1194).

²⁰⁷⁵ Erickson (1994: 1194).

²⁰⁷⁶ Erickson (1994: 1200).

Testaments²⁰⁷⁷ and describes the resurrection bodies as both physical and spiritual in nature.²⁰⁷⁸

Whale writes that the resurrection is not to be considered an addition to the Christian faith, but is the Christian faith.²⁰⁷⁹ Theologian Robert B. Sloan (1991) reasons that for early Christians the

resurrection vindicated Christ in regard to his detractors and gave his message authority.²⁰⁸⁰

Jürgen Moltmann writes that as the crucified one, the risen Christ is available for humanity.²⁰⁸¹

Moltmann explains to some the resurrection of Christ is a counter to the abandonment of humanity of God while Christ was on the cross.²⁰⁸² For certain observers Christ's resurrection for all turns them from atheism.²⁰⁸³ This may be because the historical resurrection of Christ would be viewed as God actually participating in the world to remedy the problem of evil.²⁰⁸⁴ God would not only be judging the world as he did on the cross,²⁰⁸⁵ but actually bringing about resolution to the problem of evil through Christ²⁰⁸⁶ and from a human perspective this makes a belief and trust in the Biblical God reasonable and worthwhile.

Roman Catholic, Ivone Gebara in *Out of the Depths* within the section entitled 'The cross mixed with resurrection' writes that for those within modern feminist thought it is tempting to give up the cross, which includes the idea of resurrection as the supreme symbol of Christian faith.²⁰⁸⁷ Instead of a complete abandonment of traditional resurrection, reinterpretation takes

²⁰⁷⁷ Thiessen (1956: 491).

²⁰⁷⁸ Thiessen (1956: 491).

²⁰⁷⁹ Whale (1958: 69).

²⁰⁸⁰ Sloan (1991: 449).

²⁰⁸¹ Moltmann (1993: 195).

²⁰⁸² Moltmann (1993: 195).

²⁰⁸³ Moltmann (1993: 195).

²⁰⁸⁴ Others such as Darrow, Phillips, and Flew would be very skeptical of this concept. Phillips (2005: 247-275). Darrow (1928)(1973: 266-267). Flew (1983)(1996: 92). If one does not believe in the resurrection of Christ, God's key witness to the world that he wishes to save it from the problem of evil is gone. The remedy to sin and death would be non-existent and therefore concepts of a perfected world far-fetched.

²⁰⁸⁵ Moltmann (1993: 195).

²⁰⁸⁶ Moltmann (1993: 195).

²⁰⁸⁷ Gebara (2002: 120).

place.²⁰⁸⁸ Resurrection becomes more than historical theology²⁰⁸⁹ but is the actual lived and grasped experience within the lives of women and persons.²⁰⁹⁰ Gebara notes that one can philosophically go beyond the idea of resurrection as the event following the death of a body, which is ancient idealistic theory.²⁰⁹¹ She deduces that the metaphorical resurrection of actual persons today in physical bodies is a more valuable concept than the traditional one of resurrection.²⁰⁹² C.F. Evans (1970) explains in a similar way that the use of symbolic language to describe historical figures in the context of resurrection complicates the issue of accepting the doctrine of physical resurrection.²⁰⁹³ Evans' article supports the conclusion that the traditional doctrine largely rests upon an acceptance of the New Testament data,²⁰⁹⁴ and I agree. Although I disagree with Gebara's reinterpretation of the doctrine of resurrection,²⁰⁹⁵ since this thesis involves practical theology²⁰⁹⁶ I can readily admit that it is important to deal with the problem of evil in actual physical bodies within today's world.²⁰⁹⁷ The social redemption discussed by Gebara desires a move towards dealing with the problem of evil in the midst of the trials of life,²⁰⁹⁸ and I can intellectually support this concept²⁰⁹⁹ even while maintaining a doctrinal acceptance of the actual physical resurrection of Christ²¹⁰⁰ and the eventual resurrection of humanity.²¹⁰¹

Clarence Darrow (1928)(1973) writes that resurrection of the body is purely a religious

²⁰⁸⁸ Gebara (2002: 121).

²⁰⁸⁹ Gebara (2002: 121).

²⁰⁹⁰ Gebara (2002: 122).

²⁰⁹¹ Gebara (2002: 122).

²⁰⁹² Gebara (2002: 122).

²⁰⁹³ Evans (1999: 501-503).

²⁰⁹⁴ Evans (1999: 501-503).

²⁰⁹⁵ Gebara (2002: 122).

²⁰⁹⁶ Primarily with Chapters Five and Six.

²⁰⁹⁷ Gebara (2002: 122).

²⁰⁹⁸ Gebara (2002: 124).

²⁰⁹⁹ Gebara (2002: 124).

²¹⁰⁰ Whale (1958: 65-70). Anderson (2001: 101). Mounce (1990: 369-397).

²¹⁰¹ Mounce (1990: 360).

doctrine.²¹⁰² He reasons that few intelligent persons when faced with evidence would hold to a doctrine of resurrection.²¹⁰³ He deduces that those within the New Testament era had little scientific knowledge, and therefore resurrection doctrine is a product of those with blind faith, wild dreams, hopeless hopes, and cowardly fears.²¹⁰⁴ Darrow's assumption²¹⁰⁵ would more likely be correct if the Hebrew Bible and New Testament were written by persons that were clearly writing mythological literature with the primary use of metaphorical language.²¹⁰⁶ However, as noted there are those within both conservative and liberal Christian traditions that would reason the historical writers of Scripture wrote what they saw and experienced, and therefore many of these modern scholars accept a doctrine of physical resurrection.²¹⁰⁷ Moltmann writes that after the resurrection the risen Christ appeared to his followers in order to guarantee that the glory of God and his creation would occur in the not too distance future.²¹⁰⁸ This is an ultimate of hope of a sovereignty theodicy.

5. Why do I Favour Feinberg's Approach in regard to Logical and Gratuitous Evil?

One, this first point is due to study within secular philosophy of religion and Reformed philosophical theology.²¹⁰⁹ Without becoming repetitive, as discussed I favour theistic compatibilism²¹¹⁰ over incompatibilism.²¹¹¹ I support an approach similar, but not identical to that

²¹⁰² Darrow (1928)(1973: 266).

²¹⁰³ Darrow (1928)(1973: 266).

²¹⁰⁴ Darrow (1928)(1973: 266-267).

²¹⁰⁵ Darrow (1928)(1973: 266-267).

²¹⁰⁶ This as opposed to writing historical based religious history with the use of plain literal and figurative literal language.

²¹⁰⁷ Moltmann (1993: 160-199). Erickson (1994: 1194-1204). Excepting that there are those that reinterpret such as Gebara with her feminist views. Gebara (2002: 122-124).

²¹⁰⁸ Moltmann (1993: 178).

²¹⁰⁹ I have found that secular philosophy, and in particular philosophy of religion, can be helpful explaining some philosophical terms and concepts sometimes not adequately dealt with by Christian theologians.

²¹¹⁰ Pojman (1996: 596). Stace (1952)(1976: 29). Feinberg (1994: 60).

²¹¹¹ Mawson (1999: 324). Ciocchi (2002: 46). Geisler (1986: 75).

of Feinberg.²¹¹² I reason that through my studies within philosophy of religion that there is a first cause.²¹¹³ A first cause concept avoids the great philosophical difficulty of vicious regress,²¹¹⁴ which is an infinite regression of causes that never reaches the first cause.²¹¹⁵

Philosophical theology²¹¹⁶ also points toward a first cause.²¹¹⁷ Jonathan Edwards thinks there is a major difficulty within libertarian concepts concerning free will.²¹¹⁸ If the human will determines the will and resulting choices,²¹¹⁹ since every choice must have a cause, then a chain is established where a will and choice is determined by a preceding will and choice.²¹²⁰ Therefore, if the will determines its own free acts, then every free act of will and choice is determined by a preceding act of will and choice.²¹²¹ If a preceding act of will also be of free choice, then that too was self-determined.²¹²² What Edwards is stating is that in the act of causing a free choice (choice1), the cause of that choice was also made freely (choice2), and the cause of that choice was made freely (choice3) and so on.²¹²³

This theological concept of Edwards would tie into the philosophical concept of vicious regress²¹²⁴ since with a regress it could not be determined what caused a human choice initially, because every free choice was caused by a previous free choice.²¹²⁵ Edwards instead reasoned

²¹¹² Feinberg (1994: 60).

²¹¹³ Pojman (1996: 596). Blackburn (1996: 59-60). Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 10).

²¹¹⁴ Blackburn (1996: 324).

²¹¹⁵ The problem that is attempting to be solved is never solved. Blackburn (1996: 324). Such would be the case if a cause comes from another cause 'ad infinitum' in a vicious regress. Many philosophers therefore postulate a need for a first cause, which may or may not be God.

²¹¹⁶ In particular from a Reformed perspective.

²¹¹⁷ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹¹⁸ Which would correspond to modern concepts of libertarian free will and incompatibilism.

²¹¹⁹ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹²⁰ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹²¹ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹²² Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹²³ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹²⁴ Blackburn (1996: 324).

²¹²⁵ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

that human choices were a result of human nature originally created by and within God's will.²¹²⁶ God therefore wills all things, and is the primary cause of all actions.²¹²⁷ I reason human actions, and any angelic or demonic actions would be accepted as a secondary cause²¹²⁸ in order to avoid concepts of hard determinism, where only God or the first cause would be morally responsible for acts.²¹²⁹ Blackburn counters that some form of metaphysical libertarianism²¹³⁰ postulates that free choice is not causally determined, but is also not random.²¹³¹ It is suggested that an agency situated outside of human nature,²¹³² in regard to making human choice, is possible but likely 'fantasy.'²¹³³ It appears human choice should be traced back to human nature.²¹³⁴

A major disagreement I have with Plantinga's incompatibilism²¹³⁵ is that it does not allow for God to be the antecedent cause of significantly free human actions.²¹³⁶ John Hick also sides with incompatibilism in regard to God and human beings which shall be discussed in the next Chapter.²¹³⁷ I instead favour the cause argument of Edwards²¹³⁸ and the compatibilism of Feinberg.²¹³⁹ I reason, based on the philosophical and theological presentation above, that the compatibilism of a Reformed theodicy better deals with problems associated with the logical problem of evil and gratuitous evil than do incompatibilist perspectives.²¹⁴⁰ God is explained in a

²¹²⁶ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹²⁷ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹²⁸ Pojman (1996: 596). Stace (1952)(1976: 29).

²¹²⁹ Pojman and Stace both state a secondary cause must freely commit acts in order to be significantly morally accountable. Pojman (1996: 596). Stace (1952)(1976: 29).

²¹³⁰ Blackburn (1996: 218).

²¹³¹ Blackburn (1996: 218).

²¹³² It appears Blackburn is discussing a human agency.

²¹³³ Blackburn (1996: 218).

²¹³⁴ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2). Blackburn (1996: 218). Within my Reformed world view I reason God created this nature and simultaneously influences and wills all human choice.

²¹³⁵ Plantinga (1982: 166). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

²¹³⁶ Plantinga (1982: 166). Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998: 3).

²¹³⁷ Hick, contrary to Flew and Mackie, states it was not logically possible for God to create human beings so they would freely respond to him in love and faith. Although Hick reasons people could be made in a way by God that they always did right toward one another. Hick (1970: 308).

²¹³⁸ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²¹³⁹ Feinberg (1994: 60).

²¹⁴⁰ Most notably, Plantinga and Hick.

reasonable logical manner²¹⁴¹ as being in charge of creation and therefore through Christ is also able to restore creation.²¹⁴²

Two, John Hick's approach to Scripture is to look at much of it metaphorically.²¹⁴³ Although his theodicy does have some merit,²¹⁴⁴ I reason by not looking at Scripture contextually, and instead assuming that it is not to be taken literally as metaphor in many cases,²¹⁴⁵ his theodicy becomes hyper-speculative.²¹⁴⁶ I am not a fundamentalist, and do not reason Scripture should at every point be read plain literally,²¹⁴⁷ but where contexts suggests,²¹⁴⁸ Scripture should be read within the genre intended which could include figurative language.²¹⁴⁹ I reason that the Reformed approach to reading Scripture in context²¹⁵⁰ is more beneficial to producing a realistic functional theodicy,²¹⁵¹ than is Hick's approach.²¹⁵² This should not be interpreted as a complete dismissal of soul-making²¹⁵³ or related soul-building concepts, as I view this as a reasonable concept within Hick's approach.²¹⁵⁴

In my mind, the concept compatibilism, although the term is not used,²¹⁵⁵ is implied in Scripture. The subject of predestination for salvation, for example, is a complex theological discussion and could be a topic for a Biblical Greek thesis.²¹⁵⁶ However, within Ephesians 1,²¹⁵⁷

²¹⁴¹ This is not to imply that incompatibilistic views are not often also logical and reasonable.

²¹⁴² Mounce (1990: 368-397).

²¹⁴³ Hick (1970: 172). This will be discussed in Chapter Four. He wrote, for example, in 1993 *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*, Louisville, Kentucky, John Know Press.

²¹⁴⁴ Which shall be seen in my review.

²¹⁴⁵ Hick (1970: 172).

²¹⁴⁶ Roth complains that it is overly optimistic in its speculation. Roth in Davis (2001: 62).

²¹⁴⁷ To read anything plain literally when grammar and context provide reasons to read the text otherwise, would be non-academic and philosophically troubling.

²¹⁴⁸ Fretheim (1994: 153). La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush (1987: 72).

²¹⁴⁹ Fretheim (1994: 153). La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush (1987: 72).

²¹⁵⁰ Franke (2005: 9). Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 4 Volume 1).

²¹⁵¹ The idea being to let God speak, since God is the one being questioned in the context of theodicy.

²¹⁵² Hick (1970: 172).

²¹⁵³ Hick (1970: 292).

²¹⁵⁴ Hick (1970: 292).

²¹⁵⁵ The term being a modern philosophical one.

²¹⁵⁶ This is not a Biblical Studies PhD and I was therefore advised to limit my Biblical work within this thesis, but I seek accuracy in my Biblical interpretations.

‘predestined’ which is προορίσας²¹⁵⁸ within Ephesians 1: 5,²¹⁵⁹ and in the context is ‘predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ’²¹⁶⁰ and προορισθέντες²¹⁶¹ at Ephesians 1: 11, as in ‘we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to his purpose’²¹⁶² appear to

support Reformed compatibilist notions. Strong defines προορίζω²¹⁶³ □ which is

the root word connected to the forms of the word in Ephesians 1, as to limit in advance in figurative terms,²¹⁶⁴ and to predetermine, determine before, ordain, and predestinate.²¹⁶⁵

Bauer defines the root word as meaning to decide before hand, predestine of God and applies this definition to Ephesians 1: 5 and

²¹⁵⁷ A key Chapter for Reformed views on compatibilism.

²¹⁵⁸ The Greek New Testament (1993: 654).

²¹⁵⁹ The Greek New Testament (1993: 654).

²¹⁶⁰ The New American Standard Version Bible (1984: 1322).

²¹⁶¹ The Greek New Testament (1993: 655).

²¹⁶² The New American Standard Version Bible (1984: 1322).

²¹⁶³ Strong (1890)(1986: 81).

²¹⁶⁴ Strong (1890)(1986: 81).

²¹⁶⁵ Strong (1890)(1986: 81).

11.²¹⁶⁶ Minimally, there appears reasonable textual support from this verse²¹⁶⁷ that could support a Reformed compatibilistic perspective on how God chooses persons for his ultimate culminated Kingdom.

There are incompatibilist, evangelical counters to the Reformed view.²¹⁶⁸ Ephesians scholar Francis Foulkes (1989) explains that predestination is not in opposition to human free will.²¹⁶⁹ The gospel of grace was offered to all

²¹⁶⁶ Bauer (1979: 709).

²¹⁶⁷ I realize many other verses could be examined concerning this subject. I provide Ephesians 1 as a prime Reformed example within a limited space allotted for this topic.

²¹⁶⁸ Foulkes (1989: 55).

²¹⁶⁹ Foulkes (1989: 55).

persons,²¹⁷⁰ and those persons that accepted the message were elected.²¹⁷¹ Foulkes insists that the human faith required rests totally on God and not in self.²¹⁷² Foulkes then shifts the issue to the idea that election is not simply salvation, but also holiness of life.²¹⁷³ He defines predestined as ‘marked beforehand.’²¹⁷⁴ It is understood as a divine, eternal plan.²¹⁷⁵ Foulkes presentation is commendable and reasonable and although his

²¹⁷⁰ Foulkes (1989: 55). Browning (1997: 301).

²¹⁷¹ Foulkes (1989: 55). Browning writes that the New Testament does not state that those that reject this offer are damned to hell. Browning (1997: 301).

²¹⁷² Foulkes (1989: 55). Frankly, Foulkes does not explain how this works within his incompatibilistic system.

²¹⁷³ Foulkes (1989: 55). I can agree that God does work out holiness in his people.

²¹⁷⁴ Foulkes (1989: 56).

²¹⁷⁵ Foulkes (1989: 56).

definition is similar to that of Strong²¹⁷⁶ and Bauer,²¹⁷⁷ he appears to downplay a deterministic aspect of the word.²¹⁷⁸ I do not agree, but inevitably, even with the use of linguistic sources there is room for debate and I lean toward a compatibilistic understanding based on Ephesians 1.²¹⁷⁹ Browning, an Oxford New Testament scholar,²¹⁸⁰ also sides with a view similar to Foulkes noting that God has a plan of salvation for humanity and persons may freely

²¹⁷⁶ Strong (1890)(1986: 81).

²¹⁷⁷ Bauer (1979: 709).

²¹⁷⁸ Foulkes (1989: 55-56).

²¹⁷⁹ I can still consider incompatibilistic notions and other perspectives, when needed.

²¹⁸⁰ Browning (1997: i). Browning provides an Anglican perspective.

accept or reject this plan on a personal basis.²¹⁸¹

Within Reformed theology, election is based on God's plan and initiative to save the elect,²¹⁸² as opposed to primarily foreknowledge²¹⁸³ of human acceptance of the gospel message within a Reformed, Calvinistic framework.

Schelling also presents a view on predestination²¹⁸⁴ that human beings act today as they have always acted since 'eternity' and at the beginning of creation.²¹⁸⁵ Persons continue to act wickedly because in eternity human beings took a stand in 'egotism and selfishness.'²¹⁸⁶

Within this view, passion and desire which can at times go wrong, represent freedom in the

²¹⁸¹ Browning (1997: 301).

²¹⁸² Calvin (1543)(1996: 200).

²¹⁸³ Thiessen (1956: 344).

²¹⁸⁴ Schelling (1845)(1936: 66).

²¹⁸⁵ Schelling (1845)(1936: 66). Creation is not passive and is dynamic and in constant activity. Gutmann (1845)(1936: xxiii). This non-passive activity included rebellion within Schelling's view.

²¹⁸⁶ Schelling (1845)(1936: 66).

nature of human beings.²¹⁸⁷ All persons are born with a ‘dark principle of evil attached to them.’²¹⁸⁸ Persons can be good, even with this darkness through ‘divine transmutation.’²¹⁸⁹ This non-traditional perspective would view human beings as predestined to commit evil²¹⁹⁰ but allows for God to still work good within persons.²¹⁹¹

I reason that the Bible when taken in proper context,²¹⁹² provides some important insights²¹⁹³

²¹⁸⁷ Gutmann (1845)(1936: xxv).

²¹⁸⁸ Gutmann (1845)(1936: xxv).

²¹⁸⁹ Schelling (1845)(1936: 66).

²¹⁹⁰ Schelling (1845)(1936: 66).

²¹⁹¹ Schelling (1845)(1936: 66).

²¹⁹² Franke (2005: 9). Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 4 Volume 1).

into the logical and gratuitous problems of evil, and I favour the Reformed perspective strongly without negating the other views, including incompatibilism, in an unfair manner.

Although I am a theist, I readily admit that atheists too have some good insights²¹⁹⁴ at times, as for example Flew²¹⁹⁵ and Mackie²¹⁹⁶ make some reasonable criticisms of Plantinga's work as discussed in Chapter Two.

²¹⁹³ Admittedly they are non-exhaustive. This is a major reason why we have discussions in regard to theodicy as God is not crystal clear concerning the issue in Scripture.

²¹⁹⁴ I personally relate to many of the objections raised against an all-powerful, good God in this world filled with evil. I simply reason God has perfect motives and a track record in Christ, whereas an atheist would have unbelief. This does not mean we do not share a mutual hatred of much evil and suffering.

²¹⁹⁵ Flew (1955: 150-153).

²¹⁹⁶ Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

My theological and philosophical²¹⁹⁷ explanations for the support of compatibilism and my Biblical exegesis²¹⁹⁸ demonstrates a teleological²¹⁹⁹ logical Reformed perspective within the theodicy. There is solid academic evidence of a teleological divine plan²²⁰⁰ where the problem of evil is willingly allowed, dealt with via Christ, and a Kingdom ultimately established. These perspectives and the overall thesis presentation provide reasonable

²¹⁹⁷ Within the study of philosophy of religion.

²¹⁹⁸ An important example of Biblical information and argumentation used within Reformed theology was provided without turning this work into a major presentation of Biblical studies.

²¹⁹⁹ Bloesch defines teleological as a word coming from the Greek *telos*, or end, where the emphasis is on goals and consequences. Bloesch (1987: 19).

²²⁰⁰ Bloesch (1987: 19).

argumentation on why sovereignty perspectives support divine justice as opposed to refuting it.²²⁰¹

Now of course there are plenty of theistic²²⁰² and atheistic²²⁰³ perspectives that attempt to refute it, and as noted they have their merits.²²⁰⁴ I have not duplicated Feinberg's presentation and the statistical analysis in Chapter Five²²⁰⁵ will add an original aspect to this work.

6. The Problem of Evil in regard to Justice for

²²⁰¹ Non-Reformed theistic and atheistic objections have been noted and dealt with. My Reformed theodicy has been influenced by these other views. The questionnaire results also impact my view, in particular in how theodicy is presented to the Church.

²²⁰² In particular Plantinga and also Augustine to a lesser extent, as well as in future Chapters, Hick's progressive theodicy and the empirical work of Dutch theologians.

²²⁰³ Notably Flew, Mackie and Phillips, as well as Hume.

²²⁰⁴ This theodicy is admittedly speculative within a Biblical framework influenced by philosophical theology and secular philosophy of religion. There is always room for reconsidering old concepts and considering new ones.

²²⁰⁵ This allows questionnaire respondents to agree or disagree with my Reformed theodicy.

Non-Believers

In the previous section I discussed some concepts on predestination²²⁰⁶ and how God will save some of humanity within Reformed²²⁰⁷ and non-Reformed concepts.²²⁰⁸ I reason that my work in theodicy is for both persons within the Christian Church and outside of it. I was not born into a moderate conservative tradition,²²⁰⁹ or a Reformed Christian tradition and came to this position mainly through academic study, and in

²²⁰⁶ Strong (1890)(1986: 81). Bauer (1979: 709). Foulkes (1989: 55). Schelling (1845)(1936: 66).

²²⁰⁷ Influenced by Feinberg's theodicy.

²²⁰⁸ Foulkes (1989: 55). Schelling (1845)(1936: 66).

²²⁰⁹ I was born into the progressive tradition of the United Church of Canada. I am through academic study moderately conservative theologically and not fundamentalistic as noted.

particular through my MPhil and PhD studies via the University of Wales.²²¹⁰ When I present my theodicy work from a Reformed perspective I see it as a learned perspective and not primarily or largely an assumed one, and so if non-believers read my work I reason that they may too be impacted in a similar way. John Calvin points out that preaching and teaching the word of God impacts a person to believe in Christ.²²¹¹ The Holy Spirit works through

²²¹⁰ At Bangor and Lampeter respectively.

²²¹¹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 34).

preaching to impact a person,²²¹² that if saved
does not eventually believe and work for Christ
through primarily human ‘wisdom’,²²¹³ or by
‘chance.’²²¹⁴ The gospel is only ‘granted to a few
without human aid’²²¹⁵ and most will believe
through the assistance of some sort of human
agency.²²¹⁶ I therefore see my thesis work as a
human means²²¹⁷ by which the Christian message
through a Reformed lens can be presented.²²¹⁸

Since I reason a sovereignty perspective is

²²¹² Calvin (1543)(1996: 34).

²²¹³ Calvin (1543)(1996: 34).

²²¹⁴ Calvin (1543)(1996: 34).

²²¹⁵ Calvin (1543)(1996: 34).

²²¹⁶ Calvin (1543)(1996: 34).

²²¹⁷ Calvin (1543)(1996: 34).

²²¹⁸ I also present my views on the problem of evil at Church and with believers and non-believers alike on Blogger and Facebook.

the most workable and likely theodicy approach,²²¹⁹ I am presenting it to those outside of the Church in the hope that they will be impacted. This gospel associated theodicy view allows for the possibility of forgiveness of sins within the atonement for persons²²²⁰ and for persons to experience the ultimate justice of God's culminated Kingdom.²²²¹ Bloesch explains that in the context of atonement and justice²²²² with God's holiness he forgives and forbears

²²¹⁹ But not the only approach with some good and reasonable points, as there are valuable points from non-Reformed theists and atheists within this work.

²²²⁰ Green (1971: iii). Whale (1958: 81).

²²²¹ Mounce explains that the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20 is not an arbitrary judgment of God but is based on the works of each person. Mounce (1990: 365-366). It is sign of the ultimate justice of God for all persons.

²²²² Bloesch (1987: 97).

and demonstrates his love.²²²³ There is within my theodicy concepts of ultimate justice²²²⁴ and deliverance from the problem of evil and its results,²²²⁵ but as a Christian scholar attempting to be as accurate in understanding as possible, I must include the concept that sin must first be atoned for in Christ²²²⁶ before a person can experience the benefits of a culminated Kingdom free from evil and suffering.²²²⁷ G.C.

²²²³ Bloesch (1987: 97).

²²²⁴ Mounce (1990: 365-366).

²²²⁵ Feinberg (1994: 141). Moltmann (1993: 178). Mounce (1990: 372).

²²²⁶ Green (1971: iii). Whale (1958: 81). On this matter I do not see myself as a judge of those outside of Christ, but rather as one reporting within the best of my ability, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what Scripture states about human sin and salvation.

²²²⁷ Sin, death and suffering will not exist in the culminated Kingdom. Mounce (1990: 372).

Berkouwer explains that ‘Man²²²⁸ is-even when alienated from God-not alone.’²²²⁹ God has still gifted fallen humanity²²³⁰ and there is a possible limitation to human corruption, that being the grace of Christ and his words and work.²²³¹ God still has the power and opportunity to save persons,²²³² and humanly speaking²²³³ persons have an opportunity to know Christ in conversion.²²³⁴

²²²⁸ I prefer the term humankind.

²²²⁹ Berkouwer (1962: 183).

²²³⁰ Berkouwer (1962: 186).

²²³¹ Berkouwer (1962: 192).

²²³² Berkouwer (1962: 192).

²²³³ Within a compatibilistic framework.

²²³⁴ Berkouwer (1962: 192-193).

Ivan Gebara²²³⁵ could raise some objections to a Reformed view of humanly attempting to convert persons through the Holy Spirit.²²³⁶ The cross of Christ as a universal for salvation is ‘denounced’ by feminists.²²³⁷ A concern being that women’s suffering are overlooked within a male dominated atonement.²²³⁸ In a somewhat similar way Brown raises issues about the suffering of the poor.²²³⁹ He desires liberation for those within third world²²⁴⁰ today from suffering

²²³⁵ Gebara (2002: 118).

²²³⁶ Calvin (1543)(1996: 34).

²²³⁷ Gebara (2002: 118).

²²³⁸ Gebara (2002: 118).

²²³⁹ Brown (1984: 89-104).

²²⁴⁰ Or developing world.

and oppression.²²⁴¹ A reasonable view of Reformed soteriology²²⁴² and theodicy should be very concerned with the everyday lives of women and the poor,²²⁴³ and all persons. Even in light of concepts of ultimate salvation²²⁴⁴ there needs to be the Christian desire to save people daily from the results of evil.²²⁴⁵ The Christian Church should be involved with, in a non-Biblical sense, atoning and covering for sin,²²⁴⁶ within the context of this temporal world by helping those within society in need. Justice should be sought for all, and especially those in the world that have been abused and negated.²²⁴⁷

7. Summary and Practical Theology

²²⁴¹ Brown (1984: 89-104).

²²⁴² The study of concepts of salvation. In particular the work of Christ and the triune God in that regard. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 108).

²²⁴³ Gebara (2002: 118). Brown (1984: 89-104).

²²⁴⁴ Berkouwer (1962: 192). Mounce (1990: 372).

²²⁴⁵ Brown (1984: 89-104).

²²⁴⁶ The atonement of Christ covers the sins of those in the everlasting Kingdom, but the present Christian Church needs to attempt to cover and alleviate sin and suffering in a fallen world through good works.

²²⁴⁷ Brown (1984: 89-104).

Three practical theological ramifications of an acceptance of sovereignty theodicy will be briefly discussed.

First, since within Reformed, Calvinist thought God is sovereign²²⁴⁸ and uses divine providence²²⁴⁹ God is ultimately responsible for the problem of evil. Calvin writes that God's motives remain pure in the simultaneous willing of human actions that are sinful and evil.²²⁵⁰ Calvin believed that human beings and their actions were the secondary causes of primary causes willed by God.²²⁵¹ God's motives in willing an action would work toward the greater good even while human beings freely sinned.²²⁵² Practically speaking, does this mean that for most within the Reformed, Calvinist tradition God should be viewed as the primary cause of many hardships in life? I believe that the honest and consistent answer must be yes. Since God is believed to be infinite, omnipotent, and sovereign and willingly with the use of soft determinism causes things to occur,²²⁵³ the evil that befalls an individual from a Reformed, Calvinist perspective is in a sense from God.²²⁵⁴ Clark Pinnock would counter that God is not the primary cause of evil²²⁵⁵ as he limits himself within creation in order not to prohibit human freedom,²²⁵⁶ and this would lead to the human problem of evil.²²⁵⁷ This idea, however, would not be suitable for many Calvinists and those who are Reformed, as Jonathan Edwards writes that God controls all things.²²⁵⁸ The sovereignty approach can present the remedy for the problem of evil in a practical sense, not just

²²⁴⁸ Pink (1968: 20). Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 528 Volume 1). Edwards (1729)(2006: 414).

²²⁴⁹ Boulnois (2002: 444). Hughes (1990: 45). Reichenbach (1986: 115).

²²⁵⁰ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

²²⁵¹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 38).

²²⁵² Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

²²⁵³ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

²²⁵⁴ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40). Edwards (1729)(2006: 414).

²²⁵⁵ Pinnock (1986: 108-109).

²²⁵⁶ Pinnock (1986: 108-109).

²²⁵⁷ Pinnock (1986: 108-109).

²²⁵⁸ Edwards (1729)(2006: 414).

primarily philosophically.²²⁵⁹ The approach needs to focus on the idea that the triune God consummates his Kingdom and gives things meaning.²²⁶⁰ It seems rather meaningless for a Christian to readily accept a notion of God willing all things for a greater good within a theological system when the greater good is not vividly practically explained within the system, at least in general ultimate terms.²²⁶¹

Second, God is showing love within this system by allowing significant human freedom and not using compulsion to counter it,²²⁶² and is also showing love through the work of Christ.²²⁶³ This love of God needs to be presented within a Calvinistic sovereignty theodicy. God's love may often be an overlooked idea within some Reformed, and Calvinist writings, and this may be because Calvinism is a largely philosophical system of theology.²²⁶⁴ Pinnock replies to Feinberg within 'God Ordains All Things' in *Predestination and Freewill* that Calvinistic thinking on the issue of God's will is often remote in regard to the experience of real people.²²⁶⁵ This is a reasonable criticism of Calvinism based on its overall philosophical nature.²²⁶⁶ This is not to imply that Calvinists do not discuss the love of God, as Calvinist Millard J. Erickson explains that God demonstrates his love through benevolence, grace, mercy, and persistence.²²⁶⁷ The love of God and Christ needs to be demonstrated within a Calvinistic sovereignty theodicy in order to serve as an effective form of practical theology for those suffering.

Third, the logical and reasonable nature of the sovereignty theodicy offers one suffering

²²⁵⁹ This is where empirical theology can be beneficial.

²²⁶⁰ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 78). Moltmann (1993: 338). Mounce (1990: 369-397).

²²⁶¹ I can admit this can be a weakness within sometimes overly philosophical Reformed approaches.

²²⁶² Calvin (1543)(1996: 68).

²²⁶³ Williams (2007: 108-109). Whale (1958: 71-93). Moltmann (1993: 227).

²²⁶⁴ Green (1971: 2).

²²⁶⁵ Pinnock (1986: 60).

²²⁶⁶ Pinnock (1986: 60). Green (1971: 2).

²²⁶⁷ Erickson (1994: 292).

with the problem of evil a viable answer to the problem.²²⁶⁸ However, even as critics have made reasonable criticisms of Feinberg's type of work,²²⁶⁹ his theodicy is logical and reasonable.²²⁷⁰ If a philosophical and theological point of view is not tenable then it cannot offer any possible legitimate practical theological support for one suffering.²²⁷¹ There is at least an intellectual possibility of building a helpful practical theology for those suffering with the problem of evil that hold to Reformed, Calvinistic theology.²²⁷² I hope to accomplish this through the evaluation of the empirical data.²²⁷³

CHAPTER FOUR

JOHN HICK: SOUL-MAKING THEODICY

1. Introduction

Soul-Making Theodicy Definition

In 1966 British philosopher of religion, John Hick, wrote his first edition of *Evil and The God of Love*. Hick sees soul-making²²⁷⁴ as the developmental process by which human beings

²²⁶⁸ Feinberg (1994: 124).

²²⁶⁹ I have made several criticisms myself.

²²⁷⁰ Erickson (1994: 292).

²²⁷¹ Although admittedly it can be incorrectly understood by some to be tenable.

²²⁷² To be further discussed in Chapter Five and the Appendix.

²²⁷³ Within Chapter Six and the Appendix.

²²⁷⁴ In my mind, soul-building would also be a reasonable term for this theory.

become the perfected creatures that God intended.²²⁷⁵ This is an evolutionary process,²²⁷⁶ but not one that takes place naturalistically or scientifically.²²⁷⁷ Soul-making is a method by which human beings experience the problem of evil through hazardous disobedience to God and a willful desire to commit actions that are not always pleasing to the creator.²²⁷⁸ Phillips writes concerning this general type of approach, that without the existence of evil, character development would not place.²²⁷⁹ For Hick, the development that would take place in humanity was not one of gradual human improvement throughout generations,²²⁸⁰ but was instead an individual process in each and every person.²²⁸¹ This type of approach allows God to mould human character.²²⁸² Phillips views a moral development theory as incoherent,²²⁸³ as it creates an immoral indulgence of human beings to self,²²⁸⁴ as in their own personal development.²²⁸⁵ Persons should instead be more concerned with other persons reasons Phillips.²²⁸⁶

Hick maintains the Irenean type of theodicy is a traditional perspective within the Christian faith that existed in its earliest days.²²⁸⁷ Meghan Ramsay (2004) explains that Hick attempts a theodicy within the Irenean approach, as opposed to the Augustinian one which he calls the majority report within Christian tradition.²²⁸⁸ Hick views the approach of Irenaeus

²²⁷⁵ Hick (1970: 292). Phillips discusses the similar idea of ‘Evil as Opportunities for Character Development.’

Phillips (2005: 56).

²²⁷⁶ Hick (1970: 292). It is not primarily a scientific presentation.

²²⁷⁷ Hick (1970: 292).

²²⁷⁸ Hick (1970: 292).

²²⁷⁹ Phillips (2005: 56).

²²⁸⁰ Hick (1970: 292).

²²⁸¹ Hick (1970: 292).

²²⁸² Phillips (2005: 56).

²²⁸³ Phillips (2005: 58).

²²⁸⁴ Phillips (2005: 58).

²²⁸⁵ Phillips (2005: 58).

²²⁸⁶ Phillips (2005: 58). In support of Hick and my own theories of human development, I reason that spiritual building need not be necessarily only self focused. For example, in Matthew 22 and Mark 12 Jesus tells the listener to love others as self. Within spiritual development one could and should seek to love and assist others.

²²⁸⁷ Hick (1970: 221).

²²⁸⁸ Ramsay (2004: 2).

(ca.130-ca.200)²²⁸⁹ as the minority report.²²⁹⁰ According to John C. McDowell (2005), Hick believes that an Irenaean type theodicy distinguishes between the image of God and likeness of God.²²⁹¹ Hick writes in *Evil and the God of Love* that Irenaeus viewed the image of God, which resides in the human bodily form, as representing God's nature allowing human beings to fellowship with their creator.²²⁹² The likeness of God was humanity's final perfection by the work of God's Holy Spirit.²²⁹³ Irenaeus within *Against Heresies* (c 175-185)(2005) did draw a distinction between image and likeness.²²⁹⁴ The image is a fixed nature within human beings²²⁹⁵ while likeness varies depending on how close a person follows God.²²⁹⁶ Father Anthony Zimmerman (1999) notes that to Irenaeus, the image represented the spiritual essence of an individual, while the likeness was the sanctifying presence in which a person became a son of God.²²⁹⁷

Rejecting the Augustinian tradition that humanity was made perfect and then rebelled against God becoming corrupt,²²⁹⁸ Hick explains in his 2001 presentation found in *Encountering Evil* that the Irenaean type of theodicy takes place in two phases.²²⁹⁹ In phase one God creates humanity imperfect and underdeveloped.²³⁰⁰ They develop over perhaps millions of years through biological evolution to possess the image of God.²³⁰¹ Once humanity reaches a certain level of maturity they complete this stage and exist in the image of God.²³⁰² When this image of

²²⁸⁹ Ferguson (1996: 569).

²²⁹⁰ Ramsay (2004: 2).

²²⁹¹ McDowell (2005: 1).

²²⁹² Hick (1970: 217).

²²⁹³ Hick (1970: 217).

²²⁹⁴ Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book II: Chapter 34: 4). Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book II: Chapter 7: 2).

²²⁹⁵ Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book II: Chapter 34: 4).

²²⁹⁶ Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book II: Chapter 7: 2).

²²⁹⁷ Zimmerman (1999: 1).

²²⁹⁸ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²²⁹⁹ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²³⁰⁰ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²³⁰¹ McDowell (2005: 1).

²³⁰² Ramsay (2004: 2).

God exists humanity has the potential for a relationship with their creator.²³⁰³

According to Hick, within the second phase humanity becomes intelligent, ethical and religious.²³⁰⁴ It is evolving towards the likeness of God which includes achieving goodness and personal worth.²³⁰⁵ In the process of humanity becoming like God, soul-making can take place, but it must occur with human beings possessing significant freedom away from their creator's direct influence.²³⁰⁶ Hick deduces that human beings must have an epistemic²³⁰⁷ distance from their maker in order to develop an uncoerced consciousness of God.²³⁰⁸ According to R. Douglas Geivett in his 1993 book *Evil and the Evidence for God*, Hick contends that if persons lived in the immediate presence of God, significant freedom to make moral choices would be precluded and thus an epistemic distance, a distance between God and created persons, must exist between humanity and God.²³⁰⁹ Hick's concept of epistemic distance is an important aspect of his theodicy as human beings who possess the image of God, but an imperfect likeness, inevitably create moral evil.²³¹⁰ Epistemic distance results in moral evil as human beings struggle within a hostile environment apart from God's direct rule and guidance.²³¹¹ God is therefore not clearly and overwhelmingly evident to his creation with this view.²³¹²

Hick (1978) deduces in 'Present and Future Life' that once a human being dies a conscious personality continues to exist.²³¹³ He concludes that for soul-making to succeed post-

²³⁰³ McDowell (2005: 1).

²³⁰⁴ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²³⁰⁵ Ramsay (2004: 2).

²³⁰⁶ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

²³⁰⁷ Epistemology is the theory of knowledge which includes origins of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and reason. Blackburn (1996: 123).

²³⁰⁸ Hick in Davis (2001: 48). Phillips writes this is a distance that separates God from his created beings. Phillips (2005: 164).

²³⁰⁹ Geivett (1993: 36).

²³¹⁰ Geivett (1993: 36).

²³¹¹ McDowell (2005: 2). Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

²³¹² Phillips (2005: 165).

²³¹³ Hick (1978: 12).

mortem²³¹⁴ existence must include the ability to make moral and spiritual choices.²³¹⁵ Robert Smid (1999) comments that Hick trusts all of humanity will complete their soul-making via the afterlife, as a loving God must desire the salvation of all people.²³¹⁶ Hick believes that since God has perfect knowledge of the human heart he, in patience, would eventually succeed in bringing all persons in devotion to him.²³¹⁷ Geivett reasons that for Hick, the eschatological²³¹⁸ fulfillment of God's soul-making plan must include universal perfection of every human being made by God.²³¹⁹ Hick subscribes to universalism,²³²⁰ which John Ankerberg and John Weldon (1999) write in *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*,²³²¹ is the theological idea that salvation is universal and therefore each person will eventually be redeemed in heaven.²³²² Kreeft and Tacelli explain that universalism is universal salvation and has been considered by some well known orthodox Christians over the centuries²³²³ as a viable alternative to hell, although Kreeft and Tacelli reject this alternative.²³²⁴

Author's Viewpoints

By Hick's definition,²³²⁵ my sovereignty theodicy position would fit within the

²³¹⁴ After death is meant.

²³¹⁵ Hick (1978: 13).

²³¹⁶ Smid (1999: 12).

²³¹⁷ Hick (1970: 381).

²³¹⁸ Thiessen describes eschatology as the Biblical doctrine of the last things, which includes the Second Advent, the resurrection of humanity, final judgment from God, the millennium and the final state of God's creation. Thiessen (1956: 440).

²³¹⁹ Geivett (1993: 36).

²³²⁰ Hick (1970: 381).

²³²¹ The title of this text is a bit misleading as it offers more than encyclopedia type referencing for words and concepts but presents scholarly chapters on religious movements the authors view as cultic.

²³²² Ankerberg and Weldon (1999: 503).

²³²³ This would, of course, provide another opportunity for a PhD thesis.

²³²⁴ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 286).

²³²⁵ Hick (1970: 121-143).

Augustinian tradition,²³²⁶ and therefore outside of his Irenean approach.²³²⁷ In agreement with Augustine and Feinberg,²³²⁸ I would postulate that humanity from a traditional perspective was created in the image and likeness of God,²³²⁹ spiritually in tune with their creator, perfectly moral and not sinful.²³³⁰ However, I deduce that original humanity was spiritually and morally immature, and inexperienced.²³³¹ As discussed in Chapter Three, due to lack of experience with God, the initial persons were spiritually and morally immature in relation to their creator, in comparison to what later human beings who would experience the problem of evil, atonement, and restoration would become in regard to spiritual maturity. The idea of the fall from conservative and liberal views has been discussed in Chapters Two and Three, but I would deduce that since Genesis 3 describes this event, it is plausible a literal Adam and Eve were initially morally perfect without sin and eventually fell in corruption.²³³² It is also possible that the somewhat metaphorical language of Genesis²³³³ allows for the Adam and Eve story to be describing a fall from God's plan for humanity in general, and not specifically two initial persons.²³³⁴ I do agree with Hick that some type of soul-making is an important reason for God to willingly allow the problem of evil.²³³⁵ However, there will be points of both agreement and disagreement on how this may be completed by God.

²³²⁶ This would be a broad perspective from Hick's view. I would rather define my theodicy as Reformed as opposed to Augustinian. This can be deduced through the reviews in Chapters Two and Three.

²³²⁷ Hick (1970: 121-143).

²³²⁸ That have shown within this thesis to not have identical or near identical perspectives.

²³²⁹ Genesis 1:26 states God created human beings in both his image and likeness. The New American Standard Version Bible (1984: 2). Victor P. Hamilton in *Handbook on the Pentateuch* notes three possible reasons for the writer of Genesis using these terms together: (1) The terms image and likeness may be interchangeable, in other words synonyms for each other. (2) The word likeness may modify the word image. This is done to avoid the idea that man is an exact copy of God. (3) The term likeness amplifies the term image as human beings are not simply representative of God, but representational. Hamilton (1988: 26-27).

²³³⁰ As can be understood within Chapters Two and Three within this thesis.

²³³¹ Even if Adam and Eve or original persons were made as mature adults they could not logically be made with experience as noted within Chapter Three.

²³³² Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 133-136).

²³³³ Fretheim (1994: 152).

²³³⁴ Fretheim (1994: 153).

²³³⁵ Hick in Davis (2001: 51).

My concept of original human immaturity is not identical to Hick's. I accept that when in Genesis 1:26, God is said to have created humanity in his image and likeness,²³³⁶ that this was part of their original nature.²³³⁷ H.L. Ellison (1986) explains that in the beginning human beings were made in God's image and likeness²³³⁸ in order that they could have dominion over animal creation and have communion with God.²³³⁹ If a literal explanation of Genesis 1:26 is accepted²³⁴⁰ then it seems plausible that both the image and likeness of God were given to humanity from the start, and I lean towards this understanding.²³⁴¹ As discussed in Chapter Two, scholars such as Fretheim, La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush explain that Genesis is written with the use of metaphorical language and so an interpretation such as Hick's, that is not literal in regard to the image and likeness of God, is an intellectual possibility.²³⁴² Erickson thinks that Irenaeus views the image of God as being human resemblance to the creator with reason and will,²³⁴³ and the likeness of God was the moral qualities of their maker.²³⁴⁴ This is a reasonable understanding of Irenaeus' view,²³⁴⁵ but even if this separation between image and likeness is accepted, it is plausible that the image and likeness occur in persons simultaneously.²³⁴⁶ I would therefore theorize that original human spiritual immaturity was not due to humanity lacking a likeness to God.²³⁴⁷ Rather, original people could have been created morally perfect within what Hick calls an Augustinian model.²³⁴⁸ I subscribe to a Reformed, Calvinistic sovereignty model, and I have explained throughout this thesis that Augustinian and Calvinistic models and traditions are

²³³⁶ Hamilton (1982: 26-27).

²³³⁷ Hamilton (1982: 26-27).

²³³⁸ Ellison (1986: 115). Hamilton (1982: 26-27).

²³³⁹ Ellison (1986: 115).

²³⁴⁰ Hamilton (1982: 26-27).

²³⁴¹ Ellison (1986: 115). Hamilton (1982: 26-27).

²³⁴² Fretheim (1994: 153). La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush (1987: 72).

²³⁴³ Erickson (1994: 500-501).

²³⁴⁴ Erickson (1994: 500-501).

²³⁴⁵ Erickson (1994: 500-501). Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

²³⁴⁶ Erickson (1994: 500-501).

²³⁴⁷ Hamilton (1982: 26-27). Ellison (1986: 115).

²³⁴⁸ Hick (1970: 121-131).

similar but not identical. These persons lacked the experience to properly understand and comprehend the results of disobeying God and the sort of life that would occur because of that rebellion. The first human beings may have had little understanding of the idea that their very nature would change if they disobeyed God. Within an Augustinian or Calvinistic perspective it seems plausible humanity's likeness to God was insufficient after, but not before, the fall as they were no longer in perfect moral communion with their God.²³⁴⁹

Hick's Background

'Eminent philosopher of religion'²³⁵⁰ John Harwood Hick was born in Scarborough, England in 1922.²³⁵¹ Professor Paul Badham (2003) explains that Hick, as a young adult, became a Christian through an evangelical University Christian Union.²³⁵² Initially Hick accepted traditional Christian doctrines concerning the authority of Scripture, and salvation being solely dependent on accepting Christ as one's personal saviour.²³⁵³ However, over the years Hick has rejected much of traditional Christian belief,²³⁵⁴ for example he does not necessarily hold to the literal physical resurrection of Christ, but instead deduces there are a number of plausible New Testament meanings for the term resurrection, and that not one meaning is certain.²³⁵⁵ Hick suggests that Christ could have appeared in a series of visions to his followers.²³⁵⁶ Despite these theological differences with much of traditional Christian thought, Hick in no way denies the

²³⁴⁹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8). Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 2, 7). Calvin (1543)(1996: 69).

²³⁵⁰ According to R. Douglas Geivett. Geivett (1993: ix).

²³⁵¹ Richard Peters provides the date. Peters (2005: 1). Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, Basinger (1996: 281). Burr and Goldinger (1976: 126).

²³⁵² Badham (2003: 25).

²³⁵³ Badham (2003: 25).

²³⁵⁴ Badham (2003: 25).

²³⁵⁵ Hick (1970: 172).

²³⁵⁶ Hick (1970: 171).

authenticity of the initial and continual spiritual encounter with the transcendent *Reality*²³⁵⁷ which is the key to Hick's religious experience.²³⁵⁸ Hick (1970) notes he writes much of this work so that Christian voices can be heard.²³⁵⁹ To Hick, a sincere religious experience makes it reasonable and rational to trust in a divine Reality,²³⁶⁰ but this Reality cannot be determined through a process of doctrine.²³⁶¹

Hick believes that rational arguments for God's existence have been shown over the centuries to be largely defective.²³⁶² He rejects the various rational, deductive arguments for God's existence.²³⁶³ Hick instead desires that different epistemic²³⁶⁴ approaches to understanding God be developed that are far more enduring over time.²³⁶⁵ These arguments are also known as natural theology.²³⁶⁶ Natural theology states that human beings can obtain particular knowledge about God through the use of reason, and by observing the created order.²³⁶⁷ This order is seen as a naturalistic way of God partially revealing himself.²³⁶⁸ Geivett describes natural theology as systematic reasoning on why God exists, and has a certain nature relating to the world in a particular way.²³⁶⁹ This is done without the use of any Scripture or revelation.²³⁷⁰ Mounce explains the Bible never argues for the existence of God.²³⁷¹ He reasons rational observation of

²³⁵⁷ This Reality for Hick is conceived by different religious traditions throughout the world. Geivett (1993: 38).

²³⁵⁸ Badham (2003: 25).

²³⁵⁹ Hick (1970: ix).

²³⁶⁰ Badham (2003: 25).

²³⁶¹ Badham (2003: 25). The phenomena of religious experience corresponds to various experienced religious thought of different communities throughout the world. Geivett (1993: 58).

²³⁶² Hick in Geivett (1993: 230).

²³⁶³ Badham (2003: 25). Geivett (1993: 48-50).

²³⁶⁴ Blackburn (1996: 123).

²³⁶⁵ Hick in Geivett (1993: 230).

²³⁶⁶ Natural theology is also sometimes referred to as natural revelation. Phillips reasons various theodicy approaches have tended to fail to do justice to the actual natural world. Phillips (2005: 141). Any natural theology must be constructed very carefully in my estimation.

²³⁶⁷ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 82). Geivett (1993: 47-68).

²³⁶⁸ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 82).

²³⁶⁹ Geivett (1993: 90).

²³⁷⁰ Geivett (1993: 90). Alan Richardson and John Macquarrie state natural theology is knowledge about God without the use of divine revelation. Richardson and Macquarrie (1999: 393).

²³⁷¹ Mounce (1995: 32).

our universe provides the necessary evidence of a power great enough to bring the universe into existence.²³⁷² He deduces that natural revelation was minimal, and therefore God eventually revealed himself through Christ.²³⁷³

Hick's Influences

Immanuel Kant

Hick (1995) makes it clear in 'Afterword' from Geivett's book, that Immanuel Kant was one of the leading philosophers that demolished arguments for natural theology.²³⁷⁴ He is known as a founder of critical philosophy.²³⁷⁵ Peters (2005) assumes that Hick's theory of religion begins with the Kantian concept of how human beings relate to the world, and this seems a reasonable conclusion.²³⁷⁶ Kantian philosophy originates from philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).²³⁷⁷ Kant like other prominent philosophers of the Enlightenment era,²³⁷⁸ such as Jonathan Edwards who has been cited previously in this work, is a sophisticated writer.²³⁷⁹ It would take years of research to become a scholar of Kant, and it should be noted he is not a major player within theodicy discussion,²³⁸⁰ but his writing is an influence on Hick.

²³⁷² Mounce (1995: 33).

²³⁷³ Mounce (1995: 33).

²³⁷⁴ Hick in Geivett (1993: 230).

²³⁷⁵ Blackburn (1996: 205). John R. Franke notes Kant represented the ending and destruction of the rationalist mind-set. Franke (2005: 58).

²³⁷⁶ Peters (2005: 2).

²³⁷⁷ Walker (1998: 62). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1999: vii). Blackburn (1996: 205).

²³⁷⁸ Blackburn (1996: 206). Franke (2005: 58-59).

²³⁷⁹ Blackburn rightly suggests there is a 'notorious difficulty of reading Kant, made worse by his penchant for scholastic systemization and obscure terminology.' Blackburn (1996: 206). I would suggest this difficulty will lead to inevitable differences in interpreting Kant.

²³⁸⁰ However, Kant is a major influence within Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion and did write an article in regard to theodicy: Kant, Immanuel (1791)(2001) 'On The Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy', in *Religion and Rational Theology*. Kant defined theodicy as the 'defence of the highest wisdom of the creator against the charge which reason brings against it for counterpurposive in the world.' Kant (1791)(2001: 24). In his conclusion, Kant explains that theodicy has more to do with faith than science. Authentic theodicy must take on a sincere notice of the impotence of human reason and an avoidance of dishonesty must take place. Kant (1791)(2001: 24). One should glimpse within self while making religious professions of belief, in order to avoid holding as true in public, what one is not consciously holding as truth. Kant (1791)(2001: 24-25). The translators

In his *Inaugural Dissertation*²³⁸¹ of 1770,²³⁸² Kant provides the idea that persons can only have *a priori* knowledge of space and time by the use of forms of the mind, which are imposed by human experience.²³⁸³ Kantian scholars Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (1999) with the Introduction to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, note that *a priori* knowledge originates independently of senses and experience.²³⁸⁴ According to Pojman the word *a priori* is the latin for *preceding* and is considered knowledge that is not based on empirical experience, but is known by the meaning of words or definitions.²³⁸⁵ In the *Critique of Pure Reason* of 1781 and revised in 1787, Kant explains that the forms of appearance from which sensations can be understood are not themselves the empirical sensations.²³⁸⁶ Human experience will determine the method and forms by which particular things are understood by what Kant calls *pure intuition*.²³⁸⁷ Concerning human experience, Kant reasoned categories are applied to objects not because the objects make the categories possible, but rather because categories themselves provide and constitute necessary conditions for the representation for all possible objects of experience.²³⁸⁸ Therefore any human understanding of metaphysical reality would not be comprehended by empirical knowledge in *a posteriori* sense.²³⁸⁹ Guyer and Wood point out that Kant was not an

explain that Kant viewed obligatory professions of faith as being counterproductive as they came from human self-deception and falsehood. Di Giovanni and Wood in Kant (1791)(2001: 22). However, Kant reasoned some faith professions within a theodicy could be justified. Di Giovanni and Wood in Kant (1791)(2001: 22). Kant only supported such professions when grounded in history, tradition and authority. Di Giovanni and Wood in Kant (1791)(2001: 22). I can agree with Kant that theodicy should be based in history, tradition and authority, and that it should honestly look at the problems within it. I attempt to do such within this thesis and therefore do not present sovereignty theodicy and Reformed theology without honestly looking at possible negatives. Kant's essay although not cited often in theodicy work, is one I can state is worthy of consideration.

²³⁸¹ Blackburn (1996: 205). See also Karl Ameriks. Ameriks (1996: 399).

²³⁸² Blackburn (1996: 205). Ameriks (1996: 399).

²³⁸³ Blackburn (1996: 205).

²³⁸⁴ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 2).

²³⁸⁵ Pojman (1996: 595).

²³⁸⁶ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 66). Rowan Williams writes that for Kant, the 'real contains no more than the merely possible.' Williams (2007: 205).

²³⁸⁷ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 66).

²³⁸⁸ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3).

²³⁸⁹ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 66).

empiricist,²³⁹⁰ as while Kant criticized and limited the scope of traditional metaphysical thought,²³⁹¹ he also sought to defend against empiricism's claim of the possibility of universal and necessary knowledge which he called *a priori*²³⁹² knowledge,²³⁹³ because no knowledge derived from experience, *a posteriori*²³⁹⁴ knowledge, could justify a claim to universal and necessary validity.²³⁹⁵ Guyer and Wood explain that Kant sought to defend the scientific approach to the acquisition of knowledge against skeptics that dismissed rigorous arguments in favor of 'common sense.'²³⁹⁶ Kant critiqued the dogmatism of certain metaphysicians negatively,²³⁹⁷ and he also negatively noted as dogmatists those that would be intellectually indifferent to metaphysical inquiry.²³⁹⁸ Kant wished to limit the pretensions of dogmatic

²³⁹⁰ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 2). Norman Kemp Smith within *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* writes that empiricists eliminate *a priori* principles, appealing to sense experience only, therefore eliminating distinctions between inductive inference and expectation. Smith (1930: xxvii). Blackburn suggests Kant made a strong break from eighteenth century empiricism. Blackburn (1996: 206). Kant was not an empiricist as was David Hume that within (1779)(2004) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, notes that for 'ignorant ages' persons including geniuses have ambitiously tried to produce new proofs and arguments for natural theology and God. Hume (1779)(2004: 2). Hume also reasoned that the supposed Supreme Being's infinite divine attributes would be 'totally incomprehensible' and that human nature would not have ideas that would correspond to the attributes of this divine being. Hume (1779)(2004: 21). Hume's degree of scepticism of God and natural theology and dependence on empiricism alone was not the same view as Kant. Kant (1788)(1997: 11). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3).

²³⁹¹ Kant was opposed to speculative views of indefensible rationalism. Blackburn (1996: 206). Cornelius Van Til suggests Kant reasons God is not a law giver to humanity, God cannot reveal himself through nature or human constitution with the image of God. The intellect of human beings makes no positive assertions concerning God. Kant rejects notions of theoretical knowledge of God and, instead, appeals to practical reason and faith. Van Til (1977: 246-247). Plantinga writes that it is suggested by many commentators Kant demonstrated there are insurmountable problems with the idea that the traditional Christian God exists. Plantinga (2000: 7).

²³⁹² Kant called cognitions independent of all experience and the impressions of the senses *a priori*. Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 136).

²³⁹³ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 2).

²³⁹⁴ Empirical experiences are called *a posteriori*. *A posteriori* knowledge is empirical knowledge through experience. Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 136).

²³⁹⁵ Kant argued that inductive inference from data and experience was only possible based upon prior acceptance of views of rational principles established independently. Therefore experience does not validate these principles. Smith (1930: xxvii). Ameriks suggests Kant rejected unjustifiable metaphysical claims in place of principles of theory which are the conditions by which persons orientate themselves within experience. These principles are 'necessary and discoverable' therefore defeating empiricism and scepticism concerning reasonable metaphysical claims, and contrasting traditional rationalism and dogmatism. Ameriks (1996: 399).

²³⁹⁶ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 2).

²³⁹⁷ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3).

²³⁹⁸ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3). Kant notes in 'Critique of Practical Reason' empiricism needs to be contrasted by the necessity of rational *a priori* principles. Kant (1788)(1997: 11).

empiricists while defending metaphysical theories²³⁹⁹ as a science²⁴⁰⁰ and necessary in terms of practical reason.²⁴⁰¹ Basically, Kant defended metaphysics as important and necessary,²⁴⁰² but was sympathetic to the empiricists view that certain metaphysical questions were insoluble.²⁴⁰³

Kant noted that *a priori* is relational without its own inherent content.²⁴⁰⁴ It is synthetic and incapable of serving as metaphysical proof.²⁴⁰⁵ *A priori* is relative to an experience only capable of producing appearances, and so *a priori* is factual as experience which it conditions.²⁴⁰⁶ W.H. Walsh explains if human beings had no experience whatsoever, they would have no concept of knowledge, not even *a priori* knowledge.²⁴⁰⁷ No ideas or items concerning knowledge are literally to be considered innate.²⁴⁰⁸

Kant reasons objects that were present in empirical human experience were in the phenomena realm, while objects outside were the noumena realm.²⁴⁰⁹ He writes that the contingent things experienced by persons are phenomena.²⁴¹⁰ These are things that could be experienced empirically and would be reasonably accepted as reality.²⁴¹¹ The noumena realm

²³⁹⁹ Plantinga reasons that for Kant the intellectual problem is not that persons cannot think about God but that persons cannot come to speculative metaphysical knowledge of God. Plantinga (2000: 9).

²⁴⁰⁰ John R. Franke suggests that 'scientific' knowledge within Kantian thought is limited to the realm of experience shaped by rational structures of the mind. This means knowledge of God through pure reason is impossible. Franke (2005: 58-59).

²⁴⁰¹ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3). Ameriks writes, for Kant practical reason is that which determines rules for the faculty of desire and will as opposed to the faculty of cognition and feeling. Ameriks (1996: 399).

²⁴⁰² Ameriks (1996: 399).

²⁴⁰³ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3).

²⁴⁰⁴ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3).

²⁴⁰⁵ Smith (1930: xxxvi). Ameriks (1996: 400).

²⁴⁰⁶ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 43). Smith (1930: xxxvi). Blackburn (1996: 205).

²⁴⁰⁷ Walsh (1976: 6).

²⁴⁰⁸ Walsh (1976: 6).

²⁴⁰⁹ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 482). Guyer and Wood note that the phenomena realm is the category applied to appearances whereas things in themselves are the noumena realm, which might be thought of but not known. Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 10). The phenomena realm is that which appears and is therefore empirical.

²⁴¹⁰ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 482).

²⁴¹¹ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 482).

was not available to empirical senses.²⁴¹² Therefore, according to Mario Derksen (2006) who wrote ‘Kant and the Question of Noumenal Ontology’ claims of metaphysical knowledge²⁴¹³ would not be certain as would be any resulting doctrines.²⁴¹⁴ Kant explains in a follow up work entitled *The Critique of Practical Reason* from 1788, that the noumena is the theoretical department of knowledge denied, while the phenomena is one’s own empirical consciousness.²⁴¹⁵ All positive speculative knowledge should be disclaimed for the noumena realm according to Kantian thought.²⁴¹⁶ Kant concludes *The Critique of Practical Reason* by noting that the phenomena realm is the external realm where consciousness has existence.²⁴¹⁷ The noumena realm is invisible and has true infinity where Kant believes one can reason that contingent personality is dependent on the universal and necessary connection to the invisible world.²⁴¹⁸

Importantly Kant thought it legitimate for one to postulate the noumena realm in a ‘negative sense’ meaning things as they may be independently or how they are represented,²⁴¹⁹ but not noumena in the ‘positive sense’ which would be things based on pure reason alone.²⁴²⁰ Instead, noumena categories were only useful by applying them to empirical data structured in forms of intuition.²⁴²¹ The concept of noumena, according to Kant, was bound to the limit of pretension of sensibility and reason, and therefore only negative noumenon was of intellectual

²⁴¹² Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 393).

²⁴¹³ John M. Frame suggests that within Kantian philosophy humanity replaces God as the ultimate source and interpreter of reality. Frame deduces this based on the idea that the noumena realm is beyond human experience and is unknowable. Frame (2002: 112).

²⁴¹⁴ Derksen (2006: 9). From Kant’s perspective I would reason that metaphysical doctrines could be questioned and not considered dogmatic truth, but would not necessarily be considered meaningless. Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3).

²⁴¹⁵ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 3).

²⁴¹⁶ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 26).

²⁴¹⁷ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 100).

²⁴¹⁸ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 100).

²⁴¹⁹ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 13).

²⁴²⁰ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 13).

²⁴²¹ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 13). Ameriks (1996: 400).

use.²⁴²² Noumena in its negative sense are that which is not an object of sense intuition.²⁴²³ Kant rejects concepts of positive noumena based on pure reason²⁴²⁴ because, according to T.C. Williams (1987), noumenal concepts are not determinate knowledge of anything and must be based on a sense of sensible intuition.²⁴²⁵ Kant rejects the positive use of the term as it postulates objective knowledge of a metaphysical realm.²⁴²⁶ The positive sense of the term noumena is therefore fully rejected by Kant.²⁴²⁷ He explains that the noumenal in the negative sense is equivalent to the thing itself and alone is involved in the concept.²⁴²⁸ Kant's view leads to a moral theology which has a doctrine of God and immortality postulated, along with theories of human free will²⁴²⁹ and morality.²⁴³⁰ His moral theology is postulated and is not dogmatic, rational metaphysics.²⁴³¹

The nature of the noumenal realm described by Kant would, to Hick, cause those who profess natural theology to lower their expectations from proving God's existence to merely making it probable at best.²⁴³² Hick thinks that these probabilities are based on personal estimates of likelihood and are arbitrary.²⁴³³ Kantian philosophy postulates that any reality which

²⁴²² Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 350).

²⁴²³ Smith (1930: 413). Ameriks (1996: 400).

²⁴²⁴ Smith (1930: 413). Ameriks (1996: 400).

²⁴²⁵ Williams (1987: 149).

²⁴²⁶ Williams (1987: 150).

²⁴²⁷ Williams (1987: 151).

²⁴²⁸ Smith (1930: 413).

²⁴²⁹ Kant notes free submission of the human will to law combined with the restraints of law put upon human inclination by human reason, is respect for the law. This law demands respect and inspires, it is moral law. Kant (1788)(1997: 68-69). Lewis White Beck explains Kant theorized that human actions were both free and predictable. He reasons, law can only obligate a really free being to act. Human beings demonstrate free will through choice to obey or disobey law. Beck (1963: 31-32).

²⁴³⁰ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 846). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 14). Beck explains that Kant postulated the existence of God in order that through such agency effect may be given to moral laws. Beck (1963: 273). Kant's ethical system included associated human freedom with the potential for self control and self rule, and the need to think in terms of a just God sustaining moral order. Blackburn (1996: 206).

²⁴³¹ Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 14).

²⁴³² Hick in Geivett (1993: 230-231).

²⁴³³ Hick in Geivett (1993: 230). In contrast I deduce Scriptural revelation would not necessarily be arbitrary estimates of God, but God and any revealed doctrines would be understood by a serious contextual evaluation of the Scripture.

existed beyond what can be empirically experienced is not knowable, and therefore God is placed beyond the realm of science based experience.²⁴³⁴ God and morality could not be affirmed as actual or possible concepts, although Kant states that they can be assumed as possibilities.²⁴³⁵ Hick takes this idea of Kant's and deduces that when it comes to religious doctrine, the noumenal realm that stands behind the phenomena realm may have little in common with corresponding phenomena.²⁴³⁶ Hick's theological assumption, influenced by Kantian thought, becomes clear as he reasons the doctrinal assumptions of traditional Christianity and Christian dogma (phenomena) may not actually be the true witness of God's ambiguous nature (noumena).²⁴³⁷ Hick (1993) writes in *The Myth of God Incarnate* that much of Christian theology has been mistakenly taken literally when it should have been taken metaphorically.²⁴³⁸ For Hick, the doctrine of the atonement of Christ is one theological view that has resulted from misunderstanding the metaphorical nature of the Bible's message concerning Christ and his work.²⁴³⁹ Smid writes that for Hick the Kantian noumena realm makes the nature of God unclear and a direct knowable experience with the creator impossible, and therefore human beings must base their religious understanding on interpretation of experiences.²⁴⁴⁰ Religion²⁴⁴¹ is therefore largely an ambiguous reality and could be interpreted in a variety of ways, and in fact religion could be abandoned in favour of naturalism by Hick's own standard.²⁴⁴² As a result of this Kantian influenced position, Hick argues that the propositional truth claims of traditional Christianity such as claiming the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in regard to salvation, are

²⁴³⁴ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 1).

²⁴³⁵ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 1). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 14).

²⁴³⁶ Peters (2005: 4).

²⁴³⁷ Hick (1993: 114). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3).

²⁴³⁸ Hick (1993: 114).

²⁴³⁹ Hick (1993: 126).

²⁴⁴⁰ Smid (1999: 10). This idea is supported in Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 13), and in Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 846).

²⁴⁴¹ And 'Reality' as Hick would describe it, would also be ambiguous to discern. Geivett (1993: 38).

²⁴⁴² Geivett (1993: 77-78).

indefensible.²⁴⁴³ I do not disagree with the Kantian view that the noumena realm is not empirically knowable,²⁴⁴⁴ and I readily admit that God as spirit²⁴⁴⁵ is not empirically²⁴⁴⁶ or scientifically provable.²⁴⁴⁷ Jesus stated that God is spirit in John 4:24²⁴⁴⁸ and therefore God is not of a material nature²⁴⁴⁹ and cannot be proven by the use of matter or scientific experiment.²⁴⁵⁰

Hick states that natural theology can only at best demonstrate that God is probable,²⁴⁵¹ however, I hold that Peter D. Klein's definition of certainty²⁴⁵² could possibly be applied to natural theology.²⁴⁵³ Klein (1996) in 'Certainty' describes the idea as being that a proposition is true if there are no legitimate grounds whatsoever for doubting it.²⁴⁵⁴ This is a reasonable concept, and I support the similar idea that a proposition is certain if there are no counter propositions that are superior.²⁴⁵⁵ Natural theology therefore would never be 100% certain,²⁴⁵⁶ but could hypothetically at least be philosophically certain as long as arguments that supported natural theology were true beyond any reasonable doubt,²⁴⁵⁷ or the arguments for natural theology were superior to those opposing them.

Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote *On Certainty* which is a classic philosophical work on the subject from the twentieth century.²⁴⁵⁸ Wittgenstein (1889-1951)²⁴⁵⁹ is an Austrian

²⁴⁴³ Smid (1999: 13). To be considered as insoluble within a Kantian model. Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3).

²⁴⁴⁴ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 393). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 10). Smid (1999: 10).

²⁴⁴⁵ Erickson (1994: 267). Thiessen (1956: 119).

²⁴⁴⁶ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 393).

²⁴⁴⁷ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 393). Thiessen (1956: 120).

²⁴⁴⁸ The New American Standard Version Bible (1986: 1198).

²⁴⁴⁹ God is immaterial. Thiessen (1956: 120).

²⁴⁵⁰ Thiessen (1956: 120).

²⁴⁵¹ Hick in Geivett (1993: 230-231). Geivett (1993: 49).

²⁴⁵² Klein (1996: 113).

²⁴⁵³ And Biblical theology as well.

²⁴⁵⁴ Klein (1996: 113). Blackburn explains that a proposition would be considered certain when there is no doubt concerning its truth. Blackburn (1996: 60).

²⁴⁵⁵ This would also accomplish the standard of a proposition being true as it is beyond (reasonable) doubt.

²⁴⁵⁶ In my view 100% certainty is impossible to grasp for a finite being that cannot have 100% knowledge. Absolute certainty could only belong to an infinite, omniscient being.

²⁴⁵⁷ Klein (1996: 113). Blackburn (1996: 60).

²⁴⁵⁸ Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1951)(1979) *On Certainty*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

philosopher.²⁴⁶⁰ *On Certainty* deals with philosophical skepticism by postulating that knowledge exists, in a sense, but that this knowledge is dispersed and not completely dependable.²⁴⁶¹ He notes that ‘I make assertions about reality, assertions which have different degrees of assurance.’²⁴⁶² It is often general knowledge that is not generally doubted.²⁴⁶³ Skepticism cannot be refuted by claiming certain propositions are certain.²⁴⁶⁴ Argumentation cannot completely express metaphysical truths in particular.²⁴⁶⁵ He uses the example of a child taught either to be a theist or atheist, and the child will be able to produce evidence for either position depending on which one he or she is instructed to believe.²⁴⁶⁶ For every reasonable religious point, for Wittgenstein, there is a counterpoint.²⁴⁶⁷ He does admit that there is in a sense objective truth,²⁴⁶⁸ but something would be objectively true only within a system of reason and knowledge through the understanding of reasonable persons.²⁴⁶⁹ His view allows for the logical possibility that something considered objective truth in one system, is not objective truth in another.²⁴⁷⁰ Philosophy should, therefore, not be understood as primarily making discoveries, as much as reminding persons of the issues that need to be dealt with when one turns to unfamiliar and uncertain issues.²⁴⁷¹ Wittgenstein explains that what a child is taught, he or she believes, but

²⁴⁵⁹ Blackburn (1996: 400). Sluga (1996: 859).

²⁴⁶⁰ Blackburn (1996: 400).

²⁴⁶¹ Sluga (1996: 859). Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 66).

²⁴⁶² Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 66).

²⁴⁶³ Sluga (1996: 859).

²⁴⁶⁴ Sluga (1996: 859).

²⁴⁶⁵ Sluga (1996: 859).

²⁴⁶⁶ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 107). I agree. Regardless of the truthfulness of either position, a child can be guided to have arguments for a taught philosophical viewpoint.

²⁴⁶⁷ Phillips (2005: 50). This does not guarantee the superiority of counterpoints, however.

²⁴⁶⁸ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 108).

²⁴⁶⁹ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 108). This also relates to the use of language. Wittgenstein explains that when he states he knows something, another person can validate that knowledge if he/she is familiar with the ‘language-game.’ A person must be able to imagine what the other person states as knowledge through shared language understanding. Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 18).

²⁴⁷⁰ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 108). This is reasonable. If the laws of science were not the same as this universe, in a vastly different realm, for example, then objective truth could be much different at several points.

²⁴⁷¹ Blackburn (1996: 401).

doubt comes after belief.²⁴⁷² The implication being that greater knowledge leads to greater doubt.²⁴⁷³ Therefore, caution in claiming certainty on any issue is required. Philosophically, caution should always be taken with truth claims. But, I do not reason that a lack of absolute 100% certainty concerning metaphysical claims means that some cannot be considered true and others false, in a limited sense²⁴⁷⁴ admittedly. Wittgenstein does act with certainty, but it is his own.²⁴⁷⁵ This does not in his mind justify his view as objective truth to others, it is simply belief.²⁴⁷⁶ He reasons that ‘knowledge and certainty belong in different categories.’²⁴⁷⁷ Obtaining knowledge is very important, and more vital than having certitude.²⁴⁷⁸ Knowledge and certainty are two different mental states.²⁴⁷⁹ This approach to an idea of certainty²⁴⁸⁰ would be less optimistic in asserting philosophical truths, in comparison to the view Klein presents.²⁴⁸¹

In regard to the noumenal realm making Christian doctrine clearly metaphorical and indefensible, I respectfully disagree with Hick.²⁴⁸² Christian doctrine is not primarily established through the use of natural theology, but by what many conservatives and some liberals view as the revelation of God through Hebrew Bible writers and Christ and his New Testament

²⁴⁷² Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 160).

²⁴⁷³ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 160).

²⁴⁷⁴ Heeding to the words of Kant, Klein and Wittgenstein, and in my view a recognition of finite human reasoning.

²⁴⁷⁵ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 179).

²⁴⁷⁶ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 175).

²⁴⁷⁷ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 308).

²⁴⁷⁸ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 308).

²⁴⁷⁹ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 308). Knowledge and certainty are not the same thing for Wittgenstein.

²⁴⁸⁰ Wittgenstein (1951)(1979: 66). Sluga (1996: 859).

²⁴⁸¹ Klein (1996: 113). Williams describes a view, not distinctly his own, with the assistance of various writings of Simone Weil, where it is reasoned that God is absolutely certain, as is human existence. A human desire for God is evidence for the absolute certainty of God. Williams (2007: 206-277). I prefer the term ‘reasonably certain’ over absolutely certain. I also would completely avoid using any argumentation that God exists because I desire him. A critic could state that God does not exist because he or she does not desire him. It is wiser in my view to rely on Biblical Studies, Theology and Philosophy of Religion over subjective argumentation within Christian apologetics.

²⁴⁸² Hick (1993: 126). Geivett points out Kant postulates the existence of God out of practical necessity within a system of morality. Geivett (1993: 87). I would deduce Christian doctrine could be considered in a similar sense, even from a critical perspective.

writers.²⁴⁸³ For Hick to demonstrate that Biblical revelation should be interpreted in a way that denies traditional conservative doctrines, or liberal ones for that matter, would be difficult since by Hick's own standard²⁴⁸⁴ his denial of any possible reasonable understanding of the noumenal realm²⁴⁸⁵ makes his evaluation of Scripture subject to the same negative critique by which he judges traditional theology. Christian scholars therefore, whether conservative or liberal, are left with looking at contextual, historical and methodological issues relating to Biblical interpretation, and attempting to reason out what Scripture is stating and related issues.²⁴⁸⁶ This despite the fact that the noumenal realm cannot be empirically known.²⁴⁸⁷

As for Kant, his view allows for the concept of negative noumena.²⁴⁸⁸ The idea of noumena, according to Kant, was bound to the limit of pretension of sensibility and reason, and therefore only negative noumena was of intellectual use.²⁴⁸⁹ The use of positive noumena which trusts in pure reason is rejected.²⁴⁹⁰ Christian scholarship does not rely primarily on natural theology,²⁴⁹¹ which would be considered by certain scholars to simply use pure reason which some also think Kant had demolished.²⁴⁹² Scriptural Revelation in my view, is not to be

²⁴⁸³ Otto Weber discusses this issue. Weber (1955)(1981: 169-331). John Murray suggests that through Scripture the activity of God, the Father, is reflected. Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 148). Erickson (1994: 176-177).

²⁴⁸⁴ Hick (1993: 126). Geivett explains that there is no way of knowing whether or not Hick's theodicy is true. Geivett (1993: 88).

²⁴⁸⁵ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 393). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 10). Smid (1999: 10).

²⁴⁸⁶ Weber (1955)(1981: 169-331). Lindsell (1976: 200-211).

²⁴⁸⁷ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 26). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 10). Smid (1999: 10).

²⁴⁸⁸ Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 350).

²⁴⁸⁹ Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 350). Smith (1930: 413). Ameriks (1996: 400).

²⁴⁹⁰ Williams (1987: 150). Smith (1930: 413). Ameriks (1996: 400).

²⁴⁹¹ Weber (1955)(1981: 169-331). Erickson (1994: 176-177).

²⁴⁹² Hick in Geivett (1993: 230). Weber (1955)(1981: 203). Geivett would not agree and considers it dangerous to completely dismiss natural theology. Geivett (1993: 69-89). Even after accepting Kant's critique as reasonable and somewhat valuable, I still reason that philosophical truths about God can possibly be deduced *without* the use of direct divine revelation and a supernatural event and/or Scripture. Deductions and knowledge concerning a first cause and/or God, do not however qualify as equivalent to the knowledge of knowing God as a result of Scripture and the influence of the Holy Spirit. Philosophical deductions concerning God would not necessarily be of pure reason, and I can agree with Kant that any reasonable deduction and intuition must be tied back to empirical experience by which to make sense of these deductions. Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 66). Blackburn (1996: 205).

considered a source of the concept of pure reason as discussed by Kant and reviewers,²⁴⁹³ but rather I see it as similar to how Kant approached theodicy within his brief article.²⁴⁹⁴ Scripture, like theodicy approaches can be used as an historical, traditional and authoritative source.²⁴⁹⁵ Revelation from God in Scripture and resulting claims made within could perhaps be tied to Kantian concepts and intuition arising from empirical sensations.²⁴⁹⁶ This is not a difficulty for a Reformed and some other approaches to Christianity, which do not rely primarily on philosophical deductions, but in supernatural revelation of God through empirical sensations, such as prophets, Christ, the apostles and scribes.²⁴⁹⁷ As cited, Plantinga reasons that for Kant the intellectual problem is not that persons cannot think about God but that persons cannot come to speculative metaphysical knowledge of God.²⁴⁹⁸ My conclusion here, which I realize some will debate, is that Scripture is not primarily metaphysical speculation about God as discussed,²⁴⁹⁹ but is rather coming through the authors and players within his Bible, which are reasoned to be divinely guided by God.²⁵⁰⁰

Irenaeus

As previously noted, it is widely accepted that Hick is writing a theodicy within the Irenaean tradition.²⁵⁰¹ To Hick, Irenaeus believed God's creation of humanity was the initial stage

²⁴⁹³ Williams (1987: 150). Smith (1930: 413). Ameriks (1996: 400).

²⁴⁹⁴ Kant, Immanuel (1791)(2001) 'On The Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy' in *Religion and Rational Theology*.

²⁴⁹⁵ Weber (1955)(1981: 169-331).

²⁴⁹⁶ Kant (1781)(1787)(1929)(2006: 66). Blackburn (1996: 205).

²⁴⁹⁷ Weber (1955)(1981: 169-331). William G.T. Shedd provides the view that general, natural revelation is not infallible. He differentiates this from Scriptural Revelation. Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 66 Volume 1). Van Til writes that the Reformers reasoned they were listening to Christ directly through the Scriptures as God revealed himself to humanity. Van Til (1977: 246).

²⁴⁹⁸ Plantinga (2000: 9).

²⁴⁹⁹ Plantinga (2000: 9).

²⁵⁰⁰ Weber (1955)(1981: 169-331). Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 66 Volume 1). Van Til (1977: 246). Lindsell (1976: 200-211).

²⁵⁰¹ Badham (2003: 27).

in a process that would lead to persons ultimately possessing the likeness of God.²⁵⁰² Hick quotes Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* where humanity, in its original state is called immature.²⁵⁰³ Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005) in *Against Heresies* deduces that God could have made humanity originally perfect, but the newness and immaturity of his actual creation made it impossible to grant.²⁵⁰⁴

In *Proof of Apostolic Preaching* (c185)(2005), Irenaeus notes that human beings were as children in the beginning and were easily led astray by the deceiver.²⁵⁰⁵ A child as such is immature and needs to grow towards perfection.²⁵⁰⁶ Hick agrees with these concepts and suggests that the approach of Irenaeus is a rejection of the Augustinian idea of a fall in which human beings are viewed as morally perfect beings who rebelled against God.²⁵⁰⁷ Instead, humanity in a child-like way wandered away from the rule of their creator in a rather innocent fashion.²⁵⁰⁸ According to Hick, for Irenaeus the breaking away of God's children from their creator was not so much a crime, but a youthful error,²⁵⁰⁹ and Hick views this process as a divinely appointed situation for human beings to develop towards the ultimate likeness of God.²⁵¹⁰

It seems clear that Hick and Irenaeus are in agreement that original humanity was spiritually and morally immature.²⁵¹¹ There does, however, appear in Irenaeus' writings the idea of a loss of moral right standing with God due to an initial disobedience. Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998) writes, that the disobedience of one man caused many to become sinners and forfeit

²⁵⁰² Hick (1970: 218). Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

²⁵⁰³ Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

²⁵⁰⁴ Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

²⁵⁰⁵ Irenaeus (c 185)(2005: 14).

²⁵⁰⁶ Irenaeus (c 185)(2005: 14).

²⁵⁰⁷ Hick in Davis (2001: 40).

²⁵⁰⁸ Hick (1970: 220-221).

²⁵⁰⁹ Hick (1970: 220-221).

²⁵¹⁰ Hick in Davis (2001: 41).

²⁵¹¹ Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2). Hick (1970: 218).

life, so it was needed for one man to justify and provide salvation to all.²⁵¹² This seems to support the possibility Irenaeus believed in *original sin* that occurred as human beings disobeyed God for the first time.²⁵¹³ Original sin historically views persons as being born alienated from God,²⁵¹⁴ assuming that the sin nature of the literal and historical Adam and Eve has spread to all descendents.²⁵¹⁵ Calvin reasonably claims solidarity with Augustine's view,²⁵¹⁶ and indicates that the consequences of original sin means persons do not have the power to resist, as the will is in bondage until set free.²⁵¹⁷ Augustine writes there is a 'chain of original sin' by which persons die in Adam.²⁵¹⁸ He adds that in this condition, persons were born into misery.²⁵¹⁹ Erickson suggests that due to Adam's sin, all human beings received a corrupted nature,²⁵²⁰ and this is viewed as the imputation of original sin to persons.²⁵²¹ All persons are not personally responsible for Adam's sin, but all have inherited a corrupt nature.²⁵²²

The doctrine of original sin is related to the *fall* concept and is viewed by many traditionalists as being a result of the fall.²⁵²³ The fall has already been discussed within Chapters Two and Three and therefore an extended discussion of the subject would be redundant. Gebara has a non-traditional perspective and cautiously suggests that original sin could be the somber experience of the transcendence and immanence of evil permeating through existence.²⁵²⁴ With this view evil could be the sin that engulfs all of God's creation.²⁵²⁵ F.R. Tennant (1906) rejects a

²⁵¹² Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵¹³ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵¹⁴ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 87).

²⁵¹⁵ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 87).

²⁵¹⁶ Calvin (1543)(1996: 105).

²⁵¹⁷ Calvin (1543)(1996: 105).

²⁵¹⁸ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 82).

²⁵¹⁹ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 197).

²⁵²⁰ Erickson (1994: 638).

²⁵²¹ Erickson (1994: 638).

²⁵²² Erickson (1994: 638).

²⁵²³ Erickson (1994: 915). Thiessen (1956: 253).

²⁵²⁴ Gebara (2002: 58-59).

²⁵²⁵ Gebara (2002: 58-59).

traditional doctrine of original sin²⁵²⁶ as he writes that the doctrine is self-condemned as the idea involves original guilt.²⁵²⁷ He reasons that guilt is only applicable to someone who has willingly committed an act,²⁵²⁸ and I would agree. I do not think that all human beings are guilty of the sin of Adam and Eve, or if one prefers, the first persons that disobeyed God.²⁵²⁹ I accept the doctrine of original sin in that the corrupted nature of humanity will inevitably lead to the human choice to commit wrong actions.²⁵³⁰ Tennant's concept is to reject hypothetical prior causes of 'sin',²⁵³¹ and instead views human evil as the normal process of development that takes place in the human race.²⁵³² Moral law would need to be established as humanity gradually develops over centuries.²⁵³³

If Adam and Eve, or the first human beings, disobeyed God and humanity became sinful in Irenaeus' theology,²⁵³⁴ this means previously persons were not sinful and had been acceptable in the presence of God.²⁵³⁵ In *Proof of Apostolic Preaching* as previously noted, humanity is described in terms of children that were led astray by the deceiver.²⁵³⁶ They were influenced and transformed from a position of being right with God morally, to a position of being at a wrong place morally with God.²⁵³⁷ This indicates that Irenaeus believed human beings lost their original glorious place of stature and fellowship with God, although not a fall from a perfect, mature righteousness, but rather a departure from living in obedience to God.²⁵³⁸ For Irenaeus, through human disobedience, Adam and Eve were no longer acceptable to live in God's Eden and were

²⁵²⁶ Tennant (1906: 20).

²⁵²⁷ Tennant (1906: 20).

²⁵²⁸ Tennant (1906: 20).

²⁵²⁹ Tennant (1906: 20).

²⁵³⁰ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 82). Erickson (1994: 638).

²⁵³¹ Tennant (1906: 20).

²⁵³² Tennant (1906: 81).

²⁵³³ Tennant (1906: 81).

²⁵³⁴ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵³⁵ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵³⁶ Irenaeus (c.185-2005: 14).

²⁵³⁷ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵³⁸ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

cast out.²⁵³⁹ If Irenaeus did not agree with the Augustinian position concerning the original perfect sinless nature of humanity,²⁵⁴⁰ he at least seemingly would agree that human beings had lost their moral position and right standing with their maker.²⁵⁴¹ Harvard Professor, Everett Ferguson (1996) in his article ‘Irenaeus’ claims Irenaeus believed that what was lost in the disobedience because of the first Adam, was restored through the second Adam, Jesus Christ.²⁵⁴² This again appears to make it possible that although Irenaeus and Hick have a similar view on the original immaturity of humanity,²⁵⁴³ that to Irenaeus the first human beings lost a right standing with God because of disobedience,²⁵⁴⁴ forfeiting a life of abundance with God.²⁵⁴⁵ Clearly it is plausible that Irenaeus would view this as some type of fall or departure from grace.²⁵⁴⁶ This does not mean that Irenaeus held to an Augustinian view of the fall,²⁵⁴⁷ but it appears Irenaeus understood human beings as being morally inferior to what they were previous to their initial sin against God.²⁵⁴⁸

Friedrich Schleiermacher

Friedrich Schleiermacher writes in his work of systematic theology *The Christian Faith*, that God’s original perfect creation was based on the environment being made suitable for human beings to have self-consciousness.²⁵⁴⁹ The human experience of God-consciousness and

²⁵³⁹ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵⁴⁰ Hick’s conjecture.

²⁵⁴¹ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵⁴² Ferguson (1996: 569).

²⁵⁴³ Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2). Hick (1970: 218).

²⁵⁴⁴ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵⁴⁵ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵⁴⁶ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵⁴⁷ It may be closer to an Augustinian view than John Hick would be willing to admit.

²⁵⁴⁸ Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

²⁵⁴⁹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 234).

self-consciousness are fulfilled through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and the related religious emotions.²⁵⁵⁰ For Schleiermacher, Christian theology is not a systemization of revelation of God but rather a coherent understanding of Christian religious experience related to the redemptive work of Christ.²⁵⁵¹ In *On Religion*, Schleiermacher expresses the belief that dogma is not part of religion, but arises out of religion.²⁵⁵² Religion is essentially intuitive and consists of the experience of feeling.²⁵⁵³ Therefore, Christian theology was not dictated by a direct human encounter with God but by concepts of religious experience, and Hick's theodicy is seemingly in agreement with this idea.²⁵⁵⁴ Schleiermacher explains that the original perfection of creation is its finite ability to provide an environment for God-consciousness to take place in human beings.²⁵⁵⁵ Similarly, Schleiermacher understands original human perfection as not primarily a condition, but rather the ability through both good and evil experiences to have the consciousness of God stimulating and influencing humanity.²⁵⁵⁶ Hick views Schleiermacher as understanding that an aspect of the development of God-consciousness takes place when human beings commit wrong actions, experience guilt and then grasp the need for redemption.²⁵⁵⁷ This would allow for the problem of evil to be part of God's program for humanity.²⁵⁵⁸ Schleiermacher rejects the idea of original nature that became corrupt;²⁵⁵⁹ instead he views humanity as having a nature that required redemption.²⁵⁶⁰ He philosophically exchanges original human righteousness for original human sinfulness that comes with the ability to be aware of

²⁵⁵⁰ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 76).

²⁵⁵¹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 125).

²⁵⁵² Schleiermacher in Kedourie (1799)(1961: 26).

²⁵⁵³ Schleiermacher in Kedourie (1799)(1961: 26).

²⁵⁵⁴ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 125). Hick (1970: 318-319).

²⁵⁵⁵ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 234).

²⁵⁵⁶ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 240).

²⁵⁵⁷ Hick (1970: 230).

²⁵⁵⁸ Hick (1970: 230).

²⁵⁵⁹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 303).

²⁵⁶⁰ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 303).

God-consciousness.²⁵⁶¹ Ultimately for Schleiermacher, God would draw all humanity to himself through an awareness of God-consciousness.²⁵⁶² He rejects the concept of hell because he postulates that those living in heavenly bliss could not do so in good conscience without sympathy for those in hell.²⁵⁶³ This makes the universal efficacy of Christ's redemptive work more likely, because hell would have to be nonexistent for heaven to truly be a place of peace and happiness.²⁵⁶⁴ Schleiermacher's views on universalism and hell are similar to the modern views of Hick which are discussed in *Evil and the God of Love*.²⁵⁶⁵

According to Hick, Schleiermacher was not directly influenced by Irenaeus;²⁵⁶⁶ however, he did share the idea of a two-stage creation of humanity with Irenaeus.²⁵⁶⁷ To Schleiermacher, the first Adam had the potential for perfect God consciousness, but this only became an actual reality through Jesus Christ, the second Adam.²⁵⁶⁸

2. Hick's Review of Augustinian Type Theodicy

Creation Made Good

Augustine's ideas on creation and goodness were discussed in Chapter Two, and there is no need to completely restate his views, but I do wish to discuss how Hick understands Augustine and why he criticizes his approach. Hick reasons that although Augustine was influenced by Platonic thought,²⁵⁶⁹ he rejected Platonic, Neo-Platonic, Gnostic,²⁵⁷⁰ and

²⁵⁶¹ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 303).

²⁵⁶² Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 303).

²⁵⁶³ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 721).

²⁵⁶⁴ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 721).

²⁵⁶⁵ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 721). Hick (1970: 381).

²⁵⁶⁶ Hick (1970: 225).

²⁵⁶⁷ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 89). Hick (1970: 225). Irenaeus (c 185)(2005: 14).

²⁵⁶⁸ Schleiermacher (1821)(1976: 89).

²⁵⁶⁹ Hick (1970: 51).

²⁵⁷⁰ R. MCL. Wilson in 'Gnosticism' notes it is the term used to describe a religious movement that existed during the early Christian era. The gnosis was considered a special knowledge of God and the nature of humanity. This

Manichaeism notions that matter was somehow evil and opposed to the spiritual realm.²⁵⁷¹ For Augustine, the omnipotent God created the universe and therefore evil could not be a positive substance.²⁵⁷² Instead it must be a corruption, malfunction and parasite of something originally perfectly good.²⁵⁷³ Atheist William Rowe (1996) writes that Augustine assumed God was perfect,²⁵⁷⁴ and this meant if there was evil in God's creation, it was not natural and was due to *privation boni*, a corruption and lack of goodness in something God had originally made perfect.²⁵⁷⁵ Hick believes that Augustine's view of privation is reasonable in regard to the claim that evil was not created by God, and thus is secondary and parasitic within God's universe.²⁵⁷⁶ However, Hick raises an objection, which I discussed in Chapter Two, that privation in creatures is not merely an absence of something good,²⁵⁷⁷ but consists of its own positive, destructive quality as private creatures not only lack the will to do what is good, but persons will to do evil.²⁵⁷⁸ Hick points out Augustine's idea of privation fails to deal with the fact that corrupted persons do not always tend to disintegrate and cease to exist in will and personality.²⁵⁷⁹ This would seem correct as a corrupted and evil entity can grow in intelligence and power,²⁵⁸⁰ so a mere corruption of a being from original perfection does not appear to weaken it to that status of non-existence.²⁵⁸¹ Geivett attempts to defend privation by concluding that people will usually

gnosis would provide a person with the power to be free from negative cosmic forces. Wilson (1999: 226). Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard explain that although gnosticism existed in the first century it did not become a full-fledged philosophy until the second and third centuries. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 382).

²⁵⁷¹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117). Hick (1970: 51).

²⁵⁷² Augustine (388-395)(1964: 117). Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7).

²⁵⁷³ Hick (1970: 60).

²⁵⁷⁴ Rowe (1996: 648).

²⁵⁷⁵ Rowe (1996: 648). Deprivation is nothing in itself, but requires something positive in comparison. Schelling (1845)(1936: 45).

²⁵⁷⁶ Hick (1970: 61).

²⁵⁷⁷ Hick (1970: 62).

²⁵⁷⁸ Hick (1970: 62).

²⁵⁷⁹ Hick (1970: 62).

²⁵⁸⁰ Hick (1970: 62).

²⁵⁸¹ Hick (1970: 62).

call something evil by comparing it to what is understood to be good.²⁵⁸² Something is considered evil because it can be seen to have a diminished degree of goodness.²⁵⁸³ This appears reasonable;²⁵⁸⁴ however, the diminished goodness in a creature is not replaced by non-existence, but by an actual often thriving corrupted nature within the person.²⁵⁸⁵

Hick concludes that Augustine and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)²⁵⁸⁶ were not content with merely establishing a Biblical doctrine of God's goodness and the related goodness of his creation.²⁵⁸⁷ Augustine and Aquinas were influenced by Neo-Platonic thought and equated being with goodness, so that greater existence (existence without evil) meant greater goodness.²⁵⁸⁸ Aquinas postulates that everything desired as an end is perfection,²⁵⁸⁹ and that since every nature desires its own being and perfection, this is good.²⁵⁹⁰ Therefore evil cannot signify a being, form, or nature, as evil is not desirable and is only possible by corrupting the good.²⁵⁹¹ It appears that Hick's point is reasonable,²⁵⁹² at least to the extent that greater goodness does not equal greater existence.²⁵⁹³ This is difficult to measure because as discussed previously in this work, much of traditional theology states that all creation has been corrupted.²⁵⁹⁴ We are therefore comparing imperfect creatures that are in existence with hypothetical perfect creatures, and we are attempting to judge whether or not these hypothetical creatures would have greater existence because they were perfectly good. This becomes a very speculative procedure, and I agree with

²⁵⁸² Geivett (1993: 178).

²⁵⁸³ Geivett (1993: 178).

²⁵⁸⁴ Geivett (1993: 178).

²⁵⁸⁵ Hick (1970: 62).

²⁵⁸⁶ Pojman (1996: 38).

²⁵⁸⁷ Hick (1970: 176).

²⁵⁸⁸ Hick (1970: 176). Augustine (388-395)(1964: 117). Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 7). Aquinas (1261)(1920: 1.48.1).

²⁵⁸⁹ Aquinas (1261)(1920: 1.48.1).

²⁵⁹⁰ Aquinas (1261)(1920: 1.48.1).

²⁵⁹¹ Aquinas (1261)(1920: 1.48.1).

²⁵⁹² Hick (1970: 62).

²⁵⁹³ Although I reason God is infinitely good and Satan, for example, can at best be finitely evil. But satanic power can conceivably grow.

²⁵⁹⁴ Within Augustinian and Reformed models.

Hick that the Augustinian view of God's goodness is accurate in regard to human goodness being secondary to God's, as finite beings contain finite goodness.²⁵⁹⁵ Hick, however, denies the metaphysical doctrine that human beings were created good,²⁵⁹⁶ and I would respectfully differ siding with Augustinian and Reformed traditions.²⁵⁹⁷

Free Will

Hick summarizes Augustine's free will approach: (1) human beings were created with freedom to do either good or evil,²⁵⁹⁸ (2) human beings willingly committed wrong actions, and lost the ability to do what was good according to God, and²⁵⁹⁹ (3) God had foreknowledge of the human fall and had plans for dealing with it.²⁶⁰⁰ Hick has two major objections.²⁶⁰¹ First, he views it as absurd to believe that God would make perfect human beings who lived with him in paradise, and then still favoured rebellion and disobedience.²⁶⁰² Second, Hick sees God as being ultimately responsible for sin under this proposal as God would have created beings that he knew would rebel and cause evil.²⁶⁰³

Concerning Hick's first objection,²⁶⁰⁴ I have already agreed in broad terms with Hick and Irenaeus that the original human beings were spiritually and morally immature.²⁶⁰⁵ Therefore, although it is difficult to understand how morally perfect creations would reject God, it is not a

²⁵⁹⁵ Hick (1970: 178).

²⁵⁹⁶ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²⁵⁹⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33). Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 2, 7).

²⁵⁹⁸ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁵⁹⁹ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁰⁰ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁰¹ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁰² Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁰³ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁰⁴ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁰⁵ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41). Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

philosophical absurdity for persons to rebel against God²⁶⁰⁶ because their immaturity²⁶⁰⁷ allows for the possibility of human error. This immaturity, even accepting the Augustinian, Reformed idea that God created original humanity morally perfect and sinless,²⁶⁰⁸ would allow the possibility that human beings possessing finite, immature goodness could disobey God without a comprehensive understanding of the consequences such as sin, sinful nature, alienation from God, and the need for divine restoration. Thiessen states that at some point, Adam found a sinful disposition that lead to a disobedience of God.²⁶⁰⁹ This was uncaused by God and done freely by Adam, according to Thiessen.²⁶¹⁰ Seemingly this human disposition was largely based on ignorance and lack of experience.²⁶¹¹ This was new to Adam's nature,²⁶¹² as would be the consequences of the change in his very being. Samuel J. Schultz and Gary V. Smith (2001) state that doubt and defiance were likely reasons for the first human rebellion.²⁶¹³ Doubt and defiance seem reasonable and plausible reasons to disobey God,²⁶¹⁴ especially in light of the spiritual and moral immaturity of original humanity.²⁶¹⁵ An immature human being is far more likely than a mature one to question that God is entirely correct in all his commands, and defiance leading to rebellion can take place when these doubts are fully realized.²⁶¹⁶ An experienced and mature human being who has developed spiritually and morally with God is perhaps more willing to obey commands that are not completely understood, because God has been experienced over a long period and is tested and true.

²⁶⁰⁶ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁰⁷ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41). Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

²⁶⁰⁸ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33). Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 2, 7).

²⁶⁰⁹ Thiessen (1956: 247).

²⁶¹⁰ Thiessen (1956: 247).

²⁶¹¹ Thiessen (1956: 247). Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41). Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

²⁶¹² Thiessen (1956: 247).

²⁶¹³ Schultz and Smith (2001: 15).

²⁶¹⁴ Schultz and Smith (2001: 15).

²⁶¹⁵ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41). Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

²⁶¹⁶ Schultz and Smith (2001: 15).

Steven Davis agrees with Hick,²⁶¹⁷ it is true a perfectly moral being would not sin;²⁶¹⁸ however, Davis thinks that the Biblical idea of original humanity being made very good should not be equated with moral perfection.²⁶¹⁹ Instead, original humanity should be understood as being creatures that were harmonious with the cosmos.²⁶²⁰ In other words, they were originally what God intended them to be and not corrupted, but what they were intended to be by God does not, to Davis, mean that they were morally perfect.²⁶²¹ This is a plausible explanation;²⁶²² however, in Scripture, from a traditional interpretation, post disobedience humanity is shown to be unacceptable to God, and they were expelled from the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24, according to Schultz and Smith.²⁶²³ and Victor P Hamilton.²⁶²⁴ However, if Adam and Eve were only expelled because of moral failure²⁶²⁵ and not because of changed and corrupted nature, then they were primarily exiled because they disobeyed God and failed to be what God intended them to be.²⁶²⁶ If they were morally imperfect before the fall and acceptable to live in the Garden,²⁶²⁷ then why were they not acceptable after they disobeyed God?²⁶²⁸ It seems reasonable that human beings with moral imperfection by nature would be expected to sometimes commit wrong actions,²⁶²⁹ but these errors should not cause expulsion as long as actions did not lead to a total rejection of God's rule. Would a mere failing of human beings to be exactly what they should be in Genesis 3, lead to their exile from the Garden,²⁶³⁰ and a corrupted humanity which fuels the

²⁶¹⁷ Davis (2001: 72-73). Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²⁶¹⁸ Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶¹⁹ Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶²⁰ Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶²¹ Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶²² Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶²³ Schultz and Smith (2001: 15-16).

²⁶²⁴ Hamilton (1988: 52).

²⁶²⁵ Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶²⁶ Schultz and Smith (2001: 15-16).

²⁶²⁷ Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶²⁸ Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶²⁹ Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶³⁰ Schultz and Smith (2001: 15-16). Hamilton (1988: 52).

problem of evil? If they were created morally imperfect,²⁶³¹ human error and disobedience that was not complete rebellion against God would seemingly be expected and acceptable to God because the creator would know that morally imperfect creatures would not act morally perfect. If Davis is correct,²⁶³² there would not have been any change in the nature of humanity after their disobedience. It would have remained imperfect,²⁶³³ but God's reaction of throwing humanity out of his presence and the resulting apparent sinful nature, appears to point to the idea of a critical change in human nature.²⁶³⁴ The changed nature and resulting growth of sin²⁶³⁵ was a major part of what caused the problem of evil to become a menace. Geivett criticizes Hick's argument and notes that spiritual immaturity is not necessarily constitutive of a moral defect.²⁶³⁶ He reasons that original humanity could have been morally innocent,²⁶³⁷ capable of committing wrong actions, without possessing a morally imperfect nature.²⁶³⁸ I deem this as reasonable, although Hick and Davis have raised a plausible intellectual objection.²⁶³⁹

Concerning Hick's second objection,²⁶⁴⁰ that God is ultimately responsible for sin and the problem of evil within an Augustinian system, I agree that this is a logical perspective and true in a sense;²⁶⁴¹ however, this does not automatically indicate that God is by implication a contradictory or sinful, evil, deity.²⁶⁴² The buck does ultimately stop with God in regard to the problem of evil, as Luther and Calvin noted that God used evil for good purposes.²⁶⁴³ From a traditional theological position, it is God's universe and his creation, and since he is infinite and

²⁶³¹ Davis (2001: 72-73). Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²⁶³² Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶³³ Davis (2001: 72-73). Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²⁶³⁴ Schultz and Smith (2001: 15-16). Hamilton (1988: 52-53).

²⁶³⁵ Hamilton (1988: 52- 53).

²⁶³⁶ Geivett (1993: 202-203).

²⁶³⁷ Geivett (1993: 202-203).

²⁶³⁸ Geivett (1993: 202-203).

²⁶³⁹ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41). Davis (2001: 72-73).

²⁶⁴⁰ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁴¹ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁴² As discussed within Chapter Three.

²⁶⁴³ Luther (1525)(1972: 130). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

omnipotent, he has the power to rid the universe of evil.²⁶⁴⁴ Feinberg pointed out in Chapter Three, a perfectly holy God could have good reasons for willingly allowing the problem of evil within his creation.²⁶⁴⁵ Hick's soul-making theory and similar approaches could also provide plausible reasons for God willingly allowing evil within his creation,²⁶⁴⁶ as both sovereignty and soul-making theodicy speculate that the human struggle with evil can lead to greater human development with God's help.²⁶⁴⁷ It would appear feasible that an infinite, omnipotent, omniscient God would be able to willingly allow rebellion from his creations with good personal intentions on his part,²⁶⁴⁸ and then gradually, throughout time and history, work out matters according to his plans.²⁶⁴⁹

As God is considered omniscient within a traditional theological framework,²⁶⁵⁰ he has foreknowledge of all human decisions to commit wrong actions and can plan to turn these things towards the greater good.²⁶⁵¹ Leibniz notes in *Theodicy*, God's knowledge of future events in itself does not make them determinate, rather because certain things will occur, God foreknows them.²⁶⁵² This concept means that God can foresee human rebellion as he knows all human souls, but he does not force or coerce persons to oppose him.²⁶⁵³ However, since I accept that God is an infinite and omnipotent deity,²⁶⁵⁴ I think it reasonable that he has the ability to influence through circumstances certain individuals to commit wrong actions, but I would consider it possible for

²⁶⁴⁴ God is sovereign. Pink (1968: 20). Geisler (1986: 63).

²⁶⁴⁵ Feinberg (1994: 130).

²⁶⁴⁶ Hick (1970: 292).

²⁶⁴⁷ Feinberg (1994: 130). Hick (1970: 292).

²⁶⁴⁸ Feinberg (1994: 130). Hick (1970: 292).

²⁶⁴⁹ Feinberg (1994: 130). Hick (1970: 292).

²⁶⁵⁰ As discussed within Chapter One.

²⁶⁵¹ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 144). Augustine (426)(1958: 106).

²⁶⁵² Leibniz (1710)(1998: 144). Augustine (426)(1958: 106).

²⁶⁵³ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 144).

²⁶⁵⁴ This is discussed primarily within Chapter One.

God to remain pure in nature as his motives remain good, as Luther and Calvin noted.²⁶⁵⁵ There are Biblical examples of God influencing persons to commit evil,²⁶⁵⁶ such as hardening Pharaoh's heart in the book of Exodus, as Robert P. Gordon (1986) explains.²⁶⁵⁷ Gordon notes that it can be gathered from the text that Pharaoh also hardened his own heart,²⁶⁵⁸ but we need not baulk at the idea of God influencing a person towards evil.²⁶⁵⁹ Gordon states that God is the first cause of everything,²⁶⁶⁰ and that he is ultimately responsible for the well being of some, and the disappointment of others.²⁶⁶¹ This is, of course, a difficult concept to deal with,²⁶⁶² but it seems reasonable that God could remain pure in motive and harden a rebellious heart to commit evil actions against the people of Israel in order to facilitate the Exodus.²⁶⁶³ If Gordon's idea is correct,²⁶⁶⁴ then God could willingly allow all evil, and even at times be a major influence in it occurring,²⁶⁶⁵ but this would all be part of his sovereign and good plans.

Donald E. Gowan (1994) calls the idea of God hardening Pharaoh's heart a perennial problem,²⁶⁶⁶ but he says that he will not try to soften what the Biblical text states by claiming that God is merely confirming the evil intentions of Pharaoh.²⁶⁶⁷ Gowan concludes that there may be a problem for systematic theology,²⁶⁶⁸ but clearly the sovereignty of God is a central concept in the text.²⁶⁶⁹ Gowan implies that God is somehow influencing the actions of Pharaoh, and these

²⁶⁵⁵ Luther (1525)(1972: 130). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

²⁶⁵⁶ Gordon (1986: 159).

²⁶⁵⁷ Gordon (1986: 159).

²⁶⁵⁸ Gordon (1986: 159).

²⁶⁵⁹ Gordon (1986: 159).

²⁶⁶⁰ Gordon (1986: 159). Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²⁶⁶¹ Gordon (1986: 159).

²⁶⁶² And is an important aspect of the debate between concepts of incompatibilism, compatibilism and hard determinism.

²⁶⁶³ Gordon (1986: 159).

²⁶⁶⁴ Gordon (1986: 159).

²⁶⁶⁵ Gordon (1986: 159). Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

²⁶⁶⁶ Gowan (1994: 138).

²⁶⁶⁷ Gowan (1994: 138).

²⁶⁶⁸ Gowan (1994: 138).

²⁶⁶⁹ Gowan (1994: 138).

actions parallel the king's hard heart.²⁶⁷⁰ There exists the theological possibility that God foreknew the heart and inclination of Pharaoh and planned to influence him towards evil.²⁶⁷¹

I would conclude that God's creation of beings which he knew would rebel within the Augustinian and Reformed traditions, is not incoherent or contradiction.²⁶⁷² Hick is correct.²⁶⁷³ God bares the ultimate responsibility of having evil occur within the universe,²⁶⁷⁴ however, if the Augustinian and Reformed traditions can demonstrate God does not coerce or force his creations to sin,²⁶⁷⁵ Hick's second objection²⁶⁷⁶ may be overcome because God's essential nature and intentions will be shown to be good²⁶⁷⁷ despite the rebellion that God willingly allows.

Hell

John Hick strongly disagrees with the Augustinian tradition of an everlasting hell.²⁶⁷⁸ Within this approach, the idea that significantly free persons reject God and do not repent and follow the creator,²⁶⁷⁹ leads to a conclusion that God will issue post-mortem punishment of these people.²⁶⁸⁰ Hick reasons such a view is a product of religious imagination.²⁶⁸¹ He writes that the everlasting hell idea has served the Christian Church well throughout history because it demonstrated the cosmic drama that separates humankind from God and Christ.²⁶⁸² Hick, however, sees the fatal flaws within the view of everlasting hell as necessarily leading those who

²⁶⁷⁰ Gowan (1994: 138).

²⁶⁷¹ Gowan (1994: 138).

²⁶⁷² Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

²⁶⁷³ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁷⁴ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁷⁵ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

²⁶⁷⁶ Hick (1970: 75).

²⁶⁷⁷ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

²⁶⁷⁸ Hick (1970: 284).

²⁶⁷⁹ Hick (1970: 284).

²⁶⁸⁰ Hick (1970: 284).

²⁶⁸¹ Hick (1970: 284).

²⁶⁸² Hick (1970: 284).

study theodicy in the modern era to reject such a doctrine.²⁶⁸³ He notes since everlasting punishment would not assist in soul-making that it would be unconstructive, constituting the largest part of the problem of evil.²⁶⁸⁴ Since the universe would forever contain the evil of rebellious persons, God's creation would permanently be spoiled and ultimately a failure.²⁶⁸⁵ Clark Pinnock (1992) describes a conditional immortality view within the *Four Views on Hell* text by William V. Crockett.²⁶⁸⁶ Pinnock explains that reconciliation and redemption would be questionable within heaven if evil existed in hell forever.²⁶⁸⁷ Surely God would have to abolish all evil in his new creation postulates Pinnock.²⁶⁸⁸ The subject of everlasting punishment is not central,²⁶⁸⁹ and therefore as seen within this thesis is not reviewed within the theodicy work of Augustine, Plantinga, or Feinberg. Everlasting hell was connected by Hick to Augustinian and Reformed thought,²⁶⁹⁰ but arguments for or against everlasting hell are not directly related to free will or sovereignty theodicy.²⁶⁹¹

²⁶⁸³ Hick (1970: 284-285).

²⁶⁸⁴ Hick (1970: 377). It can be deduced that everlasting hell is a realm that is not an aspect of God's creation intended for human development. It would not have to be free from the problem of evil. Our present universe would be restored through Christ and the problem of evil ended. Any everlasting hell would not constitute, in our context, the largest aspect of the problem of evil.

²⁶⁸⁵ Hick (1970: 378).

²⁶⁸⁶ Pinnock in Crockett (1992: 154).

²⁶⁸⁷ Pinnock in Crockett (1992: 154).

²⁶⁸⁸ Pinnock in Crockett (1992: 154). Browning suggests everlasting hell concepts such as Hades may relate to the Christian, New Testament use of ancient myths that consisted of the 'descent of deities to the underworld,' such as Orpheus, Eurydice and Persephone. Christ may be understood to have descended here after his death (First Peter 3: 19). Browning (1997: 168).

²⁶⁸⁹ It is a related issue to the study of theodicy.

²⁶⁹⁰ Hick (1970: 284).

²⁶⁹¹ Hick (1970: 284).

3. A Modern Theodicy

Evolution of the Soul

Hick's soul-making theodicy rejects the idea of humanity having been created perfect and in a finished state;²⁶⁹² instead Hick views persons as being in a process of spiritual evolution.²⁶⁹³ F.R. Tennant (1930)(1956) writes an evolutionary type theodicy²⁶⁹⁴ and notes that a world characterized by static perfection is incompatible with our known world of evolutionary process.²⁶⁹⁵ As noted previously, Hick writes that some form of a two-stage creation of humanity²⁶⁹⁶ must be accepted by Christian theodicy in order to provide an effective modern, progressive approach.²⁶⁹⁷ Human beings must, through uncompelled responses and co-operation with the creator, become children of God.²⁶⁹⁸ As discussed, Hick notes importantly that the soul-making evolutionary process would not be caused by natural and inevitable human progress.²⁶⁹⁹

Although there has been some ethical progress throughout history,²⁷⁰⁰ the morality of humanity remains much the same as it has always been.²⁷⁰¹ To Hick, humanity is not being developed by a preset divine evolutionary condition towards godliness,²⁷⁰² but rather God will evolve individuals through a personal spiritual experience within each person.²⁷⁰³ Tennant believes that in future ages good may begin to gain over evil in accelerated speed,²⁷⁰⁴ but he

²⁶⁹² Hick (1970: 284).

²⁶⁹³ Hick (1970: 289-290).

²⁶⁹⁴ Tennant (1930)(1956: 184).

²⁶⁹⁵ Tennant (1930)(1956: 184).

²⁶⁹⁶ Hick (1970: 291).

²⁶⁹⁷ Hick (1970: 291).

²⁶⁹⁸ Hick (1970: 291).

²⁶⁹⁹ Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁰⁰ Western secularism has placed an importance on human rights in regard to women's rights and the rights of ethnic minorities. However, Gebara would state that women's suffering worldwide need to be better understood through a feminist construct. There is a male view of evil that has been predominant throughout Christian history. Gebara (2002: 4-6).

²⁷⁰¹ Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁰² Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁰³ Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁰⁴ Tennant (1930)(1956: 195).

acknowledges that evil may continue everlastingly, while never being able to overcome good.²⁷⁰⁵

Hick, in reviewing Tennant's work on theodicy, views the possibility of everlasting evil as gravely weakening Tennant's evolutionary approach.²⁷⁰⁶ It would not guarantee a completely successful teleological²⁷⁰⁷ theodicy in which all human beings are eventually redeemed by God.²⁷⁰⁸ Hick states that there is a universal human process which will continue in most post-mortem souls, as only a few have a proper understanding of God while on earth.²⁷⁰⁹

D.Z. Phillips (2001) criticizes Hick's view that evolution will continue within humanity after death, noting this implies that the earthly process obviously failed.²⁷¹⁰ Phillips strongly disagrees with Hick's position calling it horrendous that human beings should be expected to trust in the idea that death is an actual state and everything will work out for the best.²⁷¹¹ John K. Roth (2001) provides a similar objection when he states that Hick's progressive theodicy is just too good to be true.²⁷¹² Although, in general terms, I do accept a concept of divine soul-making, both of the above objections²⁷¹³ are serious ones. Phillips critique seems correct.²⁷¹⁴ It is apparent in many cases soul-making fails in certain individuals this side of the grave.²⁷¹⁵ This being the case, why should critics necessarily believe that God will redeem all post-mortem souls?²⁷¹⁶ If there was little or no evidence from an individual's life of a disposition towards God while they were alive,²⁷¹⁷ then why should it be accepted that there will be a change in attitude after

²⁷⁰⁵ Tennant (1930)(1956: 195).

²⁷⁰⁶ Hick (1970: 252-253).

²⁷⁰⁷ Bloesch (1987: 19).

²⁷⁰⁸ Hick (1970: 252-253).

²⁷⁰⁹ Hick in Davis (2001: 51). Phillips (2005: 87).

²⁷¹⁰ Phillips in Davis (2001: 56). Phillips (2005: 87).

²⁷¹¹ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58).

²⁷¹² Roth in Davis (2001: 62). Hick's theodicy is too speculative and sentimental.

²⁷¹³ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58). Roth in Davis (2001: 62).

²⁷¹⁴ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58).

²⁷¹⁵ Phillips in Davis (2001: 56).

²⁷¹⁶ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58).

²⁷¹⁷ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58).

death?²⁷¹⁸ The philosophical assumption of universalism appears very speculative on Hick's part.²⁷¹⁹ Phillips correctly points out that life after death is not scientific fact and Hick is trusting in a hypothetical state for the eventual demise of the problem of evil.²⁷²⁰ Hick is resting his theodicy on the idea that if this state actually exists, persons that previously had rejected God would eventually change their ways bringing about a Kingdom of God without rebellion.²⁷²¹ Phillips, correctly in my view, points out that Hick 'does not treat human life seriously enough.'²⁷²²

Hick and Human Freedom

Hick deals with the compatibilistic views of Antony Flew and J.L. Mackie, which were discussed in Chapter Two.²⁷²³ Hick explains their understanding that God could have made human creatures in a way they always freely committed right actions.²⁷²⁴ He admits that the conclusions of Flew and Mackie are logically correct in that it would be possible for God to create persons so they would always freely act rightly towards each other.²⁷²⁵ Hick, contrary to Flew and Mackie, states it was not logically possible for God to create human beings so they would freely respond to him in love and faith.²⁷²⁶ Hick postulates that God, without contradiction could create human beings that would always freely act justly to each other,²⁷²⁷ but the same

²⁷¹⁸ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58).

²⁷¹⁹ Hick in Davis (2001: 51).

²⁷²⁰ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58).

²⁷²¹ Hick (1970: 252-253). Phillips is skeptical that the human race will morally improve as Hicks understands it. Phillips (2005: 89).

²⁷²² Phillips (2005: 89). Hick does not treat the empirical temporal life seriously enough.

²⁷²³ Hick (1970: 303). Flew (1955: 150-153). Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

²⁷²⁴ Hick (1970: 303).

²⁷²⁵ Hick (1970: 308).

²⁷²⁶ Hick (1970: 308).

²⁷²⁷ Hick (1970: 311).

cannot be guaranteed for a free and sincere human love for God.²⁷²⁸

Geivett explains that Hick rejects a traditional free will approach²⁷²⁹ by agreeing with Flew and Mackie²⁷³⁰ that God could have guaranteed persons would remain both free and perfectly good, even if only in regard to each other.²⁷³¹ This would be consistent with Hick's overall rejection of the Augustinian tradition in regard to theodicy.²⁷³² Geivett views Hick as allowing that God could grant persons the moral freedom to not commit wrong actions against each other,²⁷³³ but God could not guarantee persons the religious freedom to love and follow him.²⁷³⁴ Geivett claims that Hick is making a false distinction between moral and religious freedom, as it seems possible that significantly free persons who always treated each other justly, would by nature treat God justly and follow their creator.²⁷³⁵ If for the sake of religious freedom, God could not have originally made significantly free human beings that would always act rightly and obey their creator,²⁷³⁶ then why should it be accepted that God would eventually bring this about freely through soul-making?²⁷³⁷ Geivett raises a difficult intellectual problem for Hick's theodicy.²⁷³⁸

If God could not create persons that would always freely love him because of human religious freedom,²⁷³⁹ then this freedom would have to somehow be overridden through divine action in order for universal redemption to take place.²⁷⁴⁰ God would need to use some type of compatibilism, or even perhaps hard determinism, to guarantee that all of humanity would

²⁷²⁸ Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷²⁹ Such as Plantinga's view.

²⁷³⁰ Flew (1955: 150-153). Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

²⁷³¹ Geivett (1993: 195).

²⁷³² Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

²⁷³³ Geivett (1993: 195). Hick (1970: 308).

²⁷³⁴ Geivett (1993: 195). Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷³⁵ Geivett (1993: 195).

²⁷³⁶ Geivett (1993: 195). Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷³⁷ Geivett (1993: 195).

²⁷³⁸ Geivett (1993: 195).

²⁷³⁹ Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷⁴⁰ Hick in Davis (2001: 51).

eventually live in harmony with their creator.²⁷⁴¹ At some point, for God to redeem all of humanity²⁷⁴² he would seemingly need to violate Hick's own concept of religious freedom, which prevented God from initially creating significantly free beings that would always do what was right in regard to their creator.²⁷⁴³ It seems reasonable that if Hick thinks both Flew's and Mackie's compatibilism is correct in regard to moral freedom between human beings,²⁷⁴⁴ then it is difficult to appeal to a religious freedom based on a free will approach which states that eventually all persons will follow God, but could not initially.²⁷⁴⁵ If universal soul-making would eventually occur,²⁷⁴⁶ then it appears that God must somehow persuade, mould, or in some way determine persons with the use of compatibilism, which is in line with the thinking of Calvin, Feinberg and this author. Hick, however, rejects this type of theology stating that it is extreme and uncompromising.²⁷⁴⁷

Hick answers Geivett in the 'Afterword' of Geivett's text by stating the following: (1) Due to God's omnipotence, it is logically necessary that all will be contingently²⁷⁴⁸ saved through human free will.²⁷⁴⁹ (2) It is not logical by necessity²⁷⁵⁰ that all will be saved, but universalism will occur through the use of human free will.²⁷⁵¹ Therefore universalism will not take place because of necessity,²⁷⁵² but because of the contingent use of human free will.²⁷⁵³ Hick seems

²⁷⁴¹ Hard determinism would cancel out significant human freedom.

²⁷⁴² Hick in Davis (2001: 51).

²⁷⁴³ Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷⁴⁴ Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷⁴⁵ Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷⁴⁶ Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

²⁷⁴⁷ Hick (1970: 126). It may be that Hick's insistence on universal salvation causes him to be uncompromising on alternative views which allow, for example, for the continuation of evil within Tennant's theodicy, as well as with his difficulties accepting Reformed perspectives. Tennant (1930)(1956: 195). Hick (1970: 252-253).

²⁷⁴⁸ A proposition is contingent if its denial is logically possible. Pojman (1996: 596).

²⁷⁴⁹ Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

²⁷⁵⁰ A proposition that cannot logically be false. Pojman (1996: 598).

²⁷⁵¹ Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

²⁷⁵² Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

²⁷⁵³ Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

logical as he separates contingently from necessity in regard to universal salvation,²⁷⁵⁴ although Geivett seemingly deems this approach contradictory.²⁷⁵⁵ Hick may not violate logic here, but his idea that God will contingently, necessarily save everyone with their own free will,²⁷⁵⁶ seems problematic if God cannot, with the use of compatibilism, strongly persuade and mould human beings, which previously had rejected following their maker.

Even if Hick avoids contradiction,²⁷⁵⁷ he is left with the problem of explaining why human free will, specifically religious freedom, without God using compatibilism or hard determinism, would eventually lead to humanity universally following God,²⁷⁵⁸ when religious freedom prevented persons from doing so when human beings were first created.²⁷⁵⁹ It seems reasonable that if human religious freedom prevented all of humanity from following God in the beginning of human existence,²⁷⁶⁰ then it could very well continue to do so forever.²⁷⁶¹ This appears likely, because soul-making without God's use of compatibilistic persuasion and a moulding of the will, would not change the nature of each person substantially enough to guarantee universal redemption. As noted earlier, it appears that many reject God this side of the grave.²⁷⁶² It would seem, if there is life after death, that their religious freedom²⁷⁶³ could very well be leading them continually away from God as opposed to bringing them closer to their creator.²⁷⁶⁴

²⁷⁵⁴ Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

²⁷⁵⁵ Geivett (1993: 194-195).

²⁷⁵⁶ Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

²⁷⁵⁷ Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

²⁷⁵⁸ Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷⁵⁹ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58).

²⁷⁶⁰ Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷⁶¹ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58). Roth in Davis (2001: 62).

²⁷⁶² Phillips in Davis (2001: 56).

²⁷⁶³ Hick (1970: 311).

²⁷⁶⁴ Phillips in Davis (2001: 58).

4. Genuine Evil?

Gratuitous Evil?

When discussing eschatology,²⁷⁶⁵ Hick asks if evil is really good from a divine perspective, only seeming to be bad from a human point of view, or is evil really a bad thing?²⁷⁶⁶ Hick insists evil is genuinely evil and not good,²⁷⁶⁷ and that God has willed it for greater purposes.²⁷⁶⁸ Hick views God as ordaining genuine evil as a means within his creation to form the infinite good of a Kingdom of God which will feature significantly free creatures that will love and serve him.²⁷⁶⁹

C. Robert Mesle (1986) states that Hick's approach has the same problem as every classical theistic concept, that being a denial of genuine evil.²⁷⁷⁰ He notes that Hick risks making God into a devil as he has God ultimately responsible for evil,²⁷⁷¹ and if Hick denies that God can prevent evil, he ceases to be a classical theist.²⁷⁷² Mesle writes that Hick's position would be stronger if he admitted that not every evil led to something good occurring.²⁷⁷³ He thinks that much of the evil in existence is unredeemed and can be called gratuitous evil which is unnecessary evil,²⁷⁷⁴ and is more harmful than good for humanity.²⁷⁷⁵ Gratuitous evil, as an argument, is also known as the evidential argument for evil²⁷⁷⁶ and has been presented by atheistic philosopher William Rowe (1990) on more than one occasion. He presents an argument

²⁷⁶⁵ Hick (1970: 398-399).

²⁷⁶⁶ Hick (1970: 398-399).

²⁷⁶⁷ Hick (1970: 398-399).

²⁷⁶⁸ Hick (1970: 398-399).

²⁷⁶⁹ Hick (1970: 398-399).

²⁷⁷⁰ Mesle (1986: 418).

²⁷⁷¹ Mesle (1986: 418).

²⁷⁷² Mesle (1986: 418).

²⁷⁷³ Mesle (1986: 424).

²⁷⁷⁴ Mesle (1986: 424).

²⁷⁷⁵ Mesle (1986: 424).

²⁷⁷⁶ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

for gratuitous evil²⁷⁷⁷ in ‘The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism’ in *The Problem of Evil*.

Rowe’s evidential argument for evil²⁷⁷⁸ states the following propositions:

- (1) God, an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being exists.²⁷⁷⁹
- (2) Gratuitous evil exists.²⁷⁸⁰
- (3) A perfectly good being would always eliminate gratuitous evil as far as it possibly can.
- (4) There are absolutely no limits to what an omnipotent being can do.²⁷⁸¹

Rowe concludes that there is no good state of affairs where an omnipotent, omniscient being would be justified in allowing evils where no possible good can arise from them taking place;²⁷⁸² he also calls these inscrutable evils, which are evils that cannot be understood.²⁷⁸³

Rowe’s proposition (1) seems reasonable from a traditional Christian perspective.²⁷⁸⁴ Proposition (2) is debatable because it assumes that concepts of those within sovereignty and soul-making theodicy are incorrect and that an infinite, omnipotent God cannot use all wrong actions by creatures for the greater good.²⁷⁸⁵ Proposition (2) really does not prove anything, but simply states a disagreement between Rowe and many within Christian theism on whether or not God’s purposes are being fulfilled, even when horrendous evils occur. Rowe states that there is too much evil that does not make sense in existence.²⁷⁸⁶ Numerous theists would answer that although finite human beings cannot know the purpose of evil, God has a purpose.²⁷⁸⁷ The

²⁷⁷⁷ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁷⁸ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁷⁹ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁸⁰ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁸¹ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁸² Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁸³ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁸⁴ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 89-99).

²⁷⁸⁵ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40). Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁸⁶ Rowe (1990: 3).

²⁷⁸⁷ Hick (1970: 292).

human being is therefore unable to truly judge if too much evil exists. Proposition (3)²⁷⁸⁸ is questionable because it builds upon the debatable proposition (2).²⁷⁸⁹ It assumes that God cannot use all evil towards the greater good,²⁷⁹⁰ and since gratuitous evil would exist, it implies that God likely is not a perfectly good being.²⁷⁹¹ Proposition (4) can be challenged by the theist, because although God technically could rid the world of evil, both Feinberg and Hick for example,²⁷⁹² have provided good reasons why the creator would allow preventable evil.²⁷⁹³ Feinberg states that eliminating evil would prohibit other divine plans for the greater good,²⁷⁹⁴ and Hick writes that God must allow a hostile imperfect environment in order for soul-making to occur.²⁷⁹⁵

Rowe has written a logical argument, but it is not necessarily true because theists can debate proposition (2) and claim the infinite, perfectly good God can always use the evil actions of his finite creations for the greater good.²⁷⁹⁶ It also can be stated concerning proposition (3) that as Calvin noted, God's motives would remain pure even while horrendous evils take place, and God need not be less than perfectly good.²⁷⁹⁷ This would seem reasonable and possible for an infinite deity²⁷⁹⁸ to accomplish as he is dealing with finite creatures that could never match him in morality, power, and knowledge.

Frances and Daniel Howard-Snyder (1999) reason that a way to deny premise (3) is to state that there is no such thing as a minimum amount of suffering that God must allow in order

²⁷⁸⁸ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁸⁹ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁹⁰ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁹¹ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

²⁷⁹² Feinberg (1994: 130). Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁹³ Feinberg (1994: 130).

²⁷⁹⁴ Feinberg (1994: 130). Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁹⁵ Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁹⁶ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40). Hick (1970: 292).

²⁷⁹⁷ Calvin (1543)(1996: 40).

²⁷⁹⁸ Sproul and Wolgemuth (2000: 2). Thiessen (1956: 127). This claim was debated within Chapter One and some hold to concepts of a limited God. Brightman (1940: 336). James (1892-1907)(1969: 203). Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 24). Whitehead (1927-1929)(1957: 404).

for the greater good to be accomplished.²⁷⁹⁹ This idea would not accept the critic's notion that there is a minimum amount of evil and suffering that God must allow in a situation,²⁸⁰⁰ and if he goes beyond that amount, gratuitous evil has occurred and God therefore does not exist.²⁸⁰¹ Jeff Jordan (2003) disagrees and argues that the no minimum amount of evil and suffering claim is false or implausible,²⁸⁰² because for any distribution of evil for divine purposes, there is always a less painful distribution that would accomplish the same purposes.²⁸⁰³ This is possible,²⁸⁰⁴ but I think it more likely that for each varying amount of evil and suffering that God willingly allows, there are resulting amounts of greater good or evil that occur. There is the possibility that if God allows a certain amount of evil and suffering in a given situation, the greater good will not occur and therefore God would not allow this amount of evil and suffering to take place. As well, since the amount of evil and suffering is largely related to the amount of greater good, it is not likely that a smaller amount could accomplish the same results as a greater amount.²⁸⁰⁵ The amount of evil and suffering that occurs in a situation, or if no significant evil or suffering whatsoever is willed by God in a situation, would be determined by God's plans for the greater good each time. I therefore doubt Jordan's claim that a less painful distribution of evil would accomplish the exact same purposes.²⁸⁰⁶

Mesle (1991) notes that if God was truly omnipotent and had moral values equal to the best human ones as we understand them,²⁸⁰⁷ then there would be less suffering in the world.²⁸⁰⁸

²⁷⁹⁹ Howard-Snyder (1999: 129).

²⁸⁰⁰ Howard-Snyder (1999: 129).

²⁸⁰¹ Howard-Snyder (1999: 129).

²⁸⁰² Jordan (2003: 238).

²⁸⁰³ Jordan (2003: 238).

²⁸⁰⁴ Jordan (2003: 238).

²⁸⁰⁵ Contrary to what Jordon assumes.

²⁸⁰⁶ Jordan (2003: 238).

²⁸⁰⁷ Mesle (1991: 15).

²⁸⁰⁸ Mesle (1991: 15).

He states that Hick misses the point by not acknowledging gratuitous evil²⁸⁰⁹ as Hick sees that all evil must play a redemptive role for humanity.²⁸¹⁰ Hick answers this objection within a section of *John Hick's Theodicy* (1991)²⁸¹¹ where he writes that the existence of an enormous amount of evil does not entail that God cannot work his ultimate good purposes.²⁸¹² He comments that evils are not rendered good, or turned into merely apparent evil by the fact that God can turn them towards a good purpose.²⁸¹³ It should be stated that natural evils are not a major concern within Hick's soul-making theodicy.²⁸¹⁴ This is because he thinks that human beings must exist in a challenging, dangerous environment in order for human progress to be made.²⁸¹⁵ For this reason natural evils would be a natural means which could assist God in potentially building souls.²⁸¹⁶

5. Summary and Practical Theology

Three practical theological ramifications of an acceptance of soul-making theodicy will be discussed briefly.

First, Hick understands theodicy and the human problem of evil in evolutionary terms.²⁸¹⁷ As noted this is not primarily scientific evolution but spiritual in nature.²⁸¹⁸ For those that reject Augustinian and Reformed approaches to theodicy, an evolutionary theodicy that allows for human error without ultimate condemnation may appear progressive in thought.²⁸¹⁹ An acceptance of Hick's soul-making view, or similar evolutionary theory in regard to the human

²⁸⁰⁹ Mesle (1991: 38).

²⁸¹⁰ Mesle (1991: 38).

²⁸¹¹ Hick in Mesle (1991: 130).

²⁸¹² Hick in Mesle (1991: 130).

²⁸¹³ Hick in Mesle (1991: 130).

²⁸¹⁴ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

²⁸¹⁵ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

²⁸¹⁶ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

²⁸¹⁷ Hick (1970: 289-290).

²⁸¹⁸ Hick (1970: 292).

²⁸¹⁹ Hick in Davis (2001: 41).

soul,²⁸²⁰ would allow for the rejection of traditional understanding of sin and punishment. Human error would not primarily be a bad thing to be condemned by those within the Christian Church as sin,²⁸²¹ but rather in some ways human moral mistakes could be considered a good thing,²⁸²² by which human development occurs.²⁸²³ This type of evolutionary soul-making concept of human progression would not deny that bad things occur,²⁸²⁴ but would insist that God can work things for the greater good without ultimately condemning humanity.²⁸²⁵ Hick, like Calvin, believes that God turns truly evil acts towards the greater good,²⁸²⁶ but unlike Calvin, Hick optimistically assumes the universal salvation of humanity.²⁸²⁷ Hick's theory allows the religious exclusivism of traditional Christianity in regard to everlasting salvation to be abandoned, according to Kreeft and Tacelli.²⁸²⁸ Within universalism there is essentially one road for all of humanity to follow to know God, and according to Hick that road will eventually be followed by every single person.²⁸²⁹ Pragmatically speaking for a secular world, soul-making theory and universalism in a sense,²⁸³⁰ provides much more comforting practical theology, than a view that excludes those outside of Christ. I can acknowledge this fact, even as I reject the notion of universal salvation in favour of a traditional Christian view.²⁸³¹

Second, Hick's theodicy maintains human free will in regard to fellowship with God.

Hick thinks that God will not use a Reformed type compatibilism to mould people into following

²⁸²⁰ Such as Tennant's.

²⁸²¹ Hick in Davis (2001: 41).

²⁸²² Howard-Snyder (1999: 129).

²⁸²³ Hick in Davis (2001: 41).

²⁸²⁴ Hick (1970: 399). Hick (1970: 381).

²⁸²⁵ Hick (1970: 399). Hick (1970: 381).

²⁸²⁶ Hick in Mesle (1991: 130). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

²⁸²⁷ Hick in Mesle (1991: 130).

²⁸²⁸ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 318-319).

²⁸²⁹ Hick (1978: 13). Hick in Mesle (1991: 130). Smid (1999: 12).

²⁸³⁰ Hick (1978: 13). Hick in Mesle (1991: 130). Smid (1999: 12).

²⁸³¹ Which is primarily Reformed.

the creator.²⁸³² He reasons that given enough time and existence after death, people will freely choose to follow God, as resistance will have been exhausted.²⁸³³ Hick's theodicy should encourage persons to freely pursue God and spirituality, and this openness may allow opportunity for religious workers, Christian and otherwise, a chance to evangelize. Gebara explains that persons should have freedom in word and act,²⁸³⁴ and soul-making theodicy has a commitment to human freedom of choice in regard to religious thought that denies the heavy divine influence of Reformed theology and Calvinism or Augustinian thought.²⁸³⁵ Pragmatically the freedom expressed within Hick's soul-making theodicy will draw certain people to religious worship that would never accept a traditional Christian framework, in particular a Reformed one.²⁸³⁶

Third, since Hick believes that souls continue to develop post-mortem,²⁸³⁷ his theodicy provides practical comfort to those who have lost loved ones. People whose loved ones lived less than exemplary lives can hope for better things in the future,²⁸³⁸ and persons still alive that have experienced disappointing lives can hope that existence post-mortem will improve.²⁸³⁹ Those such as Clarence Darrow, who wrote 'The Myth of the Soul' in *The Forum*,²⁸⁴⁰ would disagree claiming belief in the afterlife was a product of blind religious faith, ignoring facts.²⁸⁴¹ Phillips and Roth raised similar objections against Hick's view, claiming there was no good

²⁸³² Hick (1970: 126).

²⁸³³ Hick in Geivett (1993: 236).

²⁸³⁴ Gebara (2002: 154).

²⁸³⁵ Hick (1970: 126).

²⁸³⁶ Some within the progressive liberal wing of the Church may embrace Hick's view in a strong fashion, and many including myself although not adherents of his theodicy do see God as using some type of soul-making/soul-building within human history in order to culminate the Kingdom of God which suitable human citizens.

²⁸³⁷ Hick (1978: 13).

²⁸³⁸ Hick (1978: 13).

²⁸³⁹ Hick (1978: 13).

²⁸⁴⁰ Darrow (1928)(1973: 266-267).

²⁸⁴¹ Darrow (1928)(1973: 267).

reason to think that the human condition would become better after death.²⁸⁴² For those that deny the existence of the human soul, soul-making would seem untenable and ‘wild dreams’ and ‘hopeless hopes’ as Darrow states.²⁸⁴³ However, for those within mainline, liberal Christian traditions and other religious systems that believe in a spirit or soul that exists after death, an improved quality of life for all persons after this earthly life,²⁸⁴⁴ can be a thing to be considered and welcomed. Delton Lewis Scudder explains that within an evolutionary system God can work out final victory for good over evil²⁸⁴⁵ and provide immortality for persons in a progressively suitable physical condition.²⁸⁴⁶ Tennant (1930) writes that Supreme Being is a God of the living and not of the dead,²⁸⁴⁷ and that this God would respect persons and not cut them off with everlasting death, but provide them with everlasting life.²⁸⁴⁸ An evolutionary theodicy that believes in soul-making provides all of humanity with the hope that post-mortem existence²⁸⁴⁹ will be good and an improvement from earthly life.

²⁸⁴² Phillips in Davis (2001: 58). Roth in Davis (2001: 62).

²⁸⁴³ Darrow (1928)(1973: 267).

²⁸⁴⁴ Hick (1978: 13).

²⁸⁴⁵ Scudder (1940: 253).

²⁸⁴⁶ Scudder (1940: 253).

²⁸⁴⁷ Tennant (1930: 205).

²⁸⁴⁸ Tennant (1930: 205).

²⁸⁴⁹ Hick (1978: 13).

CHAPTER FIVE

PRACTICAL/EMPIRICAL THEOLOGY AND THEODICY

1. Introduction

Practical Theology Definition

Don S Browning (1985)(2005) writes practical theology should be a public enterprise that consists of theological reflection on church ministry in the world,²⁸⁵⁰ and should also deal with the theology of professional ministerial activity within the church.²⁸⁵¹ Practical theology when done properly would have both an ecclesial and public direction.²⁸⁵² Ray S. Anderson (2001) explains that practical theology examines how God works through the ministry of human beings in this world.²⁸⁵³ The Church is the primary mode of mediation to the world through the Holy Spirit.²⁸⁵⁴ Gerben Heitink (1983) reasons practical theology is a theory of action that features empirically orientated theological notions that are a meditation of the Christian faith in modern society.²⁸⁵⁵ For Heitink, practical theology needs to take empirical data very seriously as further theological theory is developed.²⁸⁵⁶ Practical theology, like theoretical theology, uses the

²⁸⁵⁰ Browning (1985)(2005: 2).

²⁸⁵¹ Browning (1985)(2005: 2).

²⁸⁵² Browning (1985)(2005: 2).

²⁸⁵³ Anderson (2001: 25).

²⁸⁵⁴ Anderson (2001: 25).

²⁸⁵⁵ Heitink (1983: 6). Anderson (2001: 25).

²⁸⁵⁶ Heitink (1983: 7). Anderson (2001: 25).

Scripture, history and philosophy,²⁸⁵⁷ but places an importance on empirical findings which philosophical, theoretical theology does not.²⁸⁵⁸ Paul Ballard and John Pritchard (2001) write that it is a particular field of theology that specifically deals with Christian life and practice within the Church community and in relation to society.²⁸⁵⁹ Practical theology raises theological issues of meaning and truth in relation to living the Christian life in faith.²⁸⁶⁰ When practical theology works correctly it brings together theological theory and actual practice related to pastoral skills and ministry training.²⁸⁶¹ The theoretical and practical nature of this type of theology must be concerned with social and cultural issues.²⁸⁶² Mark Cartledge defines it as focusing on actual lived experiences of contemporary persons in the church and secular society,²⁸⁶³ with the implications of practical theology being important to research.²⁸⁶⁴

Praxis

Simon Blackburn explains that the term *praxis* originated in the era of Aristotle²⁸⁶⁵ and included the concept of goal-directed action, the action in itself being part of the end.²⁸⁶⁶ Praxis is therefore concerned with not merely applying theoretical knowledge,²⁸⁶⁷ but adding to knowledge in the process of practically applying theory.²⁸⁶⁸ Practical theology takes a reflective, critical look into the praxis of church theology²⁸⁶⁹ while studying the Bible, tradition and other

²⁸⁵⁷ Heitink (1983: 7).

²⁸⁵⁸ Heitink (1983: 7).

²⁸⁵⁹ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 1).

²⁸⁶⁰ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 5).

²⁸⁶¹ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 5).

²⁸⁶² Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 5).

²⁸⁶³ Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

²⁸⁶⁴ Cartledge (2003: 248-249).

²⁸⁶⁵ Blackburn (1996: 298).

²⁸⁶⁶ Blackburn (1996: 298).

²⁸⁶⁷ Blackburn (1996: 298).

²⁸⁶⁸ Blackburn (1996: 298).

²⁸⁶⁹ Anderson (2001: 22).

sources.²⁸⁷⁰ Practical theology aims to discover if church praxis is accurately reflecting in a modern context, God's plans for his creation.²⁸⁷¹ In the modern setting, according to Ballard and Pritchard,²⁸⁷² the concept of praxis comes out of the Marxist²⁸⁷³ tradition and is an attempt to overcome distinction between theory and practice.²⁸⁷⁴

Mark Cartledge explains that practical theology should take the concept of praxis seriously.²⁸⁷⁵ Praxis is a complex term but, to Cartledge, denotes theological and value-laden actions, habits and practices.²⁸⁷⁶ Praxis is a method of existing in the world that is an aspect of a person's worldview.²⁸⁷⁷ James Woodward and Stephen Pattison provide a similar definition when they write that practical theology is very committed to an understanding that leads to praxis that would be considered theory and practice.²⁸⁷⁸ Anderson differentiates between practice and praxis.²⁸⁷⁹ He writes practice refers to tasks that carry out plans and actions that relate theory to a task.²⁸⁸⁰ He uses the example of a physician having a medical practice.²⁸⁸¹ In contrast, praxis involves a task but in performing the task, meaning is discovered and not merely applied.²⁸⁸² Praxis is more than the application of theory and is discerning truth from the application of actions.²⁸⁸³ In terms of practical theology this means that the actual practical results of theoretical theology are very important in the lives of church attendees.²⁸⁸⁴ In regard to theodicy, if one holds to free will, sovereignty, or soul-making views, it would be important to deduce what type

²⁸⁷⁰ Anderson (2001: 22).

²⁸⁷¹ Anderson (2001: 22).

²⁸⁷² Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 66).

²⁸⁷³ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 66).

²⁸⁷⁴ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 66).

²⁸⁷⁵ Cartledge (2003: 17).

²⁸⁷⁶ Cartledge (2003: 17).

²⁸⁷⁷ Cartledge (2003: 17).

²⁸⁷⁸ Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 11).

²⁸⁷⁹ Anderson (2001: 47).

²⁸⁸⁰ Anderson (2001: 47).

²⁸⁸¹ Anderson (2001: 47).

²⁸⁸² Anderson (2001: 47).

²⁸⁸³ Anderson (2001: 239)

²⁸⁸⁴ Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 11).

of praxis results from the theories.²⁸⁸⁵ The empirical findings within the thesis should help one understand what an acceptance of each theory leads to in regard to praxis. Empirical findings should assist one in discovering what the actual applications of each theoretical view actually are, and in theory what they actually should be. A major concern with practical theology is that philosophical, theoretical theology must be grounded in praxis.²⁸⁸⁶

Empirical Theology Definition

Tyron Inbody explains that classical empiricism itself, which influenced empirical theology,²⁸⁸⁷ came about in the eighteenth century and understood empiricism as the ability to perceive reality through the use of the five senses.²⁸⁸⁸ Robert T. Handy (1999) similarly teaches that the roots of empirical theology come through German and British empirical philosophers.²⁸⁸⁹ The idea was to explain Christian theology symbols in a way that would be effective in the scientific/industrial age.²⁸⁹⁰ Early empirical theologians were influenced by American pragmatism²⁸⁹¹ and saw the need for empirical data,²⁸⁹² which was used in history, sociology and philosophy.²⁸⁹³

As noted in Chapter One: Introduction, Dean explains that empirical theology begins with a particular speculative view of life,²⁸⁹⁴ which in turn leads to the use of the empirical

²⁸⁸⁵ This will be discussed within the Conclusion.

²⁸⁸⁶ Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 11). Anderson (2001: 47).

²⁸⁸⁷ Inbody (1995: 216).

²⁸⁸⁸ Inbody (1995: 216).

²⁸⁸⁹ Handy (1999: 177).

²⁸⁹⁰ Handy (1999: 177).

²⁸⁹¹ According to Louis P. Pojman, pragmatism is a theory set forth by C.S. Peirce and William James, which interprets the meaning of a statement by its consequences. Usually a proposition is true or false based on whether it is pragmatic. Pojman (1996: 598).

²⁸⁹² Handy (1999: 177).

²⁸⁹³ Handy (1999: 177).

²⁸⁹⁴ Dean (1990: 85-102).

method.²⁸⁹⁵ An empirical theologian interprets the world,²⁸⁹⁶ and the empirical method refers to how that interpretation is made workable and is revised if needed.²⁸⁹⁷ Empirical findings may indeed back up theological speculation, but if they do not, then theological concepts may need further evaluation.²⁸⁹⁸ Clive Erricker, Danny Sullivan and Jane Erricker (1994) explain that empirical theology questions how theology relates to social sciences.²⁸⁹⁹ Both sociologists and those within religious education have advocated this approach.²⁹⁰⁰ As noted in Chapter One, Professor Leslie J. Francis and the Practical Theology Team of the University of Wales, Bangor writes that an element of practical theology is the use of empirical data.²⁹⁰¹ In this sense, empirical theology is a way of doing practical theology.²⁹⁰² Mark Cartledge describes empirical theology as experience orientated theology that studies beliefs, values and practices in people, and is usually developed through social science research methods.²⁹⁰³ R. Ruud Ganzevoort (2005) similarly believes that practical theology is developed and explained in empirical data, and this becomes empirical theology.²⁹⁰⁴ Coming from a philosophical theological background, I see empirical theology and the social sciences²⁹⁰⁵ as important in understanding truth about humanity. I do not have difficulty with using social sciences to complement theology,²⁹⁰⁶ provided Christian theology still relies on an accurate historical, grammatical, and methodological interpretation of Scripture through exegesis.²⁹⁰⁷ Neal Windham (1991) writes that exegesis is the process of determining what the author meant when writing to his initial

²⁸⁹⁵ Dean (1990: 85-102).

²⁸⁹⁶ Dean (1990: 85-102).

²⁸⁹⁷ Dean (1990: 85-102).

²⁸⁹⁸ Dean (1990: 85-102).

²⁸⁹⁹ Erricker, Sullivan, and Erricker (1994: 6-7).

²⁹⁰⁰ Erricker, Sullivan, and Erricker (1994: 6-7).

²⁹⁰¹ Francis (2005: 1).

²⁹⁰² Francis (2005: 1).

²⁹⁰³ Cartledge (2003: 248).

²⁹⁰⁴ Ganzevoort (2005: 6).

²⁹⁰⁵ Cartledge (2003: 248).

²⁹⁰⁶ Cartledge (2003: 248).

²⁹⁰⁷ My Reformed methodology having been explained within Chapter Three.

audience.²⁹⁰⁸ W.R.F. Browning (1997) explains exegesis is a Greek word found in the Septuagint/LXX meaning ‘explanation’²⁹⁰⁹ and today refers to commentary on Biblical texts relating to a word, or verse in a section.²⁹¹⁰ The definition of exact meanings of words is sought and textual criticism is used.²⁹¹¹ New Testament scholars Stephen Neill and Tom Wright (1964)(1988) explain ‘the exegete’ is a ‘literary critic’²⁹¹² concerned with language, the meaning of words, along with ‘sentences’, ‘phrases’ and entire books.²⁹¹³ Grenz and Olson note that the historical-critical method of studying the Bible began in the Reformation era, and uses exegesis to seek the actual historicity of Biblical events.²⁹¹⁴

The practical theologian can use the social sciences to understand the strengths and weaknesses of practical theology.²⁹¹⁵ Social sciences should not dictate what Christian theology should be, rather they should assist in judging the effectiveness of concepts within practical theology.²⁹¹⁶ Empirical data can be helpful in this process.²⁹¹⁷

The Importance of Practical Theology

Stephen Pattison (2000)(2007) mentions a very important point in his Chapter entitled ‘Some Straw for Bricks.’²⁹¹⁸ He explains that dealing with theological concepts can frighten many people,²⁹¹⁹ as formal theology appears to come from persons whose profound ideas are

²⁹⁰⁸ Windham (1991: 64).

²⁹⁰⁹ Browning (1997: 125).

²⁹¹⁰ Browning (1997: 125).

²⁹¹¹ Browning (1997: 125).

²⁹¹² Neill and Wright (1964)(1988: 21).

²⁹¹³ Neill and Wright (1964)(1988: 21).

²⁹¹⁴ Grenz and Olson (1992: 275).

²⁹¹⁵ Francis (2005: 4).

²⁹¹⁶ Francis (2005: 3).

²⁹¹⁷ Ganzevoort (2005: 6).

²⁹¹⁸ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹¹⁹ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

incomprehensible for most.²⁹²⁰ Many persons are unable to understand academic theology thoroughly according to Pattison,²⁹²¹ and therefore think theological reflection and interpretation is too difficult.²⁹²² I have studied Biblical Studies, theology and philosophy of religion for many years, and on a personal level philosophical theology has often had natural practical implications for me.²⁹²³ So, although I do not share the struggle described by Pattison,²⁹²⁴ I realize that many persons within and outside of the Christian Church struggle with the issue of theology being practically relevant.²⁹²⁵ Pattison explains that through a practical theology approach, theology is set free from its academic bondage and is viewed primarily as contemporary enquiry.²⁹²⁶ Practical theology and pastoral care which includes counseling and the use empirical data,²⁹²⁷ can provide through the process of enquiry new ways of looking at Christian doctrine.²⁹²⁸

I have no problem with the concept²⁹²⁹ as long as the contemporary enquiry is used to interpret²⁹³⁰ and not reinvent traditional Christian theology. I would reason that contemporary enquiry should not overturn traditional Christian theology, but present it in a way in order that many persons within and outside of the Church are not frightened or intimidated by theology.²⁹³¹ This should not mean we risk committing theological error, but rather that there are, at times, less complex ways to explain and make comprehensible certain theological concepts within Christian tradition.²⁹³² As Pattison notes there are also various ways to explain theology, and

²⁹²⁰ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹²¹ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹²² Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹²³ It has not been primarily contrasted by life experience.

²⁹²⁴ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹²⁵ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137). Browning (1985)(2005: 2). This can be especially true in regard to theodicy where theory concerning the problem of evil needs to be complemented by practical concepts.

²⁹²⁶ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹²⁷ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹²⁸ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹²⁹ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹³⁰ Francis (2005: 4). Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹³¹ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹³² Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

there are different ways of making it useful in various situations.²⁹³³ Anderson explains practical theology needs a solid theological foundation in order that the practical does not overwhelm or determine the theological.²⁹³⁴ At the same time theology should not just be concerned with creeds and history,²⁹³⁵ but should also be contemporary.²⁹³⁶ Practical theology therefore complements and does not replace philosophical theology.

A Brief Historical Overview of Practical Theology

This thesis is not aiming to provide a brief history of practical theology, but rather a brief historical overview.²⁹³⁷ An actual history of practical theology is not required for a work primarily concerned with theodicy with practical theology.²⁹³⁸ As previously mentioned, according to Stephen Pattison and James Woodward, the term practical theology came to existence within late eighteenth century German academia.²⁹³⁹ The purpose of practical theology was to apply theological principles to church activities such as church worship, preaching, teaching, and government.²⁹⁴⁰ The German academics, which included Friedrich Schleiermacher, C.I. Nitzsch and Philip Marheineke began the connection between Christian theology and the social sciences.²⁹⁴¹ Schleiermacher is likely the first to work with such concepts.²⁹⁴² What developed from these understandings²⁹⁴³ was the notion that theoretical theology that deals with

²⁹³³ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 138). Anderson (2001: 25).

²⁹³⁴ Anderson (2001: 46).

²⁹³⁵ This would primarily be a concern of philosophical and systematic theology.

²⁹³⁶ Anderson (2001: 46).

²⁹³⁷ The differencing being that practical and empirical theology is a main focus only in the context of evaluating theoretical philosophical data.

²⁹³⁸ As seen in Chapter One to Four.

²⁹³⁹ Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 2).

²⁹⁴⁰ Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 2).

²⁹⁴¹ Anderson (2001: 24).

²⁹⁴² Anderson (2001: 24). This is not surprising as in *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher often focuses on subjective and personal aspects of theology in regard to persons.

²⁹⁴³ Anderson (2001: 24).

possibilities between life and action,²⁹⁴⁴ needs to be differentiated from practical theology that deals with realities between life and action.²⁹⁴⁵

Don S. Browning (1996) concludes that despite some intellectual differences between early thinkers,²⁹⁴⁶ within practical theology they share the view that practical thought is the centre from which human thinking and theoretical understandings come.²⁹⁴⁷ Theoretical thought consists of abstractions from practical thinking.²⁹⁴⁸ This is in contrast to much Protestant tradition where practical theology is thought to come from philosophical theoretical theology.²⁹⁴⁹ I would cautiously deduce that practical theology at times comes by taking philosophical theology and applying it practically, but that discussion is not central to this thesis.²⁹⁵⁰ Michael G. Lawler presents material from Gerben Heitink (1999)²⁹⁵¹ where Heitink writes that historically practical theology in both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions, is the empirically orientated theological theory,²⁹⁵² which connects theory to praxis for society.²⁹⁵³ This understanding led to broad, ecumenical considerations of praxis within the religious European academic circles, in particular in the Netherlands and Germany.²⁹⁵⁴

A twentieth century model for practical pastoral theology developed which emphasized the importance of preaching God's word in order that through meditation healing could be provided to congregations.²⁹⁵⁵ F. LeRon Shults (2004) deduces that the increased importance of

²⁹⁴⁴ Anderson (2001: 24).

²⁹⁴⁵ Anderson (2001: 24).

²⁹⁴⁶ Browning (1996: 8).

²⁹⁴⁷ Browning (1996: 8).

²⁹⁴⁸ Browning (1996: 8).

²⁹⁴⁹ Browning (1996: 8).

²⁹⁵⁰ This model order may be in play at times: Biblical exegesis, Biblical theology, systematic/philosophical theology, practical theology. There are other disciplines that can considered influences on this model such as philosophy of religion in conjunction with systematic and philosophical theology.

²⁹⁵¹ Heitink in Lawler (1999: 1-2).

²⁹⁵² Heitink in Lawler (1999: 1-2).

²⁹⁵³ Heitink in Lawler (1999: 1-2).

²⁹⁵⁴ Heitink in Lawler (1999: 1-2).

²⁹⁵⁵ Anderson (2001: 25).

relational theology within the practical theology movement may require a critical evaluation of some traditional Christian doctrines.²⁹⁵⁶ The hope for Shults being that this evaluation will lead to a more effective praxis within the twenty-first century church,²⁹⁵⁷ rather than there being too much dependence on what he views as static doctrine.²⁹⁵⁸ Paul Ballard and John Pritchard explain practical theology began to expand academically in United Kingdom Universities in the 1970's with Manchester, Birmingham, and Wales.²⁹⁵⁹ Several courses in regard to practical and pastoral care were offered at major Universities,²⁹⁶⁰ and the field continues to expand in the twenty-first century.²⁹⁶¹ It is also mentioned that simultaneously with the growth of practical theology in the academic world,²⁹⁶² pastoral care and counseling also grew in importance within the United Kingdom.²⁹⁶³ In the twenty-first century practical theology is contextualizing doctrines and concepts concerning God and raising issues of theological truth and how these relate to living out a life of Christian faith.²⁹⁶⁴ Paul Ballard (2000)(2007) notes that practical theology in the United Kingdom is developing in regard to theoretical literature²⁹⁶⁵ and is moving towards the centre of contemporary theology.²⁹⁶⁶ Not only are church related issues being dealt with,²⁹⁶⁷ but also social concerns such as poverty, employment, and community.²⁹⁶⁸

John Patton (2000)(2007) places much emphasis on pastoral care within practical theology in his article 'Modern Pastoral Theology in the United States.'²⁹⁶⁹ He explains that

²⁹⁵⁶ Shults in Wright and Kuentzel (2004: 346).

²⁹⁵⁷ Shults in Wright and Kuentzel (2004: 346).

²⁹⁵⁸ Shults in Wright and Kuentzel (2004: 346).

²⁹⁵⁹ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 2).

²⁹⁶⁰ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 2).

²⁹⁶¹ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 2).

²⁹⁶² Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 2).

²⁹⁶³ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 2).

²⁹⁶⁴ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 2-3).

²⁹⁶⁵ Ballard in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 67).

²⁹⁶⁶ Ballard in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 67).

²⁹⁶⁷ Ballard in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 67).

²⁹⁶⁸ Ballard in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 67).

²⁹⁶⁹ Patton in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 49-57).

pastoral care in regard to race, culture, gender, and power issues is most important in the American church presently.²⁹⁷⁰ Feminist issues that were previously ignored by male caregivers are now being given serious consideration.²⁹⁷¹ The overall need for change in society and the need for greater care of those suffering within the American political process is also an aspect of American practical and pastoral care.²⁹⁷²

Author's Viewpoints

My background is primarily in philosophical theology,²⁹⁷³ which is examining philosophical concepts concerning God from both the disciplines of philosophy and theology, but depending more on the latter.²⁹⁷⁴ I have presented three philosophically influenced theodicy approaches in this thesis, and interact with them theologically and philosophically.²⁹⁷⁵ This is not to say that I do not have any background in practical and empirical theology, for in my Master of Philosophy at Wales, Bangor, I also presented philosophical theology and worked with practical concepts and empirical research.²⁹⁷⁶

Theology, especially philosophical and systematic, is often seen as not being practical,²⁹⁷⁷ but I have never viewed it as such. S.W. Sykes (1999) in his article 'Systematic Theology' describes it as a method by which theology is given a rational and orderly account.²⁹⁷⁸

²⁹⁷⁰ Patton in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 57).

²⁹⁷¹ Patton in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 57).

²⁹⁷² Patton in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 57).

²⁹⁷³ And also quite extensively philosophy of religion.

²⁹⁷⁴ Philosophy of religion would also combine the disciplines of philosophy and theology, but depend more on the former. There are philosophers of religion such as Flew and Mackie, discussed earlier, who are noted atheists in writing. Antony Flew and A. MacIntyre (1999) make it clear that some philosophers of religion would see reasoning about religion as a waste of time, and instead argue against religious belief. Flew and MacIntyre (1999: 446).

²⁹⁷⁵ My free will theodicy presentation consisted of two related views, one being Plantinga's philosophical free will defence, and the other Augustine's primarily theological free will theodicy.

²⁹⁷⁶ With the assistance of Dr. William Kay.

²⁹⁷⁷ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

²⁹⁷⁸ Sykes (1999: 560).

Systematic theology is the systemization of theological concepts.²⁹⁷⁹ Erickson explains that systematic theology draws upon the entire Bible and does not exegete texts in isolation.²⁹⁸⁰ It attempts to analyze and understand Scriptural teachings in a harmonized way.²⁹⁸¹ I would add that philosophy also plays a part in systemizing theology. Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard explain systematic theology attempts to make Christian doctrine coherent, Biblical, and written in a culturally contemporary way.²⁹⁸² Systematic theology will always be influenced by the theological agenda of the writer.²⁹⁸³

Thiessen makes it clear that theology only has a deadening effect upon the spiritual life of a Christian, if it is treated as mere theory.²⁹⁸⁴ He explains that a proper use of theology will fuel the spiritual life and provide intelligent thinking about religious problems.²⁹⁸⁵ My research in this thesis, and the previous work,²⁹⁸⁶ has directly influenced my theology and how I view God and others in regard to the problem of evil, and therefore, thankfully does not fall into Thiessen's description.²⁹⁸⁷ Theology is an important aspect of understanding life, not just philosophical ideals, but the actual workings of life.²⁹⁸⁸ As Don Browning notes practical theology is useful for theological reflection and for the developments of church ministry²⁹⁸⁹ and therefore I think it should not be overlooked as a discipline in academic and church contexts.

²⁹⁷⁹ Sykes (1999: 560).

²⁹⁸⁰ Erickson (1994: 21).

²⁹⁸¹ Erickson (1994: 21).

²⁹⁸² Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 384).

²⁹⁸³ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 384).

²⁹⁸⁴ Thiessen (1956: 29).

²⁹⁸⁵ Thiessen (1956: 29).

²⁹⁸⁶ My MPhil.

²⁹⁸⁷ Thiessen (1956: 29).

²⁹⁸⁸ Thiessen (1956: 29).

²⁹⁸⁹ Browning (1985)(2005: 2).

Johannes van der Ven's Background

This scholar, born in 1940,²⁹⁹⁰ has had a major impact in fusing practical, empirical, and systematic theology.²⁹⁹¹ Leslie J. Francis states that Professor Johannes van der Ven²⁹⁹² is a pioneer in the development of methodology for empirical theology.²⁹⁹³ There are two key principles that Francis views as coming from van der Ven.²⁹⁹⁴ First, the social sciences provide legitimate tools for the methodology and agenda of empirical theology.²⁹⁹⁵ They also provide reasonable ways for empirically studying the ideas within practical theology.²⁹⁹⁶ An empirical method of surveying academics, theology students, and congregations²⁹⁹⁷ can lead to evaluations of data, which can measure the effectiveness of practical theology and where it needs to change and become more effective.²⁹⁹⁸ Second, van der Ven favours an actual full-integration of the social sciences within practical theology.²⁹⁹⁹ Professor van der Ven believes that practical theologians must have a worldview and perspectives that are far more influenced by theology than the social sciences.³⁰⁰⁰ This means theology still must have some separation from the social sciences with an intra-disciplinary approach.³⁰⁰¹ Francis, in contrast to van der Ven, favours an integrated inter-disciplinary³⁰⁰² approach to empirical theology over the intra-disciplinary view.³⁰⁰³ Francis prefers this because first, the work of empirical theologians must be publicly

²⁹⁹⁰ van der Ven (2006a: 1).

²⁹⁹¹ Ganzevoort (2004)(2005: 1).

²⁹⁹² The Professor's name in Dutch is van der Ven, the name beginning with a small 'v'.

²⁹⁹³ Francis (2005: 2).

²⁹⁹⁴ Francis (2005: 2-3).

²⁹⁹⁵ Francis (2005: 2-3).

²⁹⁹⁶ Francis (2005: 3).

²⁹⁹⁷ Francis (2005: 3).

²⁹⁹⁸ Francis (2005: 3).

²⁹⁹⁹ Francis (2005: 3).

³⁰⁰⁰ Francis (2005: 3).

³⁰⁰¹ This is an academic approach that puts one particular discipline in priority over others. The other disciplines are used secondarily. Cartledge (2003: 248).

³⁰⁰² An academic approach that uses two different disciplines together so they interact, without one discipline having priority over the other. Cartledge (2003: 248).

³⁰⁰³ Francis (2005: 4).

tested by social science,³⁰⁰⁴ and second, the empirical theologian can learn from practical problems that take place within the social sciences themselves.³⁰⁰⁵ However, van der Ven admits that some social scientists may have difficulty engaging with the language and assumptions of theology.³⁰⁰⁶ This is likely to be a valid point³⁰⁰⁷ as practical and empirical theology can be influenced and even integrated by the social sciences,³⁰⁰⁸ but Christian theology is a multifaceted discipline in itself and not every social scientist is going to be educated in theology, or even see God or theology as useful.³⁰⁰⁹

Ganzevoort writes that Johannes van der Ven is, without question, one of the most influential practical theologians of the present period.³⁰¹⁰ Professor van der Ven has been involved in the development of practical theology,³⁰¹¹ the related empirical research and used systematic theology with these disciplines.³⁰¹² ‘The Journal of Empirical Theology’ has publicized much of van der Ven’s methodological approach to practical and empirical theology since 1988.³⁰¹³ Professor van der Ven’s notable works on theodicy include *Suffering, Why for God’s Sake* (1996), which he co-wrote with Eric Vossen, and ‘Learning Theodicy’ an article he published in ‘The Journal of Empirical Theology’ that same year with Vossen and Paul Vermeer. For the purpose of this thesis, I will mainly review theodicy work he has done singularly, which includes *Practical Theology* (1993), and *God Reinvented?* (1998).³⁰¹⁴ I also have engaged in

³⁰⁰⁴ Francis (2005: 4).

³⁰⁰⁵ Francis (2005: 4).

³⁰⁰⁶ Francis (2005: 3-4).

³⁰⁰⁷ Francis (2005: 3-4).

³⁰⁰⁸ Francis (2005: 3-4).

³⁰⁰⁹ Many scientists will be naturalists, and perhaps atheists.

³⁰¹⁰ Ganzevoort (2005: 1).

³⁰¹¹ Ganzevoort (2005: 1).

³⁰¹² Francis (2005: 2).

³⁰¹³ Francis (2005: 2).

³⁰¹⁴ This provides a distinction in viewpoints between van der Ven, Vossen and Vermeer.

email correspondence with Professor van der Ven directly which has been helpful.³⁰¹⁵ I therefore have received updated information from the professor that is in line with previous work.³⁰¹⁶ I was specifically instructed by Dr. Mark Cartledge³⁰¹⁷ to email Professor van der Ven and use the information provided by the email interviews.³⁰¹⁸ This was in order to have the most recent and cutting edge material possible.³⁰¹⁹

Vossen's and Vermeer's Background

The late Eric Vossen (1954-1999)³⁰²⁰ was a professor of Practical Theology at Radboud University, Nijmegen, and according to Paul Vermeer,³⁰²¹ is the father of the research project that took place in Vermeer's text *Learning Theodicy* (1999).³⁰²² As noted, in 1996 Vossen co-wrote with Paul Vermeer and Johannes van der Ven, an article entitled 'Learning Theodicy.'³⁰²³ In that same year, Vossen published with van der Ven, 'Suffering, Why for God's Sake.'³⁰²⁴ In 1993, Vossen also produced an article in the same journal entitled 'Images of God and Coping with Suffering.'³⁰²⁵

Paul Vermeer's book *Learning Theodicy*,³⁰²⁶ appears to be a later work related to the

³⁰¹⁵ My thanks to Professor van der Ven and to Dr. Mark Cartledge for initially contacting the professor on my behalf.

³⁰¹⁶ van der Ven (2006a: 1). van der Ven (2006b: 1)

³⁰¹⁷ My original PhD thesis advisor who is published expert on practical and empirical theology.

³⁰¹⁸ This material has slight changes in van der Ven's reasoning is comparison to other cited works and therefore is quite beneficial and original.

³⁰¹⁹ A central idea of this work from Dr. Cartledge was to provide new and recent relevant material in order to add originality to this thesis. Dr. Rob Warner also supported the use of this material.

³⁰²⁰ van der Ven (2006a: 1).

³⁰²¹ Vermeer (1999: viii).

³⁰²² Vermeer (1999: viii).

³⁰²³ 'Learning Theodicy', in *Journal of Empirical Theology*, Volume 9, pp. 67-85. Kampen, The Netherlands, Journal of Empirical Theology.

³⁰²⁴ *Suffering: Why for God's Sake?* Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.

³⁰²⁵ 'Images of God and Coping with Suffering', Translated by S. Ralston, in *Journal of Empirical Theology*, Volume 6, pp. 19-38. Kampen, The Netherlands, Journal of Empirical Theology.

³⁰²⁶ *Learning Theodicy*, Leiden, Brill.

article of the same name from 1996. Although this is a singular effort, he is not only influenced by Vossen, but the similarity of his work to van der Ven's is apparent. Vermeer, like the other two scholars, is a professor at Radboud University, Nijmegen.

2. The Workings of Practical Theology

Related Hermeneutics

Cartledge defines hermeneutics as theories or strategies for interpretation of written texts.³⁰²⁷ The idea of social and community hermeneutics could also exist.³⁰²⁸ In this concept, society is interpreted with what would be called a hermeneutic.³⁰²⁹ Ray S. Anderson who is a senior professor of theology and ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary,³⁰³⁰ provides a moderate traditional and conservative perspective.³⁰³¹ He states the practical theology is essential hermeneutical theology,³⁰³² and assumes that practical theology must be developed through the text of Scripture seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.³⁰³³ To Anderson practical theology is theological and not just spiritual since it specifically trusts in the Scriptural teaching.³⁰³⁴ Anderson states that the Biblical resurrection of Christ serves as hermeneutical criterion that does not replace the other Scripture,³⁰³⁵ but rather his resurrection work is criterion that fulfills the idea of a new humanity.³⁰³⁶ Within this concept³⁰³⁷ a key idea for practical theology is that

³⁰²⁷ Cartledge (2003: 248).

³⁰²⁸ Cartledge (2003: 248).

³⁰²⁹ Cartledge (2003: 248).

³⁰³⁰ From the back cover of his 2001 text *The Shape of Practical Theology*.

³⁰³¹ Anderson (2001: 37).

³⁰³² Anderson (2001: 37).

³⁰³³ Anderson (2001: 37).

³⁰³⁴ Anderson (2001: 37).

³⁰³⁵ In context the Hebrew Bible otherwise known as the Old Testament.

³⁰³⁶ Anderson (2001: 101).

³⁰³⁷ Anderson (2001: 101).

men and women are called to serve Christ in this process of creating a new humanity,³⁰³⁸ and this cannot occur without the Biblical resurrection of Christ.³⁰³⁹ Within the Christian community some of those also concerned with practical theology, social policy, and feminist theology, such as Ivone Gebara,³⁰⁴⁰ that are to the liberal left of the theological spectrum, will not agree with Anderson and would think that the literal resurrection of Christ³⁰⁴¹ is idealistic theory based in philosophy.³⁰⁴² Gebara views a metaphorical resurrection of actual presently living bodies as more helpful theologically and practically.³⁰⁴³ She also comments that concentrating on the resurrection of the body after death does not put the forces of oppression and exclusion at risk.³⁰⁴⁴ Although I fully accept the historical, Biblical concept of the resurrection of Christ,³⁰⁴⁵ in agreement with Anderson,³⁰⁴⁶ I can conclude that Gebara has at least half a point.³⁰⁴⁷ By this I mean that a philosophical and practical theology that accepts the Biblical resurrection of Christ and his followers,³⁰⁴⁸ in no way should overlook or endorse temporal evils.³⁰⁴⁹ In ministry, to truly have concern for others is to care about them in both the short and long term, and therefore the present earthly care of others should be considered crucial within contemporary practical theology.³⁰⁵⁰ This earthly care at times should cause those within the church to take political and social stands against those in power that commit evil acts against others as indifference promotes greater evil.³⁰⁵¹

³⁰³⁸ Anderson (2001: 101).

³⁰³⁹ Anderson (2001: 101).

³⁰⁴⁰ Gebara (2002: 122).

³⁰⁴¹ Anderson (2001: 101).

³⁰⁴² Gebara (2002: 122).

³⁰⁴³ Gebara (2002: 122).

³⁰⁴⁴ Gebara (2002: 129).

³⁰⁴⁵ Matthew, Chapter 28; Luke, Chapter 24; John Chapters 20-21; Acts, Chapter 1.

³⁰⁴⁶ Anderson (2001: 101).

³⁰⁴⁷ Gebara (2002: 122-129).

³⁰⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians, Chapter 15.

³⁰⁴⁹ Gebara (2002: 122-129).

³⁰⁵⁰ Gebara (2002: 122-129).

³⁰⁵¹ Gebara (2002: 140).

Hermeneutics of Suspicion

Marie McCarthy (2000)(2007) writes that given the human tendency to distort the truth within a certain tradition,³⁰⁵² a certain hermeneutic of suspicion should exist.³⁰⁵³ She is not specifically discussing Biblical hermeneutics,³⁰⁵⁴ but is concerned that certain individuals may make personal spiritual experiences normative.³⁰⁵⁵ In particular as with Gebara,³⁰⁵⁶ McCarthy is concerned that a hermeneutics and a spirituality that overlooks the real human suffering of persons should be questioned.³⁰⁵⁷ I would agree and not only does a heavily personalized, experiential type of practical theology potentially overlook the needs of the poor and suffering,³⁰⁵⁸ but may also overlook Scripture that Anderson mentioned was essential for the development of effective practical theology.³⁰⁵⁹

Christopraxis

Ray S. Anderson defines Christopraxis as the continuing power of Jesus Christ, as his ministry works with followers through the Holy Spirit.³⁰⁶⁰ Anderson's theory of Christopraxis assumes a bodily resurrection of Christ, which Anderson states is a fact of history,³⁰⁶¹ but

³⁰⁵² McCarthy in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 203).

³⁰⁵³ McCarthy in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 203).

³⁰⁵⁴ McCarthy in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 203).

³⁰⁵⁵ McCarthy in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 203).

³⁰⁵⁶ Gebara (2002: 122-129).

³⁰⁵⁷ McCarthy in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 203).

³⁰⁵⁸ McCarthy in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 203). Gebara (2002: 122-129).

³⁰⁵⁹ Anderson (2001: 37).

³⁰⁶⁰ Anderson (2001: 29).

³⁰⁶¹ Anderson (2001: 52).

presently Christ works through the Holy Spirit in this world.³⁰⁶² The inner core of practical theology, as Anderson views it, is the life of a historical Jesus Christ, his resurrection and the work of the Holy Spirit of God continuing the gospel plan on earth.³⁰⁶³ Anderson deduces that the concept of Christopraxis includes the Holy Spirit of God working with Scripture to bring about revelation and reconciliation to persons within the Christian Church.³⁰⁶⁴ Gebara does not deny the death of Christ on the cross as a historical event and she explains there is evidence that he was crucified.³⁰⁶⁵ Gebara's feministic theology is concerned that making the death of Christ central for salvation within the Christian faith,³⁰⁶⁶ affirms a path of suffering through male martyrdom as the only way for salvation.³⁰⁶⁷ Gebara concludes that this theory of salvation makes the suffering of women over the centuries useless.³⁰⁶⁸ Although I can fully acknowledge that women have suffered throughout history and continue to suffer in ways that are not always recognized,³⁰⁶⁹ I respectfully disagree with Gebara,³⁰⁷⁰ as the New Testament salvation is for *persons* that believe and trust in Christ.³⁰⁷¹ God has a definite plan of salvation for persons.³⁰⁷² Women's status before God within the New Testament is equal to that of men with respect to personal salvation, and there is no difference between male and female as both are saved through

³⁰⁶² Anderson (2001: 52). As mentioned previously: Franke (2005: 45). Weber (1955)(1981: 350). Barth (1932-1968: 361).

³⁰⁶³ Anderson (2001: 52).

³⁰⁶⁴ Anderson (2001: 54).

³⁰⁶⁵ Gebara (2002: 117).

³⁰⁶⁶ Gebara (2002: 118).

³⁰⁶⁷ Gebara (2002: 118).

³⁰⁶⁸ Gebara (2002: 118).

³⁰⁶⁹ Gebara (2002: 110, 112, 117).

³⁰⁷⁰ Gebara (2002: 118).

³⁰⁷¹ John 3:16 mentions that whoever believes in Christ will have everlasting life, and John 14: 6 explains that no one comes to the Father, but through Christ. My point is not to exegete or exposit these verses but to point out that females and women are included and not excluded from the salvation process. Male and female alike are saved within the Christian tradition through faith and trust in Christ. NASB (1984: 1197, 1215).

³⁰⁷² Thiessen (1956: 277).

the atoning work of Christ.³⁰⁷³ There is no exclusion of persons based on their gender within this process.³⁰⁷⁴

Bloesch suggests feminists desire for men and women to be able to work together as equals.³⁰⁷⁵ Rosemary R. Ruether (1998) acknowledges that within Christian history there has been a theology where the original equality of all people in Christ is restored.³⁰⁷⁶ She believes that equality shall not be completely accomplished until social hierarchy is ended,³⁰⁷⁷ but she states that in Christ's new Kingdom all class, race and gender divisions are overcome.³⁰⁷⁸ This Kingdom will include both men and women redeemed through the work of Christ.³⁰⁷⁹ Rebecca S. Chopp (1995) suggests that a goal of feminist theology is to deconstruct patriarchal images of God.³⁰⁸⁰ She writes that feminist theology looks to overthrow oppression based in patriarchy.³⁰⁸¹ New Testament scholar Aida Besançon Spencer (1991) notes that the feminist critic is to alert the reader that there is a human tendency to alienate those persons who are different and have less power.³⁰⁸² Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard explain that feminists desire readers to examine the Biblical stories concerning women from a feminine perspective.³⁰⁸³

3. Johannes van der Ven

Theology and Suffering

Professor van der Ven explains that his theodicy is an enlightened attempt in philosophy

³⁰⁷³ Erickson (1994: 548). Erickson (1994: 548).

³⁰⁷⁴ Thiessen (1956: 277).

³⁰⁷⁵ Bloesch (1987: 256). I can support this desire in general terms, even while accepting men and women are equal but not the same, even as all men, and all women, are not the same.

³⁰⁷⁶ Ruether (1998: 28).

³⁰⁷⁷ Ruether (1998: 28).

³⁰⁷⁸ Ruether (1998: 28).

³⁰⁷⁹ Ruether (1998: 28).

³⁰⁸⁰ Chopp (1995: 88-89). Patriarchy can limit God to being humanly understood from a male point of view. Gebara (2002: 165).

³⁰⁸¹ Chopp (1995: 89).

³⁰⁸² Spencer (1991: 239-240).

³⁰⁸³ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993: 455).

and theology to explain and justify the existence of God in an evil world.³⁰⁸⁴ An aspect of his work in theodicy is an effort to understand why the problem of evil and suffering are a human problem.³⁰⁸⁵ Professor van der Ven explains that his theodicy project was motivated by a desire to make sense of certain pastoral praxis concerning Christian ministers struggling with how to assist people who are suffering.³⁰⁸⁶ It seems that many pastors have a deep sense of frustration and desperation in trying to provide hope to people,³⁰⁸⁷ even though Christianity theoretically and theologically, is a faith and philosophy that provides ultimate salvation from suffering.³⁰⁸⁸ To assist in understanding suffering practically, van der Ven establishes certain religious symbols and reviews their interpretations.³⁰⁸⁹ These shall be discussed later within this Chapter.

According to Eric Vossen (1993), Jürgen Moltmann, has had major influence in the development of theodicy concepts and symbols.³⁰⁹⁰ Moltmann appears to be commenting on this issue when he asks if the fatal problems of modern humanity will be apprehended and solved with critical interaction with the gospel,³⁰⁹¹ or will other sources, that are less problematic, be sought.³⁰⁹² It seems that Christian ministers and leaders must provide theoretically sound explanations for evil and suffering, and provide practical ways for the God of the Bible to be of comfort.³⁰⁹³ As sufferers seek the power of the gospel, these persons must have something tangible to rely on for support.³⁰⁹⁴ If Christianity and the gospel is seen as theoretically and

³⁰⁸⁴ van der Ven (1998: 207).

³⁰⁸⁵ van der Ven (1993: 157).

³⁰⁸⁶ van der Ven (1993: 157).

³⁰⁸⁷ van der Ven (1993: 157).

³⁰⁸⁸ van der Ven (1993: 157).

³⁰⁸⁹ van der Ven (1993: 159).

³⁰⁹⁰ Vossen (1993: 21).

³⁰⁹¹ Moltmann (1993: 9).

³⁰⁹² Moltmann (1993: 9).

³⁰⁹³ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 5). Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

³⁰⁹⁴ Browning (1985)(2005: 2).

practically corrupt and useless,³⁰⁹⁵ then the Church may be rejected as an option for providing the explanation for evil and suffering.³⁰⁹⁶

For example, within the Christian community,³⁰⁹⁷ if someone has lost a loved one, theological explanations of why sin and death exist in the universe can be useful in helping the sufferer make sense of the death.³⁰⁹⁸ God's justice can be understood somewhat,³⁰⁹⁹ but for the sufferer to realize theologically that death is a result of human sin and a corrupt world system,³¹⁰⁰ it is not really all that comforting, although the concept is Biblically and theologically correct. The helpful traditional practical explanation that the resurrection awaits those who trust in Christ, is both theoretically and practically sound, and may be of comfort to a believer.³¹⁰¹ Yes, God is a creator who demands justice,³¹⁰² but through the atoning work and resurrection of Christ, his love and grace is also shown to followers.³¹⁰³ The resurrection of Christ, from a traditional perspective, is also not purely a theological concept, as the Kingdom of God is progressing towards its culmination.³¹⁰⁴ It can be pointed out practically that the resurrection of Christ as King has to take place for a culminated Kingdom of God to ultimately occur.³¹⁰⁵ An actual Kingdom would require the resurrection of a historical Christ.³¹⁰⁶ The historicity of Christ in detail is obviously out of the scope of this thesis, but my point is that it is vital to ground Christian practical theology in the historicity of Christ.³¹⁰⁷ If Christ was not a real person, and his supernatural resurrection untrue, then the Biblical doctrines concerning his resurrection cannot

³⁰⁹⁵ Moltmann (1993: 9).

³⁰⁹⁶ Moltmann (1993: 9).

³⁰⁹⁷ Or perhaps outside of the Church as well.

³⁰⁹⁸ As with the four theoretical viewpoints presented in this thesis.

³⁰⁹⁹ Brown (1984: 34). Adams (1996: 794). Mounce (1990: 365-366).

³¹⁰⁰ Bloesch (1987: 16).

³¹⁰¹ Anderson (2001: 54). Moltmann (1993: 171-172).

³¹⁰² Brown (1984: 34). Adams (1996: 794). Mounce (1990: 365-366).

³¹⁰³ Thiessen (1956: 132). Whale (1958: 124).

³¹⁰⁴ Moltmann (1993: 171-172).

³¹⁰⁵ Moltmann (1993: 171-172).

³¹⁰⁶ Moltmann (1993: 171-172).

³¹⁰⁷ Anderson (2001: 37). Erickson (1994: 661-682).

be trusted.³¹⁰⁸ Christ's resurrection validates his ministry, according to Erickson.³¹⁰⁹ There would be no hope, from a traditional Christian perspective, for everlasting life and salvation for those who have died without the resurrection.³¹¹⁰ Death would thus end all hopes of ultimate reunion between those who remain and those who have died.³¹¹¹

Benefits of an Empirical Study of Theodicy

Professor van der Ven suggests that an empirical study would be useful in finding connections between a rational belief in God,³¹¹² and faith in that same God,³¹¹³ in regard to theodicy.³¹¹⁴ It is important for van der Ven to understand what people experience, and how they deal with the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of these experiences in a religious sense.³¹¹⁵ It would seem valuable, through empirical research, to gain an understanding of how people within the Church deal with the problem of evil.³¹¹⁶ This research may provide ministers and leaders with insights on how to better serve their attendees and members.³¹¹⁷ It would be important to find out if people within the Church primarily deal with suffering in faith, believing that God is just and good, or is there also reason at work?³¹¹⁸ It would seem to be important for persons within the Church to have at least a basic rational understanding of theological reasons for the problem of evil.³¹¹⁹ Simultaneously, there should be a faith in place that can trust in a God that has intervened in history through his prophets, apostles and, of course, the atoning and

³¹⁰⁸ The Apostle Paul admits this would be the case in First Corinthians 15: 12-19.

³¹⁰⁹ Erickson (1994: 691-693).

³¹¹⁰ Thiessen (1956: 332).

³¹¹¹ Anderson (2001: 54).

³¹¹² van der Ven (1993: 160).

³¹¹³ van der Ven (1993: 160).

³¹¹⁴ van der Ven (1993: 160).

³¹¹⁵ van der Ven (1993: 160).

³¹¹⁶ van der Ven (1993: 160).

³¹¹⁷ van der Ven (1993: 159).

³¹¹⁸ van der Ven (1993: 160).

³¹¹⁹ van der Ven (1993: 160).

resurrection work of Christ.³¹²⁰

Related to this issue, according to van der Ven, is the tension between divine omnipotence and divine love.³¹²¹ Christ is seen as both a representative of the divine judge,³¹²² and the expiatory sacrifice and sufferer for humanity.³¹²³ Expiation is the idea that Christ's atoning death covers sin in believers and cleanses followers from corruption, according to Erickson.³¹²⁴ Professor van der Ven is wise to suggest that an empirical analysis of how the ideas of God's justice and love work together would be useful.³¹²⁵ Understanding these concepts may be a struggle to many within the Church that are suffering, and ministers and leaders need to be aware of these difficulties in order to be of greater assistance.³¹²⁶

Theodicy Theme

In developing the theodicy theme, van der Ven states that there are three criteria needed.³¹²⁷ These are scientific relevance,³¹²⁸ practical relevance,³¹²⁹ and researchability.³¹³⁰ Scientifically, the project uses both descriptive and hypothesis testing forms,³¹³¹ and therefore theological attitudes and practices are described and insights are sought for why certain beliefs exist.³¹³² Professor van der Ven calls this approach explorative-explanatory research as he attempts to understand typical attitudes and how they influence pastoral work.³¹³³

³¹²⁰ Anderson (2001: 54).

³¹²¹ van der Ven (1993: 161).

³¹²² van der Ven (1993: 161). Mounce (1990: 365-366).

³¹²³ van der Ven (1993: 161).

³¹²⁴ Erickson (1994: 811). Expiation shall be discussed further within this Chapter.

³¹²⁵ van der Ven (1993: 160).

³¹²⁶ van der Ven (1993: 159).

³¹²⁷ van der Ven (1993: 169).

³¹²⁸ van der Ven (1993: 169).

³¹²⁹ van der Ven (1993: 169).

³¹³⁰ van der Ven (1993: 169).

³¹³¹ van der Ven (1993: 169).

³¹³² van der Ven (1993: 169).

³¹³³ van der Ven (1993: 170).

In regard to practical relevance, van der Ven attempts to examine experiences in order to make observations concerning central theological tenets, and the concepts of pastoral care that result.³¹³⁴ The scientific study should produce observations that may show certain theological assumptions lead to a certain way of performing pastoral care.³¹³⁵ It may be that some inadequate theology leads to less than adequate care,³¹³⁶ or possibly that the theology is adequate,³¹³⁷ but it is not being correctly reflected in pastoral work for those within and outside of the Church.³¹³⁸ It is also possible that certain societal views cause difficulties in the acceptance of controversial traditional Christian doctrines.³¹³⁹ Researchability attempts to find information concerning the intensity of certain human sufferings,³¹⁴⁰ and to find out how sufferers view their situation.³¹⁴¹ These three criteria are put together, the theodicy theme and a question is formulated as to what kind of attitudes exist concerning religious suffering,³¹⁴² what factors can determine these viewpoints,³¹⁴³ and what kind of practical, pastoral understanding can be gathered from this research.³¹⁴⁴ Professor van der Ven is attempting to take certain philosophical and theological concepts, which he calls ‘explicit theodicy’,³¹⁴⁵ and examine how these concepts are dealt with by sufferers, which he then calls ‘implicit theodicy’.³¹⁴⁶

³¹³⁴ van der Ven (1993: 170).

³¹³⁵ van der Ven (1993: 170).

³¹³⁶ Winqest (1987: 1). Self-consciousness and care must be brought to ministry through practical theology.

³¹³⁷ In particular in the context of theodicy. Phillips (2005: xii).

³¹³⁸ Bloesch (1987: 12).

³¹³⁹ van der Ven (1993: 170). This could include free will and sovereignty theodicy approaches.

³¹⁴⁰ van der Ven (1993: 170).

³¹⁴¹ van der Ven (1993: 170).

³¹⁴² van der Ven (1993: 170).

³¹⁴³ van der Ven (1993: 170).

³¹⁴⁴ van der Ven (1993: 170).

³¹⁴⁵ van der Ven (1993: 170). Explicit theodicy would be closer in association with concepts similar to theoretical theodicy such as free will, sovereignty and soul-making perspectives than would implicit theodicy which would be dealt with more by practical and empirical theology and statistics.

³¹⁴⁶ van der Ven (1998: 208).

Theodicy Symbols

Professor van der Ven's works, *Practical Theology* (1993)³¹⁴⁷ and *God Reinvented* (1998),³¹⁴⁸ both present seven theodicy symbols. In contrast, the work of Vossen and Vermeer deal with theodicy models.³¹⁴⁹ I specifically asked the Professor about the issue of symbols versus models, and Professor van der Ven emphatically explained to me by personal email which contained his symbols that there was within his empirical theology *no difference* between theodicy symbols and models,³¹⁵⁰ and there does not appear within any of his work to be any clear-cut distinction by comparing the two.³¹⁵¹ Vermeer does see a difference between symbols and models, which will be explained when his work is reviewed.³¹⁵² In discussing these symbols,³¹⁵³ I am not seeking to primarily critique his understanding of theodicy as I did with Augustine, Plantinga, Feinberg and Hick; that is a secondary consideration for me with his work.³¹⁵⁴ Professor van der Ven is not writing a philosophical theodicy approach with the use of his symbols,³¹⁵⁵ and it is my primary concern to understand and explain what these symbols mean and how van der Ven uses them to relate theodicy to practical theology. He does make philosophical assumptions in the production of these symbols, but he is not writing and defending a philosophical theodicy; rather he is taking philosophical and theological concepts

³¹⁴⁷ van der Ven (1993: 173-174).

³¹⁴⁸ van der Ven (1998: 212-213).

³¹⁴⁹ Vossen (1993: 21). Vermeer (1999: 18).

³¹⁵⁰ van der Ven (2006b: 1).

³¹⁵¹ van der Ven (2006b: 1).

³¹⁵² Vermeer (1999: 18). There is a difference in approach and definitions between van der Ven and Vermeer.

³¹⁵³ van der Ven (1993: 173-174). van der Ven (2006b: 1).

³¹⁵⁴ His work is more concerned with practical and empirical theology.

³¹⁵⁵ van der Ven (1993: 173-174).

and presenting the symbols³¹⁵⁶ in order to empirically test a sample group of people.

Professor van der Ven's first three symbols deal with the absolute transcendence of God.³¹⁵⁷ Transcendence is the idea that God is completely and distinctively separate from his creation.³¹⁵⁸ Grenz and Olson write God is the 'Transcendent One'³¹⁵⁹ and is 'self-sufficient' from the world.³¹⁶⁰ God is from beyond the world and universe.³¹⁶¹ J.S. Whale explains transcendence makes God inaccessible and unknowable to finite creatures.³¹⁶² For Whale, Christ revealed the nature of the transcendent God in his life and ministry.³¹⁶³ According to Kreeft and Tacelli, God is not part of the physical universe, and is not limited by the universe.³¹⁶⁴ God is the creator of the universe and all things, and is 'other' than the universe.³¹⁶⁵

With the first symbol, God is viewed as apathetic and unaffected by suffering.³¹⁶⁶ For God to be apathetic means he is unmovable and unmoved by what goes on in his creation,³¹⁶⁷ yet he keeps all things in motion and in existence.³¹⁶⁸ Professor van der Ven finds Moltmann's discussion on the ancient view, that God is apathetic towards his creation, useful.³¹⁶⁹ Moltmann notes the related Greek term 'apatheia' which is the idea of an irresistible force that cannot be influenced by outside forces.³¹⁷⁰ Historically in early Greek times from Aristotle onwards, God was viewed as being without emotions.³¹⁷¹ Brian Davies (1999) notes that the term

³¹⁵⁶ van der Ven (1993: 173-174).

³¹⁵⁷ van der Ven (1993: 173-174).

³¹⁵⁸ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling. (1999: 115).

³¹⁵⁹ Grenz and Olson (1992: 10).

³¹⁶⁰ Grenz and Olson (1992: 10).

³¹⁶¹ Grenz and Olson (1992: 10).

³¹⁶² Whale (1958: 56).

³¹⁶³ Whale (1958: 109).

³¹⁶⁴ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 93).

³¹⁶⁵ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 93).

³¹⁶⁶ van der Ven (1993: 173).

³¹⁶⁷ van der Ven (1998: 212).

³¹⁶⁸ van der Ven (1998: 212).

³¹⁶⁹ van der Ven (1993: 173).

³¹⁷⁰ Moltmann (1993: 267).

³¹⁷¹ Moltmann (1993: 268).

‘impassibility’ corresponds to ‘apatheia’³¹⁷² and defines impassibility as the traditional understanding that God, the divine nature, cannot experience pain or suffering.³¹⁷³ Davies believes it is incorrect to assume God’s impassibility should mean that the creator is indifferent or unconcerned about his creation.³¹⁷⁴ For Erickson, the idea of God’s divine nature as impassible is based upon the influence of ancient Greek thought rather than Scripture.³¹⁷⁵ Erickson points out that with the incarnation of Christ, God the Son did experience human suffering.³¹⁷⁶ He possessed a human nature that did suffer in life and in death, even though his divine nature coexisted with his human one.³¹⁷⁷ Kenneth Surin (1982) writes that God is considered by some within orthodox Christian theology to be unable to experience pain or sorrow.³¹⁷⁸ However, others concede that concluding God is impassible is a questionable view within traditional thought.³¹⁷⁹ Surin thinks that perhaps God limits his omnipotence by identifying with human suffering.³¹⁸⁰ Paul Helm (2006), Professor Emeritus of the University of London,³¹⁸¹ reasons impassibility has lost intellectual support,³¹⁸² even though throughout the ages many within the Church have accepted the doctrine.³¹⁸³ Helm suggests that the doctrine needs to be reconsidered as God is not indifferent to human suffering,³¹⁸⁴ nor does God express emotions of anger and passion as humans do.³¹⁸⁵ The concept of impassibility opens up a complex discussion beyond this thesis, but it seems reasonable God can be both all-powerful and feel

³¹⁷² Davies (1999: 288).

³¹⁷³ Davies (1999: 288).

³¹⁷⁴ Davies (1999: 288).

³¹⁷⁵ Erickson (1994: 737).

³¹⁷⁶ Erickson (1994: 737).

³¹⁷⁷ Erickson (1994: 737).

³¹⁷⁸ Surin (1982: 97).

³¹⁷⁹ Surin (1982: 97).

³¹⁸⁰ Surin (1982: 97).

³¹⁸¹ Helm (2006: 1).

³¹⁸² Helm (2006: 1).

³¹⁸³ Helm (2006: 1).

³¹⁸⁴ Helm (2006: 1).

³¹⁸⁵ Helm (2006: 1).

negative emotions. It should be concluded suffering does not alter his divine attributes.

Thiessen describes the immutability of God as meaning his divine nature, attributes, consciousness, and will cannot change.³¹⁸⁶ Erickson explains that God does not grow or develop, as there are no variations in his nature at different points within his existence.³¹⁸⁷ R.C. Sproul and Robert Wolgemuth (2000) deduce that as God is eternal he has no beginning or no end.³¹⁸⁸ As God is understood to be eternal and beyond time without a progression in nature, his infinite being would make a change in nature and character impossible.³¹⁸⁹ My modest proposal reasons since God is infinite and considered immutable,³¹⁹⁰ it is impossible for him to suffer in the exact way that human beings do. David A Pailin (1999) explains that within some process theology³¹⁹¹ approaches, God's existence may be viewed as absolute, necessary and unchanging.³¹⁹² However, God's character can change and is determined through interaction with his creation.³¹⁹³ Pailin postulates that God's character can change, as he loves his creatures.³¹⁹⁴ In my view, the divine nature does not have a physical body that can be altered, changed or die, as in John 4:24 where Jesus stated that God is spirit.³¹⁹⁵ Christ could suffer because he was both true God and true man,³¹⁹⁶ but God as spirit³¹⁹⁷ cannot suffer in human terms. Since God is immutable,³¹⁹⁸ any

³¹⁸⁶ Thiessen (1956: 127).

³¹⁸⁷ Erickson (1994: 274).

³¹⁸⁸ Sproul and Wolgemuth (2000: 2).

³¹⁸⁹ Sproul and Wolgemuth (2000: 2).

³¹⁹⁰ Sproul and Wolgemuth (2000: 2). Thiessen (1956: 127). Erickson (1994: 274).

³¹⁹¹ Process theology as discussed previously is a twentieth century approach based on the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead that presents a God that is involved in the continual process of world through two natures. God has a transcendent nature which contains God's perfect character and the consequent immanent nature by which God is part of the changing cosmic process. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 95-96).

³¹⁹² Pailin (1999: 469).

³¹⁹³ Pailin (1999: 469).

³¹⁹⁴ Pailin (1999: 469).

³¹⁹⁵ The New American Standard Version Bible (1984: 1198).

³¹⁹⁶ Schreck (1984: 16). Franke (2005: 72).

³¹⁹⁷ The New American Standard Version Bible (1984: 1198).

³¹⁹⁸ Sproul and Wolgemuth (2000: 2). Thiessen (1956: 127). Erickson (1994: 274).

type or amount of suffering cannot alter his essential nature or being, or divine character.³¹⁹⁹ In contrast, suffering can definitely change the essential nature of human beings as, for example, in the case of an amputated limb or death. Suffering can also change the mental and spiritual well being of a person, but God would not be altered in the same way.³²⁰⁰

Erickson explains that it does seem a rational possibility, however, to conclude God does have emotions, although they are controlled.³²⁰¹ He indicates anger is involved in the idea of God's wrath in the Biblical example Romans 1:18.³²⁰² God also has 'agape' love for his creatures, which is a steadfast, unselfish concern for them.³²⁰³ It is reasonable to deduce that God's love for humanity is not only a decision to care for them, but also includes intense concern for his creation.³²⁰⁴ An understanding, infinite God could comprehend the sufferings of his finite creatures,³²⁰⁵ but God's essential nature and being would not be altered by the experience of these feelings.³²⁰⁶ There is no need to conclude that the sufferings of finite creatures alter the nature of an infinite God who can comprehend and feel those sufferings.³²⁰⁷ Therefore, even if, for the sake of argument, impassibility is a correct deduction concerning God's nature,³²⁰⁸ Christ possessing the full nature of God³²⁰⁹ and a full human nature³²¹⁰ enabled him to experience suffering and evil.³²¹¹ God the Son can therefore relate to human suffering on a personal level. I reason God's immutable nature does not necessarily make him impassible.

³¹⁹⁹ Pailin (1999: 469).

³²⁰⁰ God has an infinite nature that cannot be changed, but finite human nature can be altered.

³²⁰¹ Erickson (1994: 605).

³²⁰² Erickson (1994: 605).

³²⁰³ Erickson (1994: 180).

³²⁰⁴ Erickson (1994: 180).

³²⁰⁵ Pailin (1999: 469).

³²⁰⁶ Thiessen (1956: 127).

³²⁰⁷ Thiessen (1956: 127).

³²⁰⁸ Surin (1982: 97).

³²⁰⁹ Barth (1932-1968: 371). Williams (2007: 130). Franke (2005: 72).

³²¹⁰ Williams (2007: 129). Schreck (1984: 16). Franke (2005: 72).

³²¹¹ Bloesch (1987: 16). He suffered as the reconciler between God and the world. Williams (2007: 130).

Second, the retaliatory symbol views God allowing suffering as punishment for sin.³²¹² Professor van der Ven also calls this the retributive symbol,³²¹³ and explains that evil was considered to be located in original sin and needed to be punished ultimately in the end times judgment.³²¹⁴ Professor van der Ven notes this symbol is often viewed as problematic, because it hampers God's freedom and makes God's ability to punish based on the sinful acts of humanity, as in original sin and the sins that follow.³²¹⁵ A question arises; how is God's freedom in danger by the fact that he can punish significantly free will actions of his creations that disobey him? If God cannot freely punish sin, what can he freely punish? Can God only freely punish actions that he coerced and forced? This would likely be far more problematic than God punishing significantly free beings that disobey him. Even with a sovereignty theodicy, human beings are viewed to have limited freedom,³²¹⁶ being trapped in sin³²¹⁷ and unable to please God without the Holy Spirit's guidance and regeneration of individuals.³²¹⁸

Atonement is a multifaceted, complex subject³²¹⁹ and would be another thesis in itself. I shall briefly deal with the complex idea of God punishing sin.³²²⁰ Erickson states Paul mentions the concept of propitiation in Romans 3: 25.³²²¹ C.H. Dodd (1935) explains that the Greek word in Romans 3: 25 should be translated expiation and not propitiation,³²²² and claims that many Greek translations have been incorrect.³²²³ Anthony D. Palma (2007) defines propitiation as to

³²¹² van der Ven (1993: 173).

³²¹³ van der Ven (1998: 212).

³²¹⁴ van der Ven (1998: 212).

³²¹⁵ van der Ven (1993: 173).

³²¹⁶ Feinberg (1986: 24).

³²¹⁷ Luther (1525)(1972: 128). Calvin (1543)(1996: 95-96).

³²¹⁸ Packer (1996: 924). Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172).

³²¹⁹ Erickson (1994: 783).

³²²⁰ Erickson (1994: 809-810).

³²²¹ Erickson (1994: 809-810).

³²²² Dodd (1935: 82-95).

³²²³ Dodd (1935: 82-95).

appease or pacify,³²²⁴ while expiation means to atone for as in offering or sacrifice.³²²⁵ Grenz, Guretzki and Nordling explain that expiation is, for the Christian, the concept that the atoning work of Christ covered over and cancelled out his/her sins.³²²⁶ Whale writes that expiation means God himself purges or covers human sin.³²²⁷ To state that Christ expiates sin³²²⁸ means that his atoning work enables God to forgive sins³²²⁹ and gradually, and eventually, purge sinfulness out of obedient followers.³²³⁰ Palma explains that some argue propitiation must be rejected in favour of expiation, since propitiation and its divine wrath is a concept that comes from pagan origins where pagan deities were appeased through sacrifice.³²³¹ He reasons that within the New Testament, propitiation includes the idea of expiation, but expiation does not necessarily include the idea of propitiation.³²³² James Strong explains that the word under review in Romans 3: 25, *hilasterion*, is defined as an expiatory place or thing, an ‘atoning victim’ along with ‘mercyseat’ and ‘propitiation.’³²³³ This definition, although somewhat vague³²³⁴ does not contradict Palma’s concept that propitiation does include the idea of expiation.³²³⁵ From Strong’s definition, Romans 3: 25 does perhaps allow for the idea of atonement in both the sense of sacrifice and appeasement.³²³⁶ However, his definition does place more emphasis on expiation than propitiation in the atonement process in Romans 3: 25.³²³⁷ Walter Bauer writes that the meaning

³²²⁴ Palma (2007: 1).

³²²⁵ Palma (2007: 1).

³²²⁶ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 50).

³²²⁷ Whale (1958: 81).

³²²⁸ Whale (1958: 81).

³²²⁹ Whale (1958: 81).

³²³⁰ Whale (1958: 81).

³²³¹ Palma (2007: 1).

³²³² Palma (2007: 1).

³²³³ Strong (1890)(1986: 48).

³²³⁴ Strong (1890)(1986: 48).

³²³⁵ Palma (2007: 1).

³²³⁶ Strong (1890)(1986: 48).

³²³⁷ Strong (1890)(1986: 48).

in Romans 3: 25 is uncertain and could be either expiates or propitiates.³²³⁸ According to Strong the definition of the word from 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 is ‘atonement’ along with ‘expiator’ and ‘propitiation’ and so 1 John does not solve the issue from Romans.³²³⁹ Since this thesis is primarily concerned with theodicy and atonement is a secondary, but important issue, let me conclude by stating that the Greek word allows for discussion and various interpretation.³²⁴⁰ Some within liberal, progressive Christian traditions may insist that expiation is all that is required within the atoning work of Christ,³²⁴¹ while others such as myself, within moderate conservative traditions may conclude expiation and propitiation, both sacrifice and appeasement are reasonable concepts within Christian atonement.³²⁴²

Third, van der Ven introduces a planning symbol, that being God has a hidden plan in the life of each individual.³²⁴³ Suffering has a certain function for a particular time in each life.³²⁴⁴ The understanding that God has a plan for everyone in humanity is prevalent throughout Christian history.³²⁴⁵ Whale writes creation has an ultimate meaning that is not disclosed until the end where the final purpose becomes clear.³²⁴⁶ Death is the ultimate end of temporal suffering and Whale reasons that natural phenomenon does not completely explain it as human beings are not purely natural, but also possess God’s image.³²⁴⁷ It seems, from a traditional Christian perspective, that in death, resurrection and judgment, the plan symbol³²⁴⁸ of God finally culminates. According to Moltmann, through the history of the crucified and risen Christ, lies

³²³⁸ Bauer (1979: 375).

³²³⁹ Strong (1890)(1986: 49).

³²⁴⁰ Palma (2007: 1).

³²⁴¹ Dodd (1935: 82-95).

³²⁴² Erickson (1994: 809-810). Strong (1890)(1986: 48). Bauer (1979: 375).

³²⁴³ van der Ven (1993: 173).

³²⁴⁴ van der Ven (1998: 212-213).

³²⁴⁵ van der Ven (1993: 173).

³²⁴⁶ Whale (1958: 164).

³²⁴⁷ Whale (1958: 166).

³²⁴⁸ van der Ven (1993: 173). van der Ven (1998: 212-213).

the consummation of the Kingdom of God that sets things free and provides them with meaning.³²⁴⁹

As noted earlier, Antony Flew (1983)(1996) writes that God cannot be demonstrated to have a plan for guiding humanity.³²⁵⁰ Therefore the idea of God having such a plan is meaningless, as such a plan cannot be shown empirically true or false.³²⁵¹ Clarence Darrow (1932)(1973) writes that the best one can do is hold on ‘to the same speck of dirt’ as we proceed ‘side by side to our common doom.’³²⁵² Phillips doubts that there is a God that works things out in the end times in order that there is a reality on earth that consists of happiness³²⁵³ and perfection.³²⁵⁴ Phillips reasons his criticisms will fall on ‘deaf ears.’³²⁵⁵ Many that ponder of theodicy deal with it in problematic philosophical terms and not in terms of reality.³²⁵⁶ This understanding would likely view van der Ven’s plans symbol³²⁵⁷ as a false concept.

Immanence is an aspect of the last four symbols.³²⁵⁸ God’s immanence, according to G.R. Lewis (1996) explains God’s gracious presence in the lives of those forgiven and converted to Christ.³²⁵⁹ For Erickson, God is immanent as he is present and active within creation, human nature, and history.³²⁶⁰ Grenz and Olson warn that if immanence is over emphasized, theology can be too influenced by culture.³²⁶¹ Within each culture religious error occurs and this should not be blamed on God’s direct presence on matters.

Professor van der Ven first introduces this fourth symbol, the therapeutic symbol, which

³²⁴⁹ Moltmann (1993: 338).

³²⁵⁰ Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

³²⁵¹ Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

³²⁵² Darrow (1932)(1973: 453).

³²⁵³ Phillips (2005: 265).

³²⁵⁴ Phillips (2005: 266).

³²⁵⁵ Phillips (2005: 273).

³²⁵⁶ Phillips (2005: 273-274).

³²⁵⁷ van der Ven (1993: 173). van der Ven (1998: 212-213).

³²⁵⁸ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³²⁵⁹ Lewis (1996: 458-459).

³²⁶⁰ Erickson (1994: 302).

³²⁶¹ Grenz and Olson (1992: 12).

is a combination of transcendence and immanence.³²⁶² With this symbol, suffering is a means of purifying people in order for them to realize their true humanity by serving God.³²⁶³ This view could be described as seeing the transcendent God as willing suffering upon disobedient humanity in order to immanently, through his Spirit, work inside believers for their ultimate betterment.³²⁶⁴ Martens notes salvation, although multi-faceted,³²⁶⁵ is secure through the suffering of the servant.³²⁶⁶ Gebara offers a different perspective when she discusses the idea of ‘God in the Absence of God.’³²⁶⁷ She explains the idea of God as something unforeseen that can change the course of things, but has not.³²⁶⁸ From a practical theology perspective one can understand that God as therapy³²⁶⁹ can be a hypothetical, but not apparently actual, concept in everyday life. The immanence symbols include compassion, the vicarious servant and the mystical.³²⁷⁰

The fifth symbol is God’s compassion for humanity.³²⁷¹ This is shown in the incarnate Christ and suffering through his atoning work for people.³²⁷² Christ represents God as caring for his followers,³²⁷³ and as J. Clinton McCann, Jr. (1993) assumes, God’s divine plan that led to Christ’s atoning work, ultimately enables God’s forgiveness and compassion.³²⁷⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963) explains that suffering and rejection sum up the cross of Christ.³²⁷⁵ This was part of God’s essential plan.³²⁷⁶ God’s compassion for humanity suffering under the problem of evil is shown as God incarnate Jesus Christ, suffers for the sins of humankind as the

³²⁶² van der Ven (1998: 213).

³²⁶³ van der Ven (1998: 213).

³²⁶⁴ van der Ven (1998: 213).

³²⁶⁵ Martens (1990: 108).

³²⁶⁶ Martens (1990: 108).

³²⁶⁷ Gebara (2002: 155).

³²⁶⁸ Gebara (2002: 155).

³²⁶⁹ van der Ven (1998: 213).

³²⁷⁰ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³²⁷¹ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³²⁷² van der Ven (1993: 174).

³²⁷³ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³²⁷⁴ McCann (1993: 120).

³²⁷⁵ Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 96).

³²⁷⁶ Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 96).

crucified God.³²⁷⁷ God is not uncaring as God the Son was placed within the problem of evil in order to overcome it.³²⁷⁸ The non-empirical nature of the theological divine compassion concept,³²⁷⁹ would be met disagreeably by many atheists.³²⁸⁰ They could argue that it would be difficult to show God has compassion for persons since he cannot be shown to be empirically doing anything for humanity.³²⁸¹ This thesis is not involved in arguing philosophically for God's existence, but relies on Biblical and theological argumentation concerning the work of God and Christ in creation. As Moltmann indicated Christ lived and did God's work, and this is important for both historical and eschatological³²⁸² understandings.³²⁸³

Sixth, the vicarious servant is the innocent sufferer who takes the place of God himself in order to surrender for people that are suffering.³²⁸⁴ Specifically, the term 'vicarious' is usually, within Christian theology, used in the context of atonement and means 'in the place of'³²⁸⁵ and that Christ died in the place of sinful humanity.³²⁸⁶ While reasons 'vicarious suffering' consists of one taking suffering for another.³²⁸⁷ Vicarious atonement, according to Kreeft and Tacelli, can be sufferings that do not obviously appear to help someone, but may help certain persons atone for sin.³²⁸⁸ For van der Ven, the blameless sufferer is God's martyr and saves others on God's behalf.³²⁸⁹ Christ is the ultimate martyr within a Christian model,³²⁹⁰ but van der Ven explains

³²⁷⁷ Moltmann (1993: 200-274). Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 96).

³²⁷⁸ Moltmann (1993: 200-274). Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 96).

³²⁷⁹ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³²⁸⁰ Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

³²⁸¹ Flew (1983)(1996: 92).

³²⁸² The doctrines of the last things, including the Second Coming of Christ, the Resurrection, Judgments, the Millennium and the Final State. Thiessen (1956: 440).

³²⁸³ Moltmann (1993: 126-127).

³²⁸⁴ van der Ven (1998: 214).

³²⁸⁵ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 120).

³²⁸⁶ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 120).

³²⁸⁷ Whale (1958: 81-82).

³²⁸⁸ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 125).

³²⁸⁹ van der Ven (1993: 176).

³²⁹⁰ van der Ven (1993: 176).

that all are brothers and sisters in suffering, and this provides a fellowship of the weak.³²⁹¹

Bonhoeffer deduces that Christ transforms the mortal agony of his martyrs by granting them peace in his assured presence.³²⁹² This type of sacrifice, to Bonhoeffer, is how those who follow Christ overcome suffering as Christ did.³²⁹³

Professor van der Ven's seventh theodicy symbol, and third symbol that is exclusively dealing with immanence, is that of the mystical.³²⁹⁴ He describes this as a mystical union with God, which sees the sufferer surrendering to the will of the creator.³²⁹⁵ E.J. Tinsley (1999), notes although Christian mysticism is difficult to define,³²⁹⁶ its main characteristics appear to be a sense of union and unity with God,³²⁹⁷ God being experienced beyond time continuously,³²⁹⁸ the experience between the believer and God is beyond mere subjectivity, joy is present,³²⁹⁹ and lastly there is a sense of the presence of the transcendent God.³³⁰⁰ Mysticism is an attempt through prayer and meditation to achieve a heightened union with God,³³⁰¹ and this mysticism is not only experiential, but a perceived actual experience with the transcendent God.³³⁰² Earl E. Cairns (1981) explains that mysticism exists in three forms.³³⁰³ First the epistemological type which emphasizes how persons come to know God.³³⁰⁴ With this approach spiritual intuition is crucial and more important than reason.³³⁰⁵ Second, the metaphysical type which postulates the

³²⁹¹ van der Ven (1993: 176).

³²⁹² Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 101).

³²⁹³ Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 101).

³²⁹⁴ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³²⁹⁵ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³²⁹⁶ Tinsley (1999: 387).

³²⁹⁷ Tinsley (1999: 387).

³²⁹⁸ Tinsley (1999: 387).

³²⁹⁹ Tinsley (1999: 387).

³³⁰⁰ Tinsley (1999: 387).

³³⁰¹ Tinsley (1999: 388).

³³⁰² Tinsley (1999: 388).

³³⁰³ Cairns (1981: 100-101).

³³⁰⁴ Cairns (1981: 100-101).

³³⁰⁵ Cairns (1981: 100-101).

absorbing of the spirit of a person into the divine being that takes place on occasion.³³⁰⁶ Third, the Biblical type which views mysticism as allowing the spiritual nature of an individual to relate to God through Christ, and the indwelling Holy Spirit.³³⁰⁷ For one suffering with the problem of evil, an attempt at some type of mystic understanding with God would seem a reasonable thing to pursue.³³⁰⁸ Biblical mysticism³³⁰⁹ does not appear like a practice that would oppose a traditional Christian understanding, as long as the mystic does not place mystical interpretations in priority over those found through studying Scripture and theology. It would be quite natural for one suffering great evil to attempt, with God's help, to harness a greater fellowship and mystical understanding³³¹⁰ of the God who is willingly allowing evil to befall that person.

Cosmodicy Symbols

Cosmodicy symbols, to Johannes van der Ven, are an immanent extension,³³¹¹ or provide an alternative to transcendent theodicy.³³¹² Larry Alderink (1999) explains that cosmology in a general sense, indicates a view of the world or universe, and in particular how it is arranged.³³¹³ Whale writes that cosmology is looking at the cosmos and visible universe from a theistic perspective denying that it is self-explanatory.³³¹⁴ Pojman mentions that theistic versions of cosmology deduce something outside of the universe is required to explain its existence.³³¹⁵ Paul Edwards (1973) explains cosmology reasons that all things come into being through other

³³⁰⁶ Cairns (1981: 100-101).

³³⁰⁷ Cairns (1981: 100-101).

³³⁰⁸ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³³⁰⁹ Cairns (1981: 100-101).

³³¹⁰ Cairns (1981: 100-101). Tinsley (1999: 388).

³³¹¹ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³³¹² van der Ven (1993: 174).

³³¹³ Alderink (1999: 126).

³³¹⁴ Whale (1958: 22).

³³¹⁵ Pojman (1996: 37).

things,³³¹⁶ and since a causal series of events cannot go back in infinity, there must be a first cause.³³¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas is famous for discussing *The Five Ways* and his cosmological argument within *Summa Theologica*.³³¹⁸ Plantinga reasons that aspects of Aquinas' presentation³³¹⁹ are reasonable, but overall the argument is unsuccessful.³³²⁰ I reason this does not render all arguments for first cause unsuccessful, but Plantinga points out difficulties with Aquinas' approach,³³²¹ which is perhaps too extensive.³³²² Edwards comments³³²³ would adequately explain a more modest and reasonable idea concerning first cause.

Professor van der Ven appears to be fusing the terms cosmology and theodicy to create the concept of cosmodicy symbols which parallel the theodicy symbols.³³²⁴ First, the apathy symbol represents a cosmic view that nature is viewed as indifferent towards humanity.³³²⁵ Nature is not beneficial to humanity and can cause human suffering,³³²⁶ and is governed by coincidence and fate.³³²⁷ Second, opposing this first view is the idea that the cosmos is ordered by justice.³³²⁸ Since law governs the universe, it naturally retaliates against human wrong actions.³³²⁹ Third, human beings resign themselves to suffering with faith that their problems fit into an overall cosmic plan.³³³⁰ Fourth, the cosmic therapeutic symbol views suffering as an

³³¹⁶ Edwards (1973: 377-378).

³³¹⁷ Edwards (1973: 377-378).

³³¹⁸ Aquinas, Thomas (1261)(1920) *Summa Theologica*, Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, London, Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

³³¹⁹ Aquinas, Thomas (1261)(1920).

³³²⁰ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 80).

³³²¹ Aquinas, Thomas (1261)(1920).

³³²² Aquinas' presentation although classic and important, is very speculative and Plantinga has disagreements with his overall work. Plantinga (1977)(2002: 80). Geivett reasons Plantinga is too negative concerning natural theology as possibly working. Geivett (1993: 59-60).

³³²³ Edwards (1973: 377-378).

³³²⁴ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³³²⁵ van der Ven (1993: 175).

³³²⁶ van der Ven (1998: 214).

³³²⁷ van der Ven (1998: 214).

³³²⁸ van der Ven (1998: 215).

³³²⁹ van der Ven (1993: 175).

³³³⁰ van der Ven (1993: 175).

ascetic³³³¹ vehicle to develop people towards the greater good.³³³² Fifth, the compassion symbol views nature in a metaphorical way as interacting with the suffering of people in order that peace can be found in nature.³³³³ Sixth, in order to make cosmic tragedy bearable, the concept of vicarious fellowship is introduced, meaning that people are to share sufferings with one another.³³³⁴ Seventh, the mystic symbol explains suffering as a way of arriving at a deeper connection with nature.³³³⁵ The cosmodicy symbols parallel the theodicy ones except suffering is approached from a naturalistic, secular or perhaps atheistic perspective.³³³⁶ The basic concept of the seven items is the same, except in cosmodicy, where naturalism replaces theism as the primary force of nature.³³³⁷

Additional Symbols

From personal correspondence in 2005 and 2006, Professor van der Ven sent nine theodicy symbols with corresponding items.³³³⁸ Included were retribution, plan, compassion, apathy, and the mystical.³³³⁹ These five items appear to be covered in his previous work,³³⁴⁰ although he has added four items.³³⁴¹ The didactic symbol was added,³³⁴² which he states consists

³³³¹ This concept would consist of a strict physical discipline which would include prayer, fasting and abstaining from sexual relations. Blackburn (1996: 227). Asceticism holds that physical nature is evil, and needs to be resisted. Erickson (1994: 376). An ascetic is a person who lives a life of religious contemplation and self-denial. Nigosian (1994: 482).

³³³² van der Ven (1993: 175).

³³³³ van der Ven (1998: 215-216).

³³³⁴ van der Ven (1993: 176).

³³³⁵ van der Ven (1998: 216).

³³³⁶ van der Ven (1993: 174-175). I question whether many atheists would adopt these cosmodicy/cosmology symbols which still assume an overall cosmic plan. Perhaps for many atheists there is no plan but just mutual existence and mutual death. Human beings simply get along as best possible. Darrow (1932)(1973: 453).

³³³⁷ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³³³⁸ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³³⁹ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁴⁰ The work just reviewed.

³³⁴¹ van der Ven (2005: 1-2). These are four items added that are not in a published work. My advisor, Dr. Cartledge, having known this as an expert in the field of empirical theology, had Professor van der Ven share this new and original information with me in order that this PhD thesis be as recent as possible. It would be detrimental to this work not to include this correspondence.

of God inviting sufferers to learn from suffering, sufferers turning problems into learning experiences,³³⁴³ and lastly, God providing people with the strength to become better human beings through suffering.³³⁴⁴ Professor van der Ven has also added the substitution symbol which he understands consists of God urging people to serve others through suffering,³³⁴⁵ God providing people through suffering the strength to help others, and God inviting people to make suffering a sacrifice for others.³³⁴⁶ Notably, the therapeutic symbol is missing from van der Ven's 2005 scheme,³³⁴⁷ but the substitution symbol provides therapeutic elements by people helping others who are suffering while they are suffering simultaneously.³³⁴⁸ The vicarious servant symbol is also missing from van der Ven's 2005 scheme.³³⁴⁹ Professor van der Ven has, however, included in 2005 an accusation symbol, which like the retaliatory symbol would relate to the concept of God's justice.³³⁵⁰ He lists the accusation symbol as consisting of sufferers accusing God of allowing evil,³³⁵¹ persons blaming God for the amount of evil,³³⁵² and people holding God responsible for evil.³³⁵³ Lastly, van der Ven adds a lamentation symbol which consists of people reaching out to God,³³⁵⁴ sufferers asking God for support,³³⁵⁵ and finally people crying out to God while suffering.³³⁵⁶

³³⁴² van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁴³ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁴⁴ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁴⁵ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁴⁶ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁴⁷ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁴⁸ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁴⁹ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁵⁰ van der Ven (2005: 1-2). There are therefore some similarities to Augustinian and Reformed concepts of God's justice. Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 96: 48). Strong (1890)(1986: 48).

³³⁵¹ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁵² van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁵³ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁵⁴ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁵⁵ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

³³⁵⁶ van der Ven (2005: 1-2).

Background Factors

It is not the intention of this Chapter to explain detailed empirical, statistical findings,³³⁵⁷ but rather to shed light on the theoretical concepts behind³³⁵⁸ and within empirical studies.³³⁵⁹ Johannes van der Ven attempts to explain the factors within a tested group³³⁶⁰ that lead to the acceptance of certain theodicy symbols.³³⁶¹ There are background factors such as age, gender, urbanization, education and profession.³³⁶² He notes, for example, that women tend to prefer the compassion theodicy symbol to a greater degree than men.³³⁶³ Political leanings are also considered important for van der Ven, in the development of an understanding of theodicy symbols.³³⁶⁴

Describing the Research

Professor van der Ven's theodicy research project was conducted in a Roman Catholic context through parishes in Tilburg and Nijmegen in the Netherlands.³³⁶⁵ A key factor is that most people attending the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands are above fifty years old.³³⁶⁶ There were 158 respondents³³⁶⁷ within the study and more than two thirds were over fifty years of age.³³⁶⁸ This means that the views of younger people, which may be more reflective of

³³⁵⁷ In contrast to the questionnaires and statistics to be presented in Chapter Six.

³³⁵⁸ As presented by the empirical theologians, but also in comparison to the theoretical views presented in the first four Chapters.

³³⁵⁹ van der Ven (1998: 217).

³³⁶⁰ The sample. Bryan (2004: 543).

³³⁶¹ van der Ven (1998: 217).

³³⁶² van der Ven (1998: 217).

³³⁶³ van der Ven (1998: 217).

³³⁶⁴ van der Ven (1998: 218).

³³⁶⁵ van der Ven (1998: 220).

³³⁶⁶ van der Ven (1993: 185).

³³⁶⁷ In contrast I managed to survey 213 for this project.

³³⁶⁸ van der Ven (1993: 185).

societal trends, may not be well reflected in the study.³³⁶⁹ Additionally, van der Ven writes that ratio of women to men in the survey is 76% to 24%.³³⁷⁰ This is a rather disproportional sample as women are making up more than 75% of the respondents.³³⁷¹ The educational level of the respondents varied with 40% having completed lower secondary school in the Netherlands,³³⁷² and 32.5% having achieved a post-secondary school diploma,³³⁷³ demonstrating that the educational background of these people appears typical for the Netherlands.³³⁷⁴ The occupations of the respondents were varied although over 50% of persons surveyed were business owners or professionals.³³⁷⁵ Professor van der Ven found that 98% of respondents favoured left wing to centre political parties, with 70% supporting a centrist party.³³⁷⁶

A Summary of the Survey Results

Professor van der Ven's empirical results showed that the respondents did not differentiate between theodicy and cosmodicy.³³⁷⁷ The first conclusion van der Ven arrives at from the survey findings is that Christian and secular worldviews overlapped to the point that there was no major difference in how the respondents looked at theodicy or cosmodicy.³³⁷⁸ There is a coordination of religious and scientific views, and one is not viewed as superior or containing more truth than the other.³³⁷⁹ These findings should not be too surprising since van der Ven's core concepts remain the same between theodicy and cosmodicy, other than

³³⁶⁹ This sample may be somewhat limited as young persons were not well presented, although it is has validity, as in statistical integrity. Bryman (2004: 545).

³³⁷⁰ van der Ven (1998: 220).

³³⁷¹ van der Ven (1998: 220). My sample has 61% male and 39% female.

³³⁷² van der Ven (1998: 220-221).

³³⁷³ van der Ven (1998: 220-221).

³³⁷⁴ van der Ven (1998: 220-221).

³³⁷⁵ van der Ven (1993: 187).

³³⁷⁶ van der Ven (1993: 187).

³³⁷⁷ van der Ven (1998: 222).

³³⁷⁸ van der Ven (1998: 222).

³³⁷⁹ van der Ven (1998: 222).

exchanging God for nature as the cause of all things.³³⁸⁰ There were some key conclusions van der Ven establishes from the survey that I will summarize.³³⁸¹ The greater level of education of some respondents did not conclusively lead to a decrease of acceptance of traditional symbols.³³⁸² Yes, apathy and retaliation were viewed negatively,³³⁸³ but the teaching symbols, such as therapeutic, were not viewed differently by people with different educational levels.³³⁸⁴ The immanence symbols such as compassion, which represent God's solidarity with humanity, were less valued by those with greater levels of education.³³⁸⁵ A conclusion could be made that although highly educated people tend not to appreciate transcendent theodicy models that present God as distancing himself from humanity and judging it,³³⁸⁶ they also do not assume that God immanently will assist sufferers.³³⁸⁷

Somewhat surprisingly the test showed that a right-wing or centrist political orientation did not lead to traditional theodicy symbols reflecting God's transcendence,³³⁸⁸ and left-wing political leanings did not lead to acceptance of less traditional perspectives.³³⁸⁹

4. Eric Vossen

Theodicy Models

In his 1993 work, 'Images of God and Coping with Suffering' Vossen presents three

³³⁸⁰ van der Ven (1993: 174).

³³⁸¹ van der Ven (1993: 211).

³³⁸² van der Ven (1993: 211).

³³⁸³ van der Ven (1993: 211). A difficulty with a retaliation symbol could equate to a difficulty with traditional, Augustinian, and Reformed views of God that punishes sin and sinners. Leibniz (1710)(1998: 123). Irenaeus (c.175-185)(1998: Book III, Chapter 18: 7).

³³⁸⁴ van der Ven (1993: 211).

³³⁸⁵ van der Ven (1993: 211).

³³⁸⁶ van der Ven (1993: 211).

³³⁸⁷ van der Ven (1993: 211).

³³⁸⁸ van der Ven (1993: 211).

³³⁸⁹ van der Ven (1993: 211).

theodicy models, which are related to the work of van der Ven and Vermeer.³³⁹⁰ One, the retaliation model, that Vossen sees as relying heavily on the idea of God the supreme, omnipotent judge.³³⁹¹ Two, the plan model, where God is viewed as guiding earthly happenings according to his intentions,³³⁹² and the emphasis is on God's omnipotence and love for humanity.³³⁹³ Three, the compassion model, where suffering is understood as an intrinsic aspect of finiteness and contingent occurrences.³³⁹⁴ The atoning work of Christ³³⁹⁵ is central to this model as God is seen as showing compassion to humanity through this work, and is in solidarity with humankind.³³⁹⁶ Vossen writes that the three models represent three different general assumptions about God.³³⁹⁷ The retaliation model is based primarily on the idea of God's transcendence,³³⁹⁸ the plan model is a balance between the transcendent and immanent,³³⁹⁹ and the compassion model represents, for the most part, God's immanence.³⁴⁰⁰ Vossen's approach is very similar to van der Ven's with no great difference in opinion presented.³⁴⁰¹ Vossen's work, like that of van der Ven and Vermeer, is largely a collaborative effort with the University of Nijmegen. The three men have worked together and shared data.

Coping Strategies

Vossen presents three coping strategies for the problem of evil, which parallel his three

³³⁹⁰ Vossen (1993: 21).

³³⁹¹ Vossen (1993: 21). God can rightly judge. Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Lubac (1965)(2000: 151-152). His judgments are supreme. Edwards (1731-1733)(2006: 553).

³³⁹² Vossen (1993: 21).

³³⁹³ Vossen (1993: 21).

³³⁹⁴ Vossen (1993: 21).

³³⁹⁵ Whale (1958: 71-93). Augustine (398-399)(1992: 178).

³³⁹⁶ Vossen (1993: 21).

³³⁹⁷ Vossen (1993: 21).

³³⁹⁸ Vossen (1993: 21). God is distant and separate from humanity. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling. (1999: 115). He is not human and in his holiness will judge humankind.

³³⁹⁹ Vossen (1993: 21).

³⁴⁰⁰ Vossen (1993: 21). God shows compassion to his followers and therefore demonstrates a personal closeness. Lewis (1996: 458-459).

³⁴⁰¹ Vossen (1993: 21).

theodicy models.³⁴⁰² First is the hope for removal of suffering over time.³⁴⁰³ A key to this strategy is a trust in God's sovereign intervention in matters, perhaps supernaturally, or with the help of medical science.³⁴⁰⁴ With the first coping strategy, God is viewed by Vossen as being the supreme judge who has retaliated against sin.³⁴⁰⁵ Vossen thinks this concept is influenced by the idea of 'inner-worldly causality' where within our world wrong human actions have caused God to punish people.³⁴⁰⁶ Second, concentration on the completion of life, realizing that God has a plan and has promised a better life in the hereafter.³⁴⁰⁷ This concept ties into an understanding that the present suffering will ultimately work towards the sufferer's salvation.³⁴⁰⁸ The person in pain is being presently prepared for an eventual finalized state of salvation.³⁴⁰⁹ Third, concentration on the loving proximity of other people in the present.³⁴¹⁰ This is a survival instinct, which depends on the love, care and compassion of friends and family as sharing with them in solidarity, pain and suffering.³⁴¹¹ This view is dependent both on the immanent love of family and friends, as well as on the love and care of an immanent creator.³⁴¹²

A Summary of the Survey Results

Vossen's test was based on data from Catholic parishes in Nijmegen, Netherlands, and

³⁴⁰² Vossen (1993: 24-28).

³⁴⁰³ Vossen (1993: 24-28).

³⁴⁰⁴ Vossen (1993: 24-28).

³⁴⁰⁵ Vossen (1993: 24-28). Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3). Edwards (1731-1733)(2006: 553).

³⁴⁰⁶ Vossen (1993: 24-28).

³⁴⁰⁷ Vossen (1993: 24-28).

³⁴⁰⁸ Vossen (1993: 24-28).

³⁴⁰⁹ Vossen (1993: 24-28). This a speculative metaphysical argument for the benefits of pain. Phillips questions whether God, if he exists, would have morally sufficient reasons for allowing such evil. Phillips (2005: 201). Although in general terms pain could be a tool used by God for the development of believers it would be quite difficult in concrete terms to equate a person's pain with a definitive plan of God. This leaves room for both the theist and atheist to question God.

³⁴¹⁰ Vossen (1993: 24-28).

³⁴¹¹ Vossen (1993: 24-28).

³⁴¹² Vossen (1993: 24-28). This assumes a questionable concept of divine care. Phillips (2005: 201).

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.³⁴¹³ Concerning a retaliation model and coping strategy, the data test showed great scepticism with highly educated people in regard to God intervening and removing suffering.³⁴¹⁴ Vossen's study indicates that the greatly educated respondents found God's intervention in human suffering to be less rational,³⁴¹⁵ and rejected the idea of God's retaliation against human wrong actions for the same reason.³⁴¹⁶ As noted earlier, there is within some theological approaches, an outright rejection of the idea of God punishing sinful people in retaliation,³⁴¹⁷ and especially with divine anger.³⁴¹⁸ The plan model, according to Vossen was not understood primarily as God's immanent presence with followers,³⁴¹⁹ but rather his transcendent workings and an understanding that God will provide everlasting life to believers.³⁴²⁰ Clearly the results of the test showed that God's ultimate plan of salvation for those in Christ was viewed as transcending them,³⁴²¹ yet the idea of everlasting life was a vital aspect of the faith.³⁴²² Biblically the exact nature of everlasting life in God's Kingdom is not comprehensively explained, and there is good reason to view it is beyond human understanding. John Hick points out that many religious and secular writers reject everlasting life as empirically improvable,³⁴²³ and instead view it as either a moral quality that takes place in temporal life,³⁴²⁴ or God's everlasting remembrance of each of his creation.³⁴²⁵ Clarence Darrow doubts there are proofs available for life after death,³⁴²⁶ and states there is strong evidence against the idea of personal consciousness after

³⁴¹³ Vossen (1993: 30).

³⁴¹⁴ Vossen (1993: 36).

³⁴¹⁵ Vossen (1993: 36).

³⁴¹⁶ Vossen (1993: 36).

³⁴¹⁷ van der Ven (1993: 173).

³⁴¹⁸ Palma (2007: 1).

³⁴¹⁹ Vossen (1993: 36).

³⁴²⁰ Vossen (1993: 36).

³⁴²¹ Vossen (1993: 36).

³⁴²² Vossen (1993: 36).

³⁴²³ Hick (1999: 332).

³⁴²⁴ Hick (1999: 332).

³⁴²⁵ Hick (1999: 332).

³⁴²⁶ Darrow (1928)(1973: 261).

death.³⁴²⁷ For Darrow the immaterial soul does not exist and cannot be reasonably conceived.³⁴²⁸

It is true that a culminated Kingdom of God is not presently empirical,³⁴²⁹ but has been presented as Biblical teaching and theology in academic circles for two millennia.³⁴³⁰

With the compassion model, Vossen believes church culture or ambiance contributed to a compassion theodicy model working with a coping strategy of religious proximity.³⁴³¹ Vossen clearly points out the idea of God demonstrating compassion through the love and care of other church attendees and members, was for this group a more plausible alternative to the transcendent idea of God's retaliation.³⁴³² I would agree with the respondents that the compassion model is crucial within the Christian Church,³⁴³³ and simultaneously the religious proximity of other believers is an essential method of coping and growing together with people in Christ.³⁴³⁴ However, the fact that a concept of God retaliating against sinful humanity, perhaps in anger, is not very comforting,³⁴³⁵ does not make God's punishment of humanity a false doctrine. As noted previously, the concept of propitiation is a Biblical possibility.³⁴³⁶ It is simply more comforting within a pastoral, counseling context, to believe one is receiving God's compassion in suffering,³⁴³⁷ than to realize that perhaps the human problem of evil is somewhat a result of human nature and wrong choices worthy of punishment.³⁴³⁸ It is a possibility that a compassion model cannot be deeply understood in the context of salvation without an

³⁴²⁷ Darrow (1928)(1973: 261).

³⁴²⁸ Darrow (1928)(1973: 261).

³⁴²⁹ It is predicted to occur within Scripture, but has not as of yet. Moltmann (1993: 171-172). A non-traditional and metaphorical understanding of this concept may view a literal Kingdom of God as a reality where all souls eventually evolve to a place of belief and trust in God. Hick in Davis (2001: 51).

³⁴³⁰ Moltmann (1993: 166-196).

³⁴³¹ Vossen (1993: 37).

³⁴³² Vossen (1993: 37).

³⁴³³ Vossen (1993: 37).

³⁴³⁴ Vossen (1993: 37).

³⁴³⁵ Vossen (1993: 37).

³⁴³⁶ Strong (1890)(1986: 48). Bauer (1979: 375).

³⁴³⁷ Vossen (1993: 37).

³⁴³⁸ Strong (1890)(1986: 48). Bauer (1979: 375).

understanding of God's justice.³⁴³⁹ It is plausible that for Christians to adequately understand God's compassion, they must also understand how horrendous wrong actions committed against a holy God are.³⁴⁴⁰ It is reasonable therefore to understand a retaliation model as ultimately being a result of God's desire for both justice and love simultaneously.³⁴⁴¹

5. Paul Vermeer

The Importance of Practical Theodicy

Paul Vermeer, born in 1962,³⁴⁴² is the third of the trio of Nijmegen scholars that shall be reviewed. His text *Learning Theodicy* from 1999 is useful in the empirical study of theodicy. Within the 'Introduction' he makes the observation that the problem of evil, and the resulting attempts at theodicy, cause religious questions to be asked in a secular world.³⁴⁴³ For Vermeer, many people in today's society reject religion because there does not appear to be adequate theodicy to deal with the evil that people experience.³⁴⁴⁴ He explains some have difficulty reconciling a perfectly good and omnipotent deity with the evil that is present.³⁴⁴⁵ Theodicy must find a way to practically influence what people believe, or they may have a weak or non-existent religious faith.³⁴⁴⁶ As mentioned in Chapter One, Henri Blocher explains that philosophical explanations have failed in dealing with the problem of evil.³⁴⁴⁷ Although I somewhat disagree with this comment,³⁴⁴⁸ I can acknowledge philosophical theodicy does not take the place of effective practical theology that can assist a sufferer in having a true Christian religious

³⁴³⁹ Strong (1890)(1986: 48). Bauer (1979: 375).

³⁴⁴⁰ These evils caused by a human choice to disobey God. Augustine (426)(1958: 254-255).

³⁴⁴¹ Strong (1890)(1986: 48). Bauer (1979: 375). Palma (2007: 1).

³⁴⁴² van der Ven (2006a: 1).

³⁴⁴³ Vermeer (1999: 2).

³⁴⁴⁴ Vermeer (1999: 2).

³⁴⁴⁵ Vermeer (1999: 2).

³⁴⁴⁶ Vermeer (1999: 2).

³⁴⁴⁷ Blocher (1994: 84).

³⁴⁴⁸ Blocher (1994: 84).

experience. Carl Henry, as noted in Chapter One, reasons that theistic arguments do not in themselves vindicate God,³⁴⁴⁹ and God's revelation is required.³⁴⁵⁰ In other words, through the study of Scripture and personal experience with God through revelation, the creator can be better understood,³⁴⁵¹ even though he willingly allows evil.³⁴⁵²

Vermeer views Leibniz' approach in 'Theodicy' as limited.³⁴⁵³ Leibniz wrote that reason could reconcile the omnipotent and good God with the problem of evil.³⁴⁵⁴ With this approach Leibniz is viewed as overlooking the practical aspects of theodicy for the sake of theoretical presentation.³⁴⁵⁵ It is not a priority within this thesis to thoroughly examine Leibniz and his theodicy,³⁴⁵⁶ but it states that God by his perfect nature created the best,³⁴⁵⁷ and therefore his theodicy promotes the idea that God created the best possible world.³⁴⁵⁸ God is not the author of sin,³⁴⁵⁹ but evil is permitted by God as evil is a privation of the good.³⁴⁶⁰ For Leibniz, God has the ability to allow angelic and human sin and the suffering it promotes, yet God can promote and use sinful evil for the greater good.³⁴⁶¹ Leibniz' approach would be within a traditional Christian perspective,³⁴⁶² as are many free will and sovereignty approaches, although as discussed in the theoretical Chapters, Plantinga and Feinberg would deny Leibniz' claim that God could create a best possible world and would,³⁴⁶³ instead, hold to 'Modified Rationalism' which states God,

³⁴⁴⁹ Henry (1983: 282).

³⁴⁵⁰ Henry (1983: 282).

³⁴⁵¹ Henry (1983: 282).

³⁴⁵² Henry (1983: 282).

³⁴⁵³ Vermeer (1999: 5).

³⁴⁵⁴ Vermeer (1999: 5). Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

³⁴⁵⁵ Vermeer (1999: 5).

³⁴⁵⁶ Leibniz theodicy was not reviewed in this work because it is a traditional approach, as is the work of Augustine, Plantinga and Feinberg, and therefore the non-traditional perspective from Hick is reviewed for balance.

³⁴⁵⁷ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 137, 267).

³⁴⁵⁸ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 137, 267).

³⁴⁵⁹ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

³⁴⁶⁰ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61). Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117). Geivett (1993: 178).

³⁴⁶¹ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

³⁴⁶² Leibniz would likely be the equivalent of a modern day compatibilist. Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61).

³⁴⁶³ Feinberg (1994: 36).

freely and without necessity, created a good world that was one of many he could create.³⁴⁶⁴

Vermeer writes, in his first Chapter, his work in theodicy is not primarily concerned with the philosophical question of whether or not the existence of evil contradicts God's omnipotent and good nature.³⁴⁶⁵ In this respect, Vermeer's approach³⁴⁶⁶ is different than the theoretical section of this thesis where three theodicy approaches are analyzed for their philosophical and theological tenability. However, there is a continuity within this thesis as the aim is to review theodicy for logic, reason, and Biblical viability, and then to examine to what degree they are practically and empirically applicable.³⁴⁶⁷ Therefore, there exists a connection between this thesis and the empirical research of Vermeer and Nijmegen University, as there is a shared goal of attempting to understand theodicy as practical theology.

Evil Versus Suffering

Vermeer, within his study, makes a distinction between evil and suffering.³⁴⁶⁸ Evil is a harmful event or situation that causes human suffering.³⁴⁶⁹ Natural disasters and disease would be considered evil;³⁴⁷⁰ whereas, in contrast, suffering is the active emotional human response to evil.³⁴⁷¹ Evil is not suffering, but it is only when human beings attempt to find meaning with the negative results of evil that suffering exists.³⁴⁷² As Francis Young (1999) points out, there is no simple satisfactory answer for suffering within theodicy,³⁴⁷³ but the cross of Christ has the power

³⁴⁶⁴ Feinberg (1994: 36).

³⁴⁶⁵ Vermeer (1999: 5).

³⁴⁶⁶ Vermeer (1999: 5).

³⁴⁶⁷ To be assisted by the empirical data of Chapter Six.

³⁴⁶⁸ Vermeer (1999: 7).

³⁴⁶⁹ Vermeer (1999: 7).

³⁴⁷⁰ Vermeer (1999: 7).

³⁴⁷¹ Vermeer (1999: 7).

³⁴⁷² Vermeer (1999: 7).

³⁴⁷³ Young (1999: 556).

to provide a genuine meaning in the lives of Christians.³⁴⁷⁴ Suffering was part of Christ's redemptive work.³⁴⁷⁵ Bonhoeffer writes suffering, along with rejection 'sum up the whole cross of Jesus' as he died on the cross, Christ faced human rejection.³⁴⁷⁶ Gebara offers a different position when she writes that the suffering of a God-man has been used by certain people to accept their own suffering within conformity,³⁴⁷⁷ and some religious movements can use this concept of suffering to cover up 'misery or unjust crosses.'³⁴⁷⁸ Gebara notes that suffering caused by evil persons committing wrong actions, should be distinguished from 'anguish present in every human life.'³⁴⁷⁹ The existence of evil is understood,³⁴⁸⁰ but Vermeer and the Nijmegen school are attempting to make empirical sense of resulting suffering, in light of the saving work of Christ on the cross.

Theodicy Models

Vermeer explains that his three theodicy items are models and not symbols, because they represent abstract distinct theoretical concepts, as opposed to straight forward statements associated with certain theodicy ideas.³⁴⁸¹ As noted earlier, in contrast, van der Ven states there is no difference between theodicy symbols and models, and a clear distinction is not found.³⁴⁸² Vermeer presents retaliation, plan and compassion models.³⁴⁸³ He notes that each model contains

³⁴⁷⁴ Young (1999: 556).

³⁴⁷⁵ Bloesch (1987: 127).

³⁴⁷⁶ Bonhoeffer (1937)(1963: 96).

³⁴⁷⁷ Gebara (2002: 90).

³⁴⁷⁸ Gebara (2002: 90).

³⁴⁷⁹ Gebara (2002: 90).

³⁴⁸⁰ From research, at least within liberal and conservative Christian traditions, evil is deemed to exist, as is the problem of evil. This is not to state that every single documented religious philosophy acknowledges evil and the problem of evil.

³⁴⁸¹ Vermeer (1999: 18).

³⁴⁸² van der Ven (2006b: 1).

³⁴⁸³ Vermeer (1999: 21).

a different understanding of divine omnipotence and goodness.³⁴⁸⁴

The retaliation model, to Vermeer, answers the question of why people are suffering.³⁴⁸⁵ Vermeer appeals heavily to Hick's critical evaluation of Augustine and Calvin,³⁴⁸⁶ which has already been reviewed, and views Augustine as the forefather of retaliation thought in regard to the problem of evil.³⁴⁸⁷ Vermeer correctly points out that Augustine, with the use of free will theodicy, blames human evil and suffering on free will disobedience to God.³⁴⁸⁸ Augustine writes that divine punishment was allotted to those that freely sinned.³⁴⁸⁹ In regard to the suffering of children, Augustine, as does Calvin in the Reformation era, would appeal to original sin to explain why this occurs.³⁴⁹⁰ Children, although innocent compared to adults, who reasonably comprehend their sinfulness, would still be corrupt creatures because of original sin and the fall.³⁴⁹¹ Vermeer notes³⁴⁹² that Calvin, like Augustine, believed human beings freely rebelled in evil against God,³⁴⁹³ and thus all persons were worthy of divine punishment, the full extent of this only avoidable through election to salvation.³⁴⁹⁴ For Vermeer, the retaliation model uses the 'doctrine of divine omnipotence' which states that God is all powerful and yet human suffering is attributed to human sin.³⁴⁹⁵ So ultimately people receive what they deserve and are fully punished for their sins outside of God's grace in election.³⁴⁹⁶ Vermeer, unlike Hick,³⁴⁹⁷ admits the retaliation model can be reasonably upheld without the justice and goodness of God

³⁴⁸⁴ Vermeer (1999: 21).

³⁴⁸⁵ Vermeer (1999: 22).

³⁴⁸⁶ Hick (1970: 221). Ramsay (2004: 2).

³⁴⁸⁷ Vermeer (1999: 22).

³⁴⁸⁸ Vermeer (1999: 22). Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

³⁴⁸⁹ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 3).

³⁴⁹⁰ Vermeer (1999: 25).

³⁴⁹¹ Vermeer (1999: 25).

³⁴⁹² Vermeer (1999: 26).

³⁴⁹³ Calvin (1543)(1998: 37). Augustine (388-395)(1964: 116-117).

³⁴⁹⁴ Calvin (1543)(1996: 154, 349).

³⁴⁹⁵ Vermeer (1999: 27).

³⁴⁹⁶ Vermeer (1999: 27).

³⁴⁹⁷ In regard to everlasting hell, for example. Hick (1970: 377).

being questioned.³⁴⁹⁸

The plan model consists of the assumption that human suffering is part of the divine plan.³⁴⁹⁹ Vermeer portrays the plan model as stating human rebellion causes evil and suffering, and although it opposes God, suffering is ultimately part of God's divine plan.³⁵⁰⁰ The plan model, like the retaliation model, holds to the doctrine of divine omnipotence, but according to the concepts of Leibniz,³⁵⁰¹ and especially Hick,³⁵⁰² as we have seen God uses suffering for the purpose of soul-making.³⁵⁰³ Vermeer points out that with the retaliation model, divine punishment results in suffering,³⁵⁰⁴ in contrast with the plan model where suffering is part of God's scheme as God created the best possible world where free will creatures would inevitably sin.³⁵⁰⁵ For the plan model, for Vermeer, God's goodness could not be questioned as the problem of evil was all part of a divine plan.³⁵⁰⁶

This differentiation presented between the retaliation and plan models seems too simplistic.³⁵⁰⁷ It is apparent that the writings of Augustine and Calvin both include the concept of God saving the elect from sin while, at the same time, judging humanity for it.³⁵⁰⁸ Augustine (398-399)(1992) describes God's plan for those in Christ that are, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, justified, separated from the wicked, subjected to the authority of Scripture, and gathered together for a single aspiration of acquiring the celestial reward.³⁵⁰⁹ This commentary by Augustine, portrays a divine plan of God to save followers from the evil and suffering in

³⁴⁹⁸ Vermeer (1999: 26).

³⁴⁹⁹ Vermeer (1999: 27).

³⁵⁰⁰ Vermeer (1999: 33).

³⁵⁰¹ Leibniz reasons that God works all things to the greater good. Leibniz (1710)(1998: 61). This could perhaps include the idea God would develop in the best possible world, as Leibniz viewed it, human souls.

³⁵⁰² Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

³⁵⁰³ Vermeer (1999: 34-35).

³⁵⁰⁴ Vermeer (1999: 27).

³⁵⁰⁵ Vermeer (1999: 30).

³⁵⁰⁶ Vermeer (1999: 36).

³⁵⁰⁷ Vermeer (1999: 35).

³⁵⁰⁸ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 303). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37, 178-179).

³⁵⁰⁹ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 303).

creation.³⁵¹⁰ Calvin (1543)(1996) explains that God can take the wicked actions of people, yet still accomplish his work and execute his judgment.³⁵¹¹ Within that statement, one can see a judgment or retaliation model, and at the same time God is accomplishing his work concerning humanity which is implying a plan model.³⁵¹² Calvin writes, in the same text, that God does a work of perseverance in a believer, so by grace the believer stays in Christ for life.³⁵¹³ God's work of perseverance in elected individuals³⁵¹⁴ is clearly not retaliation, but a divine plan to save sinful persons despite the fact they are worthy of punishment.³⁵¹⁵ Instead, the atoning and resurrection work of Christ allows the elect to avoid the penalty for sin, being part of the divine plan of salvation.³⁵¹⁶

The compassion model, for Vermeer, has been largely rejected throughout Christian history, although in the twentieth century it gathered some support.³⁵¹⁷ The concept is that God has compassion for human beings and does not focus on retaliation or plan ideas.³⁵¹⁸ As with van der Ven's symbols,³⁵¹⁹ the notion of God's impassibility is discussed in regard to a compassion model.³⁵²⁰ Vermeer correctly points out that there exists in Scripture, anthropomorphic language³⁵²¹ to describe God as one who, like the human beings he created, has feelings and emotions.³⁵²² The fact God is a loving being would allow for the logical and reasonable

³⁵¹⁰ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 303).

³⁵¹¹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37).

³⁵¹² Calvin (1543)(1996: 37).

³⁵¹³ Calvin (1543)(1996: 178-179).

³⁵¹⁴ Calvin (1543)(1996: 178-179).

³⁵¹⁵ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37).

³⁵¹⁶ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 303). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37, 178-179).

³⁵¹⁷ Vermeer (1999: 36).

³⁵¹⁸ Vermeer (1999: 36).

³⁵¹⁹ van der Ven (1998: 212).

³⁵²⁰ Vermeer (1999: 36).

³⁵²¹ A figure of speech used in Scripture that describes God with human physical characteristics. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 11). Anthropomorphisms are Biblical attempts to express realities about God through human analogy. Erickson (1994: 268).

³⁵²² Vermeer (1999: 37).

deduction that he is a compassionate being.³⁵²³

A vital point Vermeer makes concerning the compassion model is that it asks how God responds to human suffering,³⁵²⁴ while the retaliation and plan models are more concerned with why God permits evil and suffering.³⁵²⁵ The compassion model envisions a God that is immanent within his creation,³⁵²⁶ the emphasis on the creator as a God of love, leads to this conclusion.³⁵²⁷ Within the compassion model, the 'doctrine of divine goodness' clearly takes precedence over the doctrine of divine omnipotence.³⁵²⁸ Theologically and Biblically, the compassion model is a vital aspect of the atoning work of Christ, and therefore would be important for Christian theodicy.³⁵²⁹ Christ as God renounced his privileges and experienced an agonizing death on the cross.³⁵³⁰ For Christ as the God-man, to renounce his rights as God and die for the humanity he loves, definitely shows compassion³⁵³¹ as does God's participation in the death³⁵³² and resurrection of Christ. A compassion theodicy symbol or model is therefore acceptable within orthodox Christianity,³⁵³³ although I believe judgment and plan are vital theodicy concepts.³⁵³⁴

A Summary of the Survey Results

Vermeer's field research was conducted among Roman Catholic students from the age of 14 to 18, with the average age being 15.6 years old.³⁵³⁵ The empirical research was to answer

³⁵²³ Pailin (1999: 469).

³⁵²⁴ Vermeer (1999: 38).

³⁵²⁵ Vermeer (1999: 38).

³⁵²⁶ Vermeer (1999: 44).

³⁵²⁷ Vermeer (1999: 44).

³⁵²⁸ Vermeer (1999: 45).

³⁵²⁹ Moltmann (1993: 226-227).

³⁵³⁰ Moltmann (1993: 226-227).

³⁵³¹ Moltmann (1993: 226-227).

³⁵³² Moltmann (1993: 226-227).

³⁵³³ Vermeer (1999: 45).

³⁵³⁴ van der Ven (1993: 173). van der Ven (1998: 212-213). Augustine (398-399)(1992: 303). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37, 178-179).

³⁵³⁵ Vermeer (1999: 141, 144).

two questions: First: What was the direct influence of the taught curriculum on their comprehension of theodicy?³⁵³⁶ Second: What was the indirect influence the taught curriculum had on theodicy judgment by way of its influence on theodicy comprehension.³⁵³⁷

Concerning the first question, Vermeer states their taught curriculum did not directly significantly influence the views of the young people,³⁵³⁸ as the post-test results concerning theodicy judgment were virtually the same as the pretest results.³⁵³⁹ With the second question, Vermeer writes that the curriculum's influence on the children's theodicy judgment was almost entirely indirect,³⁵⁴⁰ with most of the views generally not being directly altered by the taught curriculum.³⁵⁴¹ There was some influence on the judgment of the three theodicy models due to the taught curriculum,³⁵⁴² but Vermeer admits the direct educational concept within the curriculum did not facilitate a rational theodicy judgment.³⁵⁴³ Vermeer concludes that the taught curriculum did assist with an understanding of theodicy models,³⁵⁴⁴ but it did not significantly change the judgments of the children concerning theodicy,³⁵⁴⁵ although taught material did influence, to some degree, judgments concerning the plan model.³⁵⁴⁶ Perhaps youth and, more importantly, limited educational experience, largely caused the lack of a rational theodicy judgment influenced by the taught curriculum.³⁵⁴⁷

6. Conclusion

³⁵³⁶ Vermeer (1999: 146).

³⁵³⁷ Vermeer (1999: 146).

³⁵³⁸ Vermeer (1999: 153).

³⁵³⁹ Vermeer (1999: 153).

³⁵⁴⁰ Vermeer (1999: 153).

³⁵⁴¹ Vermeer (1999: 153). An implication being that culture has a large impact on a young person's view of theodicy.

³⁵⁴² Vermeer (1999: 154).

³⁵⁴³ Vermeer (1999: 154).

³⁵⁴⁴ Vermeer (1999: 154).

³⁵⁴⁵ Vermeer (1999: 154).

³⁵⁴⁶ Vermeer (1999: 154).

³⁵⁴⁷ Vermeer (1999: 141, 144). In contrast with my questionnaire, I surveyed adults.

The Nijmegen school through van der Ven, Vossen, and Vermeer has produced some important and useful work.³⁵⁴⁸ My questionnaire and approach is taking concepts primarily from my theoretical work reviewed,³⁵⁴⁹ but also from some social issues.³⁵⁵⁰ The Nijmegen school has produced an approach to theodicy and empirical results, but my work is taking concepts from primarily four sources and compiling results. I shall therefore provide an original approach that is not only somewhat indicative of my personal sovereignty theodicy, but primarily a result of the writings of four scholars work on the problem of evil. These are four different perspectives and three approaches to theodicy, whereas the Nijmegen school is three different perspectives and one approach.³⁵⁵¹ The school importantly has established with the sample groups, empirical findings demonstrate that compassion symbols or a compassion model was practically superior to retaliation or plan symbols, or a retaliation or plan model.³⁵⁵²

³⁵⁴⁸ Examining practical and empirical theology in regard to theodicy in a modern Roman Catholic context.

³⁵⁴⁹ Through my Reformed perspective.

³⁵⁵⁰ Dr. Cartledge suggested I discuss women's issues, which I do within the questionnaire and in the main body of this thesis to a limited degree. An adequate feminist/feminism theodicy was not found and so we agreed that this was the best course of action.

³⁵⁵¹ Clearly my work is significantly different from that of the Nijmegen school.

³⁵⁵² van der Ven (1993: 211). Vossen (1993: 36).

CHAPTER SIX

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

1. Methodology

The previous Chapter explained that my theoretical work dealt with free will,³⁵⁵³ sovereignty,³⁵⁵⁴ and soul-making³⁵⁵⁵ perspectives. Practical and empirical theology based in questionnaire data, interpretation and reflection of these theodicy approaches would be produced within this thesis providing new and original material.³⁵⁵⁶ Pattison explains theological reflection can frighten many people,³⁵⁵⁷ as theology appears to come from academic sources that are too difficult to comprehend.³⁵⁵⁸ Theology can become less of a burden to those not academically trained,³⁵⁵⁹ if elements of practical theology and empirical data are used in the process of understanding and enquiring about what theology means in our present culture.³⁵⁶⁰ Practical theology used in conjunction with empirical data³⁵⁶¹ can provide, through the process of enquiry,

³⁵⁵³ Augustine and Alvin C. Plantinga.

³⁵⁵⁴ John S. Feinberg.

³⁵⁵⁵ John Hick.

³⁵⁵⁶ Therefore an original PhD thesis.

³⁵⁵⁷ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

³⁵⁵⁸ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

³⁵⁵⁹ I must add that for those of us academically trained in theology, in general terms, theoretical theology is much more beneficial when connected with practical concepts.

³⁵⁶⁰ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

³⁵⁶¹ Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

new and different ways of looking at Christian doctrine.³⁵⁶² This thesis has provided influential approaches to theodicy within Christian tradition, both conservative and liberal,³⁵⁶³ and examines practical and empirical results of these views from the perspective of church attendees from various denominations primarily in North America, Western Europe, and Oceania.³⁵⁶⁴ It is my view that in conjunction with the theological perspectives reviewed, there are possible ideas and concepts that, through the use of practical and empirical methods, can assist in the development of theological praxis.³⁵⁶⁵

Rationale for Questionnaire Method and Questions Provided

Dr. Mark Cartledge³⁵⁶⁶ is well-known as a researcher within empirical theology and practical theology, having written a text book on the subject³⁵⁶⁷ in particular within Pentecostal and charismatic theology.³⁵⁶⁸ Cartledge took over supervising this theodicy and practical/empirical theology project from Dr. William Kay, who is also within the field of empirical and practical theology³⁵⁶⁹ and was Cartledge's 'doctoral supervisor.'³⁵⁷⁰ These two experts on practical and empirical theology guided this project³⁵⁷¹ along with the assistance of Dr. Rob Warner who took over advisement after the questionnaire had already been developed.³⁵⁷² It

³⁵⁶² Pattison in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 137).

³⁵⁶³ As represented in my selection of theodicy approaches.

³⁵⁶⁴ Australia and New Zealand. South Africa may also be considered a Western nation of the European tradition.

³⁵⁶⁵ As noted previously, Simon Blackburn writes that the term *praxis* originated in the era of Aristotle and included the concept of goal-directed action, the action in itself being part of the end. Blackburn (1996: 298). Praxis is not concerned with merely applying theoretical knowledge, but adding to knowledge in the process of practically applying theory. Anderson (2001: 22).

³⁵⁶⁶ Now of the University of Birmingham (UK).

³⁵⁶⁷ Kay in Cartledge (2003: xiii-xiv).

³⁵⁶⁸ Kay in Cartledge (2003: xiii-xiv).

³⁵⁶⁹ Dr. Kay is of Wales, Bangor where I earned my MPhil thesis degree.

³⁵⁷⁰ Cartledge (2003: ix).

³⁵⁷¹ Cartledge (2003: back cover). Cartledge (2003: ix). Dr. Cartledge was my main advisor in establishing the questionnaire in a correct manner.

³⁵⁷² Dr. Warner also has experience within the field of practical/empirical theology. Dr. Warner fully supported the questionnaire as it is presently and it was not altered.

was understood that taking often quite complex philosophical propositions and putting them in a simplified form for the questionnaire,³⁵⁷³ would be a challenge, and it has been.³⁵⁷⁴ But, it was accomplished and this type of project would be original by PhD standards.³⁵⁷⁵ The questions within the questionnaire are based on free will, sovereignty and soul-making theodicy approaches,³⁵⁷⁶ with general theology and feminism questions included. The survey questions needed to be relevant and understandable to respondents within the Christian Church.³⁵⁷⁷ The theodicy approaches come from within the Christian community with free will and sovereignty being moderately conservative approaches and soul-making a progressive liberal approach.³⁵⁷⁸ General theology questions were included in order to demonstrate empirically that respondents, being of the Christian Church, were able to answer basic propositions relevant to the Church. It is important to establish that those sampled within the Christian Church reason in a way that is historically Christian and this is established by the use of general theology questions.³⁵⁷⁹

Ivone Gebara's book *Out of the Depths* has been very helpful in providing me with material in order to base my feminism questions.³⁵⁸⁰ This provides another layer of originality for this project and as well allows me to more objectively deal with the important issue of women and suffering,³⁵⁸¹ which Gebara reasons has often been overlooked in Christian history dominated by males.³⁵⁸² She admits that her work is not particularly Biblical,³⁵⁸³ and more

³⁵⁷³ Which is included within this thesis.

³⁵⁷⁴ The questionnaire took approximately one year to develop and complete.

³⁵⁷⁵ These type of theoretical propositions had not been presented in this way previously.

³⁵⁷⁶ Reviewed approaches.

³⁵⁷⁷ Overall the questionnaire questions were considered understandable by respondents that contacted me on the matter, however, there is the difficulty of lack of context as respondents did not have the opportunity to read my theoretical work. This could not be rectified by the nature of this project.

³⁵⁷⁸ However, as noted, I reason as a moderate conservative that soul-making in general terms does have some academic and intellectual merit.

³⁵⁷⁹ This includes views from conservative and progressive liberal perspectives.

³⁵⁸⁰ My feminism questions were an attempt for me as a male theologian to present them from a feminist perspective as opposed to a Reformed one. Gebara's work assisted me in this goal.

³⁵⁸¹ Gebara (2002: 1-44).

³⁵⁸² Gebara (2002: 1-44).

importantly for this thesis, I reason it is not particularly philosophically theological or is it primarily dealing with philosophy of religion. She explains that her work is coming from the perspective of ‘theological anthropology’³⁵⁸⁴ and is seeking to examine the legitimate historical sufferings of women³⁵⁸⁵ and the need for justice and human solidarity.³⁵⁸⁶ Her approach is more so that of practical theology³⁵⁸⁷ and therefore, with advisement, it was determined that her approach is not a work of philosophical theodicy as is the work of Augustine, Plantinga, Feinberg, and Hick and could not be reviewed as such. It was rather a sociological work of anthropological theology³⁵⁸⁸ that could be discussed within my thesis and reviewed within the questionnaire.³⁵⁸⁹ This is why Gebara’s work is not reviewed as a feminism theodicy.³⁵⁹⁰

The graphs provided in the Appendix add a very useful visual perspective that would be lacking from just reading the statistical results within this Chapter.³⁵⁹¹ Quite importantly, it should be noted that neither Dr. Cartledge or Dr. Warner suggested or requested graphs be produced for this thesis, and so the statistics were never developed with the intention of producing graphs.³⁵⁹² Also, I was specifically and more importantly told to only use selective information from my statistics when presenting the information in this Chapter and this will, of course, show with the graphs in the Appendix as that is the documented data available to me. Neither the statistics in this Chapter, or the graphs in the Appendix, are exhaustive information

³⁵⁸³ Gebara (2002: 8).

³⁵⁸⁴ Gebara (2002: 8).

³⁵⁸⁵ Gebara (2002: 8).

³⁵⁸⁶ Gebara (2002: 8).

³⁵⁸⁷ As with Chapter Five.

³⁵⁸⁸ Gebara (2002: 8).

³⁵⁸⁹ As in Chapter Six.

³⁵⁹⁰ As her methodology and approach is so much different than the theoretical presentations reviewed, it would not work well to attempt direct comparison of her book with the works of Augustine, Plantinga, Feinberg and Hick.

³⁵⁹¹ Another layer of empirical theology is added.

³⁵⁹² Graphs were an after PhD viva addition to this project.

from my questionnaires.³⁵⁹³ The information is selectively based in order to best relate to connecting my theoretical theodicy approaches to practical and empirical theology. This means often there is a priority on the highest numbered results for a question.³⁵⁹⁴

I have provided a good-sized sample with 213 respondents, but it needs to be stated that my sample is limited. There are several denominations represented and not one of them has been surveyed exhaustively.³⁵⁹⁵ The idea of the questionnaire was to sample the Christian Church overall, from both conservative and liberal traditions, and this does not include a large worldwide examination of the views of one particular Christian group or denomination. A large examination of one particular denomination or group would be beneficial in a narrow sense,³⁵⁹⁶ but in this work I am looking for a wider perspective.³⁵⁹⁷

2. Frequency

Definition

The frequency procedure produces tables that display both the number and percentage of cases for each value of a variable.³⁵⁹⁸ Variables represent different types of data compiled including numbers, strings, currency and data.³⁵⁹⁹ Alan Bryman (2004) explains frequency tables provide the number of people and percentage that belong in each variable category.³⁶⁰⁰ Julie Pallant (2004) notes frequencies include all the individual variable items that make up the

³⁵⁹³ Too much data would not assist in establishing clarity for this project.

³⁵⁹⁴ Some results from fewer respondents will not be discussed.

³⁵⁹⁵ When I state that a denominational group came to a particular conclusion with a certain percentage, it should be understood that this is not a sweeping statement meant to represent the overall worldwide views of the entire group.

³⁵⁹⁶ A larger sample would be provided.

³⁵⁹⁷ As a moderate conservative theologically, I purposely sampled leaders and attendees from progressive liberal and conservative fundamentalist churches that would have quite different perspectives at times from myself. I know this from survey results and personal emails received in response to my questionnaire. I also sampled persons from my own denomination and others from denominations with moderate conservative and moderate liberal views.

³⁵⁹⁸ SPSS (2006: 82).

³⁵⁹⁹ SPSS (2006: 51).

³⁶⁰⁰ Bryman (2004: 227).

represented scales.³⁶⁰¹

Frequencies of this Thesis

As noted, statistically there are 213 valid³⁶⁰² respondents. These respondents are the people on whom research has been conducted for this project.³⁶⁰³ This indicates that all 66 variables/questions are answered by 213 respondents, or 14,058 times. This project does not contain missing data,³⁶⁰⁴ as it is useful to distinguish between those respondents who refused to answer a question and those who did not respond because it was not applicable.³⁶⁰⁵ Within my questionnaire, some questions provided the ‘Other’ option as opposed to ‘Not Applicable’.

3. Variables

Data and Interpretation

It should be noted that this section will contain less citations than the rest of the thesis. This is because of the following reasons. One, I am discussing the questionnaire as the source of the information and there would be no point in continuously citing the questionnaire.³⁶⁰⁶ Two, many of the subjects raised within the questionnaire will have already been dealt with in the thesis and I wish to avoid needless repetition. I do not wish to create redundant work. Three, key issues will be further discussed within the Theology and Application section.

³⁶⁰¹ Pallant (2004: 42).

³⁶⁰² Validity is the concern with the integrity that is generated from a piece of research. Validity is usually measurable in statistics. Bryman (2004: 545). The validity of a scale is in regard to the degree to which it measures what it is supposed to measure. This is done empirically in statistics. Pallant (2004: 6-7). Other important statistical terms include ‘mean’ which is known as ‘arithmetic mean’, and is defined as the average of the total distribution of values divided by the number of values. Bryman (2004: 537). ‘Median’ is the mid-point in distribution values. Bryman (2004: 537). ‘Standard deviation’ is the measure of dispersion around the mean, in other words where variables differ from the average. Bryman (2004: 544).

³⁶⁰³ Bryman (2004: 543).

³⁶⁰⁴ SPSS (2006:543).

³⁶⁰⁵ SPSS (2006: 63).

³⁶⁰⁶ This would not be beneficial for thesis presentation.

Question 1: Sex

As stated, all questions are valid.³⁶⁰⁷ The frequency for male respondents is 130, for female respondents 83, and indicates 61% are male and 39% female. The valid percentage is identical to the percentage.³⁶⁰⁸ The cumulative percentage starts at 61% after the male total, and goes to 100% after the female total.³⁶⁰⁹ Within the process of handing out, mailing and emailing questionnaires there was no preference made in regard to gender.³⁶¹⁰ Although I contacted more mainline churches³⁶¹¹ than evangelical or fundamentalist,³⁶¹² primarily in Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, and English speaking churches in continental Europe, the majority of ministers, elders and leaders were men.

The Christian Century Group in the article 'Women in ministry - women clergy face discrimination, lower wages' (1999) explains it is difficult for female ministers to progress in this male dominated profession.³⁶¹³ Some denominations will not sanction women ministers.³⁶¹⁴ As well, even if the majority of members of a congregation would find a female minister acceptable, and a minority of the same congregation do not, this could cause dissention in the church indicating it is less likely that a woman minister would be hired.³⁶¹⁵

Question 2: Age

³⁶⁰⁷ Bryman (2004: 545).

³⁶⁰⁸ In this case, there was no missing data so the valid percentage, the percentage of data with integrity matches the percentage of data received.

³⁶⁰⁹ For each response the percentage is taken and accumulates toward the total of 100%.

³⁶¹⁰ For the sake of a balanced presentation.

³⁶¹¹ Which were progressive and at least moderately liberal.

³⁶¹² I was not looking for primarily Reformed churches, although some were surveyed.

³⁶¹³ Christian Century Group (1999: 1).

³⁶¹⁴ Christian Century Group (1999: 2).

³⁶¹⁵ Christian Century Group (1999: 2).

The age group with the highest percentage and valid percentage was the ‘under 25’ group, with 29 (13.6%) respondents, followed closely by the ‘25 to 29’ group with 28 (13.1%) respondents. The next group was ‘35 to 39’ year olds with 27 (12.7%) respondents, followed by ‘30 to 34’ year olds with 24 (11.3%) respondents. It is interesting that the four youngest age groups were 50.7% of my total respondents. It is possible that young people are more likely to fill out a questionnaire. Statistically there is a general decline in respondents as the age increases. The two groups with the lowest respondents are the ‘70 to 74’ and ‘75 and over’ groups, that together total 13 (6.1%) respondents. Within the graphs presentation in the Appendix, for the sake of clarity eight groups were combined to form a group of ‘40-70’ or over year olds that is presented.³⁶¹⁶ I first combined the ‘40-69’ year olds that made up 43.2% of respondents.³⁶¹⁷ I then combined the 40-69 years old group with those over ‘70’ years of age.³⁶¹⁸

As mentioned in the previous Chapter, Paul Ballard and John Pritchard (2001) explain that, historically, practical theology began to expand academically in United Kingdom Universities in the 1970’s in Manchester, Birmingham, and Wales.³⁶¹⁹ John Patton notes pastoral care in regard to race, culture, gender, and power issues is presently most important in the American church.³⁶²⁰ Empirical, and practical theology and related pastoral care have become more popular since the 1970’s³⁶²¹ and, therefore, questionnaires dealing with empirical theology would be culturally familiar to younger people, and a greater number of young persons may be willing to complete a questionnaire.³⁶²²

³⁶¹⁶ Non-young adults.

³⁶¹⁷ The groups that were combined were ‘40-44’, ‘45-49’, ‘50-54’, ‘55-59’, ‘60-64’ and ‘65-69’.

³⁶¹⁸ This demonstrates that 49% of the persons that completed the questionnaire were middle-aged or seniors. Fifty-one percent of respondents were young adults.

³⁶¹⁹ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 2).

³⁶²⁰ Patton in Woodward and Pattison (2000)(2007: 57).

³⁶²¹ Ballard and Pritchard (2001: 2).

³⁶²² This is speculative and I am not dogmatic on this point.

Question 3: Marital Status

In regard to marital status, 126 (59.2%) respondents were married (including those separated).³⁶²³ Next there were 69 (32.4%) single respondents, followed by widows/widowers with a frequency of 10 (4.7%) and finally divorcees at 8 (3.8%).

Question 4: Qualifications

The top three by frequency are Bachelor Degree at 62 (29.1%) respondents, followed by Master Degree with 45 (21.1%) respondents. The third high frequency group is high school diploma at 34 (16%). There are 20 (9.4%) respondents who have received a Doctorate Degree. From the data, 59.6% of respondents have some type of post secondary degree.

Question 5: Occupation

Many of the respondents who are ministers do not consider themselves professionals and chose the 'Other' option; 76 (35.7%) respondents chose this option. Next 52 (24.4%) respondents are involved in professional services, some of these are ministers. The questionnaire does not ask specifically if someone is a minister as this could interfere with confidentiality, but I deduce from my results that many of the 60.1% are Christian ministers or leaders.³⁶²⁴ Therefore, my respondent group is not primarily made up of lay people in the congregation.³⁶²⁵ The top two respondent groups are far ahead of the next highest group, that is tied between homemakers and

³⁶²³ I did not think separated persons warranted their own group since they are still legally married.

³⁶²⁴ Many respondents wrote down that they were ministers on the questionnaire.

³⁶²⁵ Since many of my respondents were ministers and church leaders this provided some educated perspectives on theodicy. Many of these Christian leaders should have Bachelor's degree and a few would have higher degrees.

students at 18 (8.5%) each.

Question 6: How long have you been a Christian?

There is a wide range of respondents³⁶²⁶ starting with the frequency of 51 (23.9%) of over 45 years, followed by 35 (16.4%) for the age group 15 to 19 years. The next largest group of 21 (9.9%) respondents is the 10 to 14 years group.

Question 7: Denomination

With my research, I initially expected to survey mainly local respondents³⁶²⁷ but through the use of the internet received responses from the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries where English is spoken, including continental Europe.³⁶²⁸ The questionnaire was designed with local denominations in mind, but it contained an 'Other' option for international denominations which was useful with the internet responses received. I shall list the denominations that had ten or more respondents. First, there is Non-denominational, with 48 (22.5%) respondents. No further explanation was required by respondents when answering this question and I, therefore, cannot break down whom these 48 respondents are affiliated with; however, from my research many of them are independent charismatic and Baptist churches from North America and the United Kingdom.³⁶²⁹

There are 46 (21.6%) respondents from my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church in North

³⁶²⁶ Every frequency group has double figures in respondents except for the under 5 years group at 3.8%. There was a wide range of Christian leaders and church attendees with this research; therefore, some persons have been Christians for many years and some for only a few.

³⁶²⁷ Within Greater Vancouver, also known as the Lower Mainland in British Columbia, Canada.

³⁶²⁸ Using churches found on the internet and worldwide web as a source, as well as local churches, provided me with a greater number of respondents than I could have sampled locally in the time allotted.

³⁶²⁹ Since this group is represented by a variety of non-denominational churches, the responses from this frequency group cannot be considered as meaningful as those from denominations that are actual religious groups.

America. This is a Canadian variant for the American church planting denomination known as the Presbyterian Church in America.³⁶³⁰ It should be no surprise that the highest number of respondents from an actual denomination comes from my own church, but it does not represent even a quarter of my data. Therefore, it is an indicator that I pursued a wide range of responses in regard to theodicy within the Christian Church.³⁶³¹ Next we have 23 (10.8%) respondents who are Methodist, and I received their questionnaires through email and regular mail, mainly from the United States. Lutherans both local and worldwide, and not from specific Lutheran denominations, make up 16 (7.5%) respondents. Persons from the Church of the Nazarene, mainly local, make up 14 (6.6%) respondents. Lastly, with 11 (5.2%) respondents are people who attend the Church of God.

Questions 8 to 10: Religious Labels

Question 8 represents primary religious label, while question 9 represents secondary religious label, followed by question 10 representing tertiary religious label. ‘Evangelical’ has 69 (32.4%) respondents for primary label, for the secondary label it has 54 (25.4%) respondents. As a tertiary religious label it features 12 (5.6%) respondents.³⁶³² Overall 63.4% of respondents chose evangelical as an option.³⁶³³ ‘Conservative’ is the primary preference of 45 (21.1%) respondents, 45 (21.1%) respondents for a secondary preference with a leading frequency for

³⁶³⁰ My pastors allowed me to hand out or email from a list, the questionnaire to persons from both of our church sites. Our church is moderately conservative and evangelical. It is neither fundamentalist nor liberal.

³⁶³¹ Even if hypothetically over 50% of the respondents are from my church and/or denomination, there would be no guarantee that the majority of these people would support my Reformed, sovereignty perspective. My church is in Vancouver, an urban centre where many people are transient, and has many attendees and members that have not grown up in the Reformed tradition. Among church leaders there would generally be support for my sovereignty theodicy, but not necessarily among the congregation, and most of the 46 respondents are from the congregation.

³⁶³² The mean, which is the total of a distribution of values divided by the number of values. Bryman (2004: 537), is 21.13%.

³⁶³³ There was not a concerted effort to bring in evangelical respondents, in fact, I spent most of my time locally, and particularly on the internet, searching for mainline perspectives. It is likely that some moderately liberal, still consider themselves evangelical.

tertiary preference at 25 (11.7%) respondents.³⁶³⁴ The conservative label was chosen by 53.9% of respondents and this is an indicator of my efforts to have those within liberal, progressive Christianity specifically in my project, since although a majority of respondents chose conservative as a label, it is not an overwhelming majority. ‘Charismatic’ is the primary preference of 18 (8.5%) respondents, a secondary preference of 12 (5.6%) respondents, and 10 (4.7%) respondents as a tertiary preference.³⁶³⁵ So 18.8% of respondents chose this as a religious label. ‘Catholic’ is the primary religious label of 16 (7.5%) respondents, secondary preference frequency of 12 (5.6%), and tertiary preference of 10 (4.7%).³⁶³⁶ Bishop James Judd (2003) explains within ‘Short History of the Old Catholic Church’³⁶³⁷ that the term ‘catholic’ equates with the term ‘universal.’³⁶³⁸ The term catholic literally means ‘universal’ or ‘worldwide.’³⁶³⁹ Since the term ‘catholic’ is not defined in my questionnaire, some respondents who state they are catholic are not necessarily Roman Catholic. Thirty-eight respondents state they are catholic for religious label, but only 9 respondents at 4.2% are part of the Roman Catholic denomination. A total of 17.8% chose the catholic option. This is not necessarily an indicator that they are members of the Roman Catholic Church, but they consider themselves catholic³⁶⁴⁰ Christians.

Question 11: God reveals himself in the Bible

The frequency for ‘Agree Strongly’ is shown as ‘AS’ and is 185 (86.9%) respondents. The frequency for ‘Agree’ shown as ‘A’ is 23 (10.8%) respondents. ‘Not Certain’ represented as ‘NC’ has 5 (2.3%) respondents. Interestingly, no respondent chose ‘Disagree’ which is ‘D’, or

³⁶³⁴ The mean total for ‘conservative’ is 18%.

³⁶³⁵ A mean of 6.27%.

³⁶³⁶ A mean of 5.93%.

³⁶³⁷ Judd (2003: 1).

³⁶³⁸ Judd (2003: 1).

³⁶³⁹ Grenz, Guretski and Nordling (1999: 24).

³⁶⁴⁰ Judd (2003: 1).

‘Disagree Strongly’ which is ‘DS’. On this question 97.7% of respondents selected ‘AS/A’ and therefore this concept overwhelmingly is accepted within my data.

Question 12: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the same God

For this question, 186 (87.3%) respondents chose ‘AS’ while 20 (9.4%) selected ‘A’. Therefore 96.7% strongly supported the Biblical idea of the Trinity and only 4 (1.9%) respondents chose ‘D’ or ‘DS’. Within this data, the concept of the triune God of the Bible is not a major topic of debate between evangelical and mainline Christianity whether from conservative or liberal perspectives.³⁶⁴¹

Question 13: God is close to all persons

With a frequency of 95 (44.6%) respondents ‘AS’ is the top response, followed by 54 (25.4%) respondents for ‘A’. So 70% of respondents support this idea. There are fair numbers of ‘NC’ as 26 (12.2%) respondents made that choice, and 38 (17.8%) respondents chose ‘D/DS’. I do not view this question as primarily important for work on theodicy, but interestingly God’s closeness to persons or immanence is accepted by 70% of the respondents in a world where the problem of evil exists.

³⁶⁴¹ As noted in Chapter Three, the Trinity is a subject of controversy in the context of some groups that have a restoration view of Christianity, as in a need to restore Christianity to its original theology, even though these groups tend to lack Scriptural support for their key and crucial doctrines. With groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints the Trinity is rejected. Bowman, Robert M. (1990) *Why You Should Believe in the Trinity*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House. Martin, Walter (1965)(1997) *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis. Ankerberg John and John Weldon (1999) *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, Eugene, Oregon, Harvest House Publishers. The Trinity is also of course at times a controversial subject with those religions outside of cultural Christianity which can have radically different views on the nature of God.

Question 14: God is beyond his creation

One hundred and fifteen (54%) respondents chose ‘AS’ and 30 (14.1%) chose ‘A’. This indicates 68.1% support of this idea. It is not specifically indicated in the questionnaire due to limitations of empirical theology, but I am within the survey communicating the idea of transcendence, which shall be discussed in the Theology and Application section.

Question 15: God is in all things

This question concerned the concept of pantheism, and not immanence.³⁶⁴² From the results, bearing in mind the context of the question is not provided with empirical theology, many respondents understood the question as dealing with immanence. Therefore 74 (34.7%) respondents preferred ‘AS’ while 46 (21.6%) respondents selected ‘A’. It is doubtful that 56.3% of those in the Christian Church, whether conservative or liberal, are pantheists!³⁶⁴³ Sixty-nine (32.4%) respondents chose ‘D/DS’ and therefore I deduce these respondents reasoned pantheism was being discussed. Pantheism will be further discussed in the Theology and Application section.

Question 16: God separates himself from his creation

This is a difficult question.³⁶⁴⁴ The idea behind the proposition is a concern on whether or not the transcendent and immanent God, as infinite and omnipresent, limits his influence on creation and, in a sense, separates his will from that of created beings, allowing them significant, but limited free will. Sixty-four (30%) respondents preferred ‘AS/A’ with this question, 41

³⁶⁴² Immanence was defined and discussed in Chapter Five, and pantheism in Chapter One.

³⁶⁴³ I would have no good reason, based on historical and present Church culture to believe this a reality.

³⁶⁴⁴ There was no attempt on my part to retrieve a particular answer from respondents through a lack of clarity.

(19.2%) chose 'NC', while 108 (50.7%) respondents selected 'D/DS'.

Question 17: God cannot suffer.

The subject of impassibility was discussed in the practical theology Chapter. I have pointed out in this work that Kenneth Surin reasons some within orthodox, traditional, Christian theology consider God as unable to experience pain or sorrow.³⁶⁴⁵ However, others concede that concluding God is impassible is a questionable view.³⁶⁴⁶ Surin thinks perhaps God limits his omnipotence by identifying with human suffering.³⁶⁴⁷ I conclude that God suffers but cannot alter his essential infinite and immutable nature. Seventy-two (33.8%) respondents chose 'D', while 78 (36.6%) respondents preferred 'DS'. Therefore 70.4% of respondents reason that God suffers in some way. It can be deduced that many of these persons would assume God suffers simultaneously with his creation when they experience the problem of evil.

Question 18: Life is a result of evolution

This is by no means a scientific thesis and the subject of evolution will not be dealt with exhaustively. The evolution question was placed in the questionnaire in order to receive an idea of how many respondents that attend Christian churches would consider evolution as part of God's initial plan in creation. Laurence Moran (1993) who is in the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Toronto,³⁶⁴⁸ defines evolution as a process, which results in noticeable heritable changes in a population spread over many generations.³⁶⁴⁹ It is a change in the gene pool from one generation to another.³⁶⁵⁰ Moran's definition is explaining the scientifically based

³⁶⁴⁵ Surin (1982: 97).

³⁶⁴⁶ Surin (1982: 97).

³⁶⁴⁷ Surin (1982: 97).

³⁶⁴⁸ Moran (1993: 1).

³⁶⁴⁹ Moran (1993: 1).

³⁶⁵⁰ Moran (1993: 1).

theory of evolution³⁶⁵¹ and does not include speculation on how this occurred. His definition is based on empirical scientific evidence³⁶⁵² as opposed to scientific theory/philosophy speculating on how matter began to exist.³⁶⁵³ One hundred and fifty-nine respondents (74.6%) selected ‘D/DS’ and therefore did not support the notion of life resulting from evolution. Thirty-two (15%) respondents reason that ‘AS/A’ are proper responses. These results are, in my opinion, primarily a rejection of the idea of evolution causing life to exist and not a rejection of the idea of God using evolution of some type in the creation process.³⁶⁵⁴ This second idea would not contradict Moran’s definition.³⁶⁵⁵

Question 19: All religions seek the same God

This concept is soundly rejected by 174 (81.7%) respondents. My deduction is that the respondents, whether evangelical or mainline, conservative or liberal, for the most part believe that the God of Christianity is not the same God of all religions. Moltmann (1993) explains that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God³⁶⁵⁶ and is of one substance with God, not being created.³⁶⁵⁷ For Moltmann, Jesus was the eternal presence of God among humanity.³⁶⁵⁸ The Church established by Christ’s disciples and apostles, according to Vinroth Ramachandra (1998) has the universal mission to be the bearer of God’s saving purpose for the world.³⁶⁵⁹ There is a universality of Christ for all cultures and the salvation that he provides is God’s singular plan for

³⁶⁵¹ Moran (1993: 1).

³⁶⁵² Moran (1993: 1).

³⁶⁵³ I am not going to engage in this speculation within this thesis, as it is too complex of a topic to thoroughly examine in the context of a work on theodicy which has its own complexities.

³⁶⁵⁴ Moran (1993: 1).

³⁶⁵⁵ Moran (1993: 1).

³⁶⁵⁶ Moltmann (1993: 88).

³⁶⁵⁷ Moltmann (1993: 88).

³⁶⁵⁸ Moltmann (1993: 88).

³⁶⁵⁹ Ramachandra (1998: 275).

humanity.³⁶⁶⁰ Edith Humphrey (1998) explains that the Biblical basis for salvation can be traced to the triune God.³⁶⁶¹

Question 20: If something works, it is good

This question relates to the idea of pragmatism. If something works pragmatically, it is good. Louis P. Pojman defines pragmatism as the theory that interprets the meaning of a statement in terms of practical consequences.³⁶⁶² Some judge the truthfulness or falseness of a statement/proposition on whether or not it is pragmatic.³⁶⁶³ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., (1994) states ‘what works and what’s³⁶⁶⁴ practical’ is pragmatism.³⁶⁶⁵ Pragmatism is rejected by 170 (79.8%) respondents choosing ‘D/DS’.

Question 21: Jesus died in our place

Two hundred and one (94.3%) respondents support with ‘AS/A’ the idea that Jesus Christ died for humanity. This question is delivered in the context of the atoning work of Christ, which has been discussed throughout this thesis, and the respondents understand this idea. One hundred and seventy-nine (84%) persons chose ‘AS’ and I reason that ‘A’ may be a better response, in that the death of Christ on the cross for sin does not take away earthly human death. Thiessen explains that all persons physically die because of the consequences of sin.³⁶⁶⁶ This

³⁶⁶⁰ Ramachandra (1998: 265-276).

³⁶⁶¹ Humphrey (1998: 219).

³⁶⁶² Pojman (1996: 598).

³⁶⁶³ Pojman (1996: 598).

³⁶⁶⁴ Veith uses a contraction, which I do not normally use in academic work.

³⁶⁶⁵ Veith (1994: 83).

³⁶⁶⁶ Thiessen (1956: 257).

would be a key doctrine in traditional Christian theology. However, it appears that, resoundingly, the respondents accept a view of some type of sacrificial atonement by Christ. According to Sproul and Wolgemuth, Christ suffered the sanctions of God so that persons would not have to suffer for their sins.³⁶⁶⁷ Christians are blessed to belong to God because Jesus was cursed in their place in his death.³⁶⁶⁸ Christ suffered on behalf of his people.³⁶⁶⁹

Question 22: God does not cause evil

This free will theodicy based question deals with a crucial and original aspect of my thesis and statistical data. I conclude within a sovereignty perspective that God does cause evil and I will explain this concept in this Chapter from both theological and philosophical perspectives from my theoretical research in the Theology and Application section.³⁶⁷⁰ One hundred and seventy-nine respondents (84%) selected 'AS/A' for this question. Only 17 (8%) persons supported my notion by choosing 'D/DS'.

Question 23: God allows sin

Here 169 (79.3%) respondents prefer 'AS/A' for their answer. Thirty-four persons (16%) were in opposition with 'D/DS'. The respondents appear to grasp the concept that infinite, omnipotent God does not have sin forced upon himself in his creation.

Question 24: God's interference would limit human spiritual growth

³⁶⁶⁷ Sproul and Wolgemuth (2000: 259-260).

³⁶⁶⁸ Sproul and Wolgemuth (2000: 259-260).

³⁶⁶⁹ Sproul and Wolgemuth (2000: 259-260).

³⁶⁷⁰ This was already discussed in Chapter Three as well.

This question is based on Hick's soul-making theodicy.³⁶⁷¹ With soul-making, human beings must have significant freedom away from their creator's direct influence.³⁶⁷² Hick deduces that human beings need epistemic distance from their maker in order to develop an uncoerced consciousness of God.³⁶⁷³ Somewhat similarly, Feinberg has the idea that God could not remove evil and solve the problem of evil without contradicting other plans God had in place.³⁶⁷⁴ With both concepts God's direct influence upon humanity would interfere with his plan to develop persons.³⁶⁷⁵ Hick reasons that humanity, in the presence of God, could not fully develop,³⁶⁷⁶ and I can agree with this in the sense that an infinite being must restrain his presence³⁶⁷⁷ in order for finite beings to have significantly free consciousness and limited free will. From Feinberg's perspective God's interference to a great degree, for example eliminating evil in this present realm, would contradict other plans,³⁶⁷⁸ which would include the overall spiritual development of followers of Christ.³⁶⁷⁹ This proposition is rejected by a majority of respondents as 109 (51.2%) persons preferred 'D/DS'. Sixty-three (29.6%) persons selected 'AS/A'. A large number at 41 (19.2%) were 'NC'. It is possible that a majority of persons reasoned that through the gospel work, God does interfere with human spiritual growth, and I can grant this point. Hick's concept, from my research, would require a God more distant from his creation.³⁶⁸⁰

Question 25: Scripture describes women as more evil than men

³⁶⁷¹ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

³⁶⁷² Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

³⁶⁷³ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

³⁶⁷⁴ Feinberg (1994: 126).

³⁶⁷⁵ Hick in Davis (2001: 48). Feinberg (1994: 126).

³⁶⁷⁶ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

³⁶⁷⁷ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

³⁶⁷⁸ Feinberg (1994: 126).

³⁶⁷⁹ Feinberg (1994: 126).

³⁶⁸⁰ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

One hundred and thirty-four (62.9%) respondents selected ‘DS’ and fifty-one (23.9%) chose ‘D’. So 86.8% of completed questionnaires contain the view that Scripture does not describe women as more evil than men. This proposition was soundly rejected. Only 11 (5.2%) persons chose ‘AS/A’. Gebara offers a different perspective stating that within Christian tradition, only male sacrifice is valuable.³⁶⁸¹ She also notes that women symbolically have often been represented as weak and ‘evil.’³⁶⁸² Biblically, although Christ was male, he died for both genders within Christian tradition.³⁶⁸³ Additionally, within Gebara’s own Roman Catholic tradition, Mary is known as the ‘Mother of God.’³⁶⁸⁴ Within this view, Mary is recognized and praised as Jesus was born of a truly ‘human mother.’³⁶⁸⁵ This is a key example of a woman being highly esteemed within Gebara’s tradition,³⁶⁸⁶ and therefore, although I do not dismiss her comments, they should be considered cautiously.

Question 26: God cannot cause free human actions

This is also a key question that would differentiate between free will and sovereignty theodicy.³⁶⁸⁷ Free will theodicy that holds to incompatibilism would state that God cannot cause free human actions.³⁶⁸⁸ Compatibilism,³⁶⁸⁹ as noted with the previous question reasons that God can simultaneously will/determine freely committed human actions that are not forced or coerced. Sixty-five respondents (30.5%) were ‘NC’ with this question. This was the highest single category choice of respondents, and does not support either free will or sovereignty

³⁶⁸¹ Gebara (2002: 7).

³⁶⁸² Gebara (2002: 135).

³⁶⁸³ Erickson (1994: 548).

³⁶⁸⁴ Schreck (1984: 175).

³⁶⁸⁵ Schreck (1984: 176).

³⁶⁸⁶ Schreck (1984: 176).

³⁶⁸⁷ And discussed primarily in Chapters Two to Four.

³⁶⁸⁸ McCann (2001: 115). Boyd (2001: 52). Sanders (1998: 221). Geisler (1986: 75).

³⁶⁸⁹ Feinberg (1986: 24). Feinberg (1994: 60). Greenspan (1998: 1). Pruss (2003: 216).

theodicy. Sixty-nine persons (32.4%) selected 'AS/A' in support of incompatibilism, while 79 (37.1%) respondents chose 'D/DS'. These 37.1% were supporting a compatibilistic notion, which can be deduced to mean there is some support for Reformed, Calvinistic doctrine. However, by combining the 'NC/AS/A' categories, 62.9% of total respondents do not support an idea of compatibilism/soft determinism. Therefore a majority (62.9%) of respondents either reject this concept, or are not sure if a Reformed, Calvinistic view of God determining the free acts of persons is true. This is hardly a resounding endorsement of one of the core concepts of my sovereignty theodicy.³⁶⁹⁰ Within my denomination, 19 (41.3%) respondents selected 'D/DS' while 11 (23.9%) persons chose 'A/AS'. Sixteen (34.8%) persons were 'NC'. The concept received reasonable support from the Presbyterian Church in North America (41.3%) but there remains 58.7% not in support.

Question 27: God influences the actions of all persons

The previous question was similar from an incompatibilist, free will theodicy perspective, while Question 27 asks a question from a compatibilist, sovereignty theodicy view. Ninety-one (42.7%) respondents support this compatibilistic idea with 'AS/A', which is slightly higher than the 'D/DS' response of 37.1% for the previous question. Eighty-one (38%) persons chose the incompatibilist 'D/DS' option which is slightly higher than the 32.4% 'AS/A' for the previous question. Forty-one (19.2%) respondents were 'NC' and this is a fair drop in percentage from the 30.5%, which was the leading individual choice in the previous question. I deduce that more persons that reject or are unsure about compatibilistic notions will have difficulty accepting Question 26 and its idea of God *causing* free actions, than they would with the concept of God *influencing* actions in Question 27. In a sense, Question 27 is stating a very similar idea, but has

³⁶⁹⁰ And also demonstrates my attempt at objectivity in research with this work.

softened the language slightly. Some incompatibilists may reason that God influences human actions without determining them,³⁶⁹¹ but I deduce that if God's influence from his will is going to lead to a human action actually taking place, it must be determined.³⁶⁹² If this was not so, God could influence hypothetical human actions that would not necessarily occur due to human free will, and God's influence would have no actual effect on these actions. God's influence would, therefore, be useless at certain times, meaning God does not influence the actions of all persons. My denomination had 28 (60.9%) persons supporting this concept with 'AS/A' while 11 (23.9%) respondents selected 'D/DS' so there is solid support for Reformed, Calvinistic concepts with this question. In contrast, Lutherans had 7 (43.7%) respondents who chose 'AS/A' and the same amount selected 'D/DS' although 5 (31.3%) persons preferred 'AS' and 2 (12.5%) persons chose 'DS', so the slight statistical edge goes to favouring the proposition. Lutherans are, of course, a denomination influenced by the deterministic views of Martin Luther,³⁶⁹³ but compatibilism and incompatibilism seem to be on a virtual equal footing from this sample.

Question 28: Humanity was created imperfect

Both John Hick³⁶⁹⁴ and Steven Davis³⁶⁹⁵ reason that God created humanity imperfect. In Chapter Four, I acknowledged that these men made good points but from the Genesis³⁶⁹⁶ account with the expulsion of humanity from God's presence after the fall, humanity's moral imperfection made them unacceptable to God. I have, instead, argued that original humanity was immature although morally perfect as they lacked knowledge of good and evil, and did not have

³⁶⁹¹ McCann (2001: 115). Sanders (1998: 221). Geisler (1986: 75).

³⁶⁹² Pojman (1996: 596).

³⁶⁹³ Luther (1525)(1972: 133).

³⁶⁹⁴ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

³⁶⁹⁵ Davis (2001: 72-73).

³⁶⁹⁶ It has been discussed that the book of Genesis does use figurative language in places, and this must be understood in attempting to make theological interpretations.

experience with the results of evil. One hundred and forty-four (67.6%) persons rejected the idea of Hick and Davis, while 45 (21.1%) chose 'AS/A' in agreement.

Question 29: God desires that women's sufferings be understood

Many respondents, 140 (65.7%) supported this idea while only 16 (7.5%) opposed it with a choice of 'D/DS'. Fifty-seven (26.7%) were 'NC'. Gebara writes that Biblical Scripture, which emphasizes differences between male and female, has led to a 'hierarchical dualism' that is used to exclude women.³⁶⁹⁷ Gebara reasons evils experienced by women are often linked with the idea they are considered a second, less valuable sex.³⁶⁹⁸ Gebara's comments demonstrate that her particular feminist views³⁶⁹⁹ are not supported by the majority of my respondents.

Question 30: God is not able to cause people to follow him

One hundred and thirty-four (62.9%) respondents chose 'D/DS'; 54 (25.4%) were in agreement with 'AS/A'. This sample, may on the surface contradict the findings from Questions 22, 26, 27, and 35. I fully grant that empirical theology does not provide the context that philosophical, theoretical theology would.³⁷⁰⁰ It appears that the majority of respondents did not connect the concept in this question with the other four questions relating to the rejection of compatibilism, and my sovereignty theodicy.

Question 31: God could have created humans who were only good

³⁶⁹⁷ Gebara (2002: 5).

³⁶⁹⁸ Gebara (2002: 85).

³⁶⁹⁹ Gebara (2002: 2, 85). This is not to imply that many of my respondents do not support feminist theology in some regard.

³⁷⁰⁰ Empirical theology has a different function than philosophical theology. It is useful in evaluating practical concepts that result from philosophical theology with data. It does not explain in detail philosophical theology, but evaluates data from it.

This is a sovereignty related question dealing with compatibilism. As noted, incompatibilism reasons God could not have made human beings in a way that they were both truly free and, at the same time, always committed good actions God desired.³⁷⁰¹ Plantinga thinks it logically possible and reasonable that God could not have made free creatures that never committed wrong actions, since they would lack significant freedom.³⁷⁰² Feinberg³⁷⁰³ disagrees with incompatibilism on this point, as does Flew³⁷⁰⁴ and Mackie.³⁷⁰⁵ One hundred and forty-seven (69%) persons agreed with this proposition while 31 (14.6%) chose ‘D/DS’. A substantial number of 35 (16.4%) were not certain. I reason the majority that supported this proposition would assume that without the use of compatibilism/soft determinism human beings could have been made in order to only commit good actions. I would respectfully disagree since the infinite, omnipotent God wills and determines all events³⁷⁰⁶ and that for human beings to remain morally perfect, this would require minimally, soft determinism.³⁷⁰⁷ The human state regardless of its condition will be primarily determined by God, and secondarily determined by persons.³⁷⁰⁸

Question 32: Humanity was created immature

One hundred and five (49.3%) respondents disagreed with this proposition, while 56 (26.3%) chose ‘AS/A’. Importantly the second highest single choice was ‘NC’ with 52 (24.4%) persons. I have already stated that I support this proposition, and have discussed this issue.

³⁷⁰¹ Feinberg (1994: 60).

³⁷⁰² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 30).

³⁷⁰³ For Feinberg since God can simultaneously will human actions that are not done under compulsion, it is possible if God desired, only good actions would take place.

³⁷⁰⁴ Flew (1955: 150-153).

³⁷⁰⁵ Mackie (1971) in Plantinga (1977)(2002: 32-33). Mackie (1955)(1996: 250-253).

³⁷⁰⁶ As first cause. Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2). Mill (1833)(1985)(2009: 10).

³⁷⁰⁷ Stace (1952)(1976: 29).

³⁷⁰⁸ In philosophy some hold to compatibilism and that human beings are secondary cause of human actions, without mentioning God as the primary cause. Stace (1952)(1976: 29). It is therefore possible for atheists to be compatibilists.

Question 33: God desires women to have influence in the Church

One hundred and ninety-five (91.6%) persons supported this proposition; 101 (47.4%) agreed strongly with the question. This question was not dealing with thorny issues of women leadership such as being elders and pastors,³⁷⁰⁹ but was simply dealing with the broader idea of general influence. Therefore, in my estimation, this strong support for the proposition is because the idea of female influence will not cause disagreement between conservative and liberal wings in the Christian Church. Mennonite New Testament scholar, Willard M. Swartley (1983) reasons ‘the concept of equality’ for women is present in the New Testament,³⁷¹⁰ but he asks what these concepts mean in regard to ‘social, political and economic’ contexts.³⁷¹¹ Swartley also ponders on what equality for women means within the Biblical ancient texts, and what it should mean today.³⁷¹² Individual churches need to consider concepts of equality for women with men, when deciding where women should have greater influence.³⁷¹³

Question 34: God is not able to create persons that do not sin

This question is very similar to Question 31, which was discussed, except this is written from a free will theodicy perspective, and not a sovereignty one. In basic agreement with the results of Question 31, 159 (74.6%) respondents chose ‘D/DS’ and ‘DS’ led with 88 (41.3%) selections. Several respondents may have reasoned humanity was originally made in a way that they did not sin, but chose to sin by the use of free will, which caused human corruption.³⁷¹⁴

³⁷⁰⁹ Christian Century Group (1999: 1).

³⁷¹⁰ Swartley (1983: 184).

³⁷¹¹ Swartley (1983: 184).

³⁷¹² Swartley (1983: 184).

³⁷¹³ This should include conservative churches, even if they do not sanction women in the role of pastor.

³⁷¹⁴ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8). Plantinga (1982: 184-189).

Question 35: God will decide who will follow him

The question asks whether or not respondents support the theological idea of God electing³⁷¹⁵ persons to salvation. Eighty-three (38.9%) respondents selected 'AS/A' while 101 (47.4%) chose 'D/DS'. Twenty-nine persons (13.6%) were 'NC' so 61% of respondents are rejecting, or are unsure concerning the Reformed, Calvinistic doctrine. Although the concept in this question was not accepted by the majority of respondents, 36 of 46 (78.2%) persons in my denomination chose 'AS/A'. The other denominations with 10 or more persons completing the questionnaire, rejected the idea in this question by a majority. The Anglican Church, which includes attendees from the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the Episcopal Church in the USA, chose 'D/DS' with 11 out of 18 (61%) respondents and only 4 (22.2%) persons chose 'AS/A'. With the Lutherans, 7 persons out of 16 (43.8%) rejected the concept while 6 (37.5%) persons accepted it. With the non-denominational respondents, they are not a denominational group and therefore this statistic represents persons from a variety of backgrounds. Twenty-two of 48 (45.8%) persons chose 'D/DS' while 21 (43.8%) persons selected 'AS/A'. With those that chose Methodist as a denomination, 14 of 23 (60.8%) did not support this concept, while 3 (13%) were in support. For those from the Nazarene Church, 11 out of 14 (78.6%) persons chose 'D/DS' while only 3 (21.4%) selected 'AS/A'. Finally, with the Church of God, 8 of 11 (72.7%) persons rejected the idea of the question while 1 (0.9%) person was in support. Overall, we can statistically see a rejection of a Reformed, Calvinistic view of God's election of his followers. I would deduce the majority of persons assume that human free will plays a greater

³⁷¹⁵ Calvin explains that grace for salvation is only given to those who God wills and the rest, for whom it is not given, remain evil and have no ability to do the good and obtain salvation. Calvin (1543)(1996: 136). J.S. Whale explains the doctrine of New Testament election proclaims that salvation is the sovereign act of the living God, untouchable by human activity. Whale (1958: 133).

part in human salvation than does God's election of individuals. This is a rejection of key components of sovereignty theodicy, which reasons that God can only save persons by altering their nature through regeneration,³⁷¹⁶ and this requires soft determinism and election. Without the election of individuals through soft determinism,³⁷¹⁷ from a sovereignty theodicy perspective, the Kingdom of God would not be culminated, because the sinful nature and choices of persons would prohibit them from ever coming to Christ and, therefore, there would be no citizens to inhabit the Kingdom. Leibniz reasoned that God had very good reasons for his election and dispensation of grace to some persons and recognized that these reasons were unknown to persons in any detail.³⁷¹⁸

Question 36: God allows evil to exist to build human character

Eighty-one (38%) persons supported this idea; 46 (21.6%) were 'NC'; 86 (40.4%) were not in support of the proposition. This is a controversial question among respondents. I agree strongly with the proposition in that I reason God creates significantly free creatures that will eventually commit wrong actions. However, through the atoning work and resurrection of Christ applied to believers, they will develop a character that tires of rebellion against God and awaits God given restoration in his culminated Kingdom.³⁷¹⁹ If creatures never sinned and experienced evil, it is possible they would not have the steadfast commitment to God of creatures that have been rescued from the problem of evil, through the atoning work and resurrection of Christ.³⁷²⁰ I

³⁷¹⁶ Erickson (1994: 1228).

³⁷¹⁷ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 165).

³⁷¹⁸ Leibniz (1710)(1998: 165).

³⁷¹⁹ This is not to presume that all Christians will develop character in a similar mature fashion. I admit that, in some cases, Christians may live relatively disobedient lives, but I am confident in finalized regeneration through the resurrection.

³⁷²⁰ With this speculative idea, my personal sovereignty theodicy goes beyond that of Feinberg's which, in my opinion, lacks in this area. It is better if a theodicy provides some good reasons why God would allow evil, and

am not stating that this is the only reason why elected individuals will have a steadfast commitment to God. The regeneration and resurrection process will turn a previously sinful nature into a holy one.³⁷²¹ Moltmann writes that the resurrection message of the early Christian community was the anticipation of what was to come.³⁷²² The resurrection of Christ created the hope for the eventual world of a new righteousness.³⁷²³ In the new heaven and new earth, the life of the believer will be transformed in completion.³⁷²⁴ Believers will share the likeness of God,³⁷²⁵ and this will be a life of moral perfection.

Question 37: God dislikes women being viewed as sex objects

One hundred and eighty-nine (88.7%) respondents supported this proposition; 136 (63.8%) chose 'AS'. Only 8 (3.8%) persons, four from each category, disagreed. Gebara notes some women have high value as objects of 'enjoyment' and 'pleasure' or on the flip side, 'revenge' and 'hate.'³⁷²⁶ She lists prostitution as an example of women being viewed as 'merchandise.'³⁷²⁷

Question 38: Something is evil when its goodness is taken away

Ninety-five (44.6%) persons supported the idea; 58 (27.2%) were not certain; 60 (28.2%) chose 'D/DS'.

Feinberg's explanation remains very general in nature. I do not pretend, however, to know why God allows evil in certain situations, for example, as in the premature death of loved ones.

³⁷²¹ Thiessen (1956: 383-384). Erickson (1994: 1184).

³⁷²² Moltmann (1993: 177).

³⁷²³ Moltmann (1993: 177).

³⁷²⁴ Mounce (1990: 388).

³⁷²⁵ Mounce (1990: 388).

³⁷²⁶ Gebara (2002: 34).

³⁷²⁷ Gebara (2002: 34).

Question 39: Ending evil now would oppose God's ultimate plans

This question comes from Feinberg's concept³⁷²⁸ discussed in Question 24 that ending the problem of evil would contradict God's plans for humanity, in other words the greater good.

There is diverse opinion with this question. Sixty-three (29.6%) respondents chose 'AS/A'; 67 (31.5%) persons were not certain; 83 (39%) chose 'D/DS'.

Question 40: Evil will continue in everlasting hell

One hundred and seventeen (54.9%) respondents supported this idea; 57 (26.8%) were not certain; 39 (18.3%) chose 'D/DS'. With my denomination 35 out of 46 (76%) persons supported this concept. Every denominational group had more respondents that supported this proposition than rejected it. Lutherans agreed with 9 out of 16 (56.3%) persons supporting. Anglicans supported this with 11 out of 18 (61.1%). With non-denominational categories, 21 out of 48 (43.8%) supported the idea; however, not a majority, as 16 (33.33 %) was the largest number for a single choice of 'NC'. Eleven (22.9%) respondents chose 'D/DS'. With Methodists who are not one defined Methodist denomination, 15 out of 23 (65.2%) respondents supported the proposition and only 1 opposed (0.43%). With Nazarene, 7 out of 14 (50%) supported the concept, while 2 (14.3%) opposed. The Church of God had 8 out of 11 (72.7%) who chose 'AS/A' with no one in disagreement. It is surprising that with the many mainline churches contacted there was not a greater rejection of this proposition.³⁷²⁹ An in depth discussion of everlasting hell is outside of the scope of this thesis,³⁷³⁰ but I would have expected a

³⁷²⁸ Feinberg (1994: 126).

³⁷²⁹ Based on research throughout my academic career and accepting that Hick's theodicy comes from a liberal viewpoint, reasoning other liberals may support his type of approach.

³⁷³⁰ It is not central to theodicy but is discussed as a secondary issue at times.

higher number of persons from progressive churches to question and/or disagree with this proposition. Harold Lindsell explains that the inerrancy of Scripture is rejected by many within liberal churches.³⁷³¹ He reasons that inerrancy equals infallibility and a trustworthy Bible.³⁷³² Within progressive churches the issue of everlasting punishment can be complicated by questioning of inerrancy of related verses. The issue of the trustworthiness of Scripture mentioned by Lindsell,³⁷³³ and as well the symbolic nature of the Biblical language describing everlasting hell,³⁷³⁴ could create doubt concerning the doctrine of everlasting punishment within liberal churches.

Question 41: Christian thought has been dominated by men

One hundred and forty-four (67.6%) respondents chose 'AS/A', 44 (20.7%) persons chose 'D/DS'. This question can be related back to my earlier comments regarding how difficult it is for women to become senior pastors.³⁷³⁵ The concept of 'Christian thought' within this question is not necessarily regarding professional leadership alone, but is presented in the context of both professional leadership and lay teaching.

Question 42: Rebellion against God will always be possible

Throughout my thesis work I have reasoned that God, through Christ, will restore his creation, and culminate the Kingdom of God with his people.³⁷³⁶ A Reformed view of everlasting hell would understand rebellion against God as being punished everlastingly, but would not

³⁷³¹ Lindsell (1976: 201-202).

³⁷³² Lindsell (1976: 19). I can support inerrancy for the original documents, which no longer exist. No copies or translations are inerrant.

³⁷³³ Lindsell (1976: 201-202).

³⁷³⁴ Mounce (1990: 367).

³⁷³⁵ Christian Century Group (1999: 1-2).

³⁷³⁶ Moltmann (1993: 256). Erickson (1994: 1228). Feinberg (1994: 141). Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 3, 6).

allow evil to exist in the creation that God intended humanity to have dominion³⁷³⁷ over. I reason, through the use of compatibilism, God will determine and persuade citizens within the culminated Kingdom not to rebel against him, as the first human beings did. Rebellion would therefore only be technically possible if God would willingly allow this to occur.³⁷³⁸ I deduce that since Revelation 21:4 describes a new creation free from death and suffering, that whatever the figurative nature of this portion of Revelation, a finalized state free from human rebellion is going to be established.³⁷³⁹ Ninety-eight persons (46%) supported this question, while 43 (20.2%) were ‘NC’, and 72 (33.8%) disagreed. There is ambiguity with this question, but I gather that how a person interprets the question may shed light on how they answer it. From my perspective, God’s creation that he intended for humanity to rule, shall be free from rebellion once the Kingdom is culminated.³⁷⁴⁰

Question 43: God is in control of all events

One hundred and sixty persons (75.1%) supported this idea. This does not equate to support of sovereignty theodicy by my respondents. There are scholars that hold to incompatibilistic concepts of free will that believe God has sovereign control over the universe³⁷⁴¹ but does not control every detail.³⁷⁴² This subject was discussed previously; however, Clark Pinnock writes that the universe would ultimately be under the sovereign control of God, but not everything that occurs is according to God’s intentions.³⁷⁴³ John Sanders

³⁷³⁷ Genesis 1:26.

³⁷³⁸ I reason persons in the culminated Kingdom will be filled with the Holy Spirit, or in philosophical terms will be heavily influenced by God, in order that they maintain perfect nature and pure thought and do not ever sin.

³⁷³⁹ Mounce (1990: 385).

³⁷⁴⁰ Mounce (1990: 385).

³⁷⁴¹ Pinnock (1986: 145). Sanders (1998: 212).

³⁷⁴² Pinnock (1986: 145). Sanders (1998: 212).

³⁷⁴³ Pinnock (1986: 145).

supports a concept of general sovereignty in contrast to a Calvinistic specific sovereignty.³⁷⁴⁴

General sovereignty would view God as allowing structures to be set up by which significant human freedom and resulting choices would allow persons input on how things turn out.³⁷⁴⁵

Contrary to how I understand compatibilism and specific sovereignty,³⁷⁴⁶ Sanders sees specific sovereignty making hard determinism necessary.³⁷⁴⁷ In contrast, I deduce that God can have very specific intentions in every situation, while allowing significant limited free will,³⁷⁴⁸ and this has been explained throughout this work.

Question 44: The Bible states that all persons will follow God

This is a soul-making theodicy question, as Hick supports the idea of universal salvation.³⁷⁴⁹ One hundred sixty-two persons (76%) disagreed with this idea, while only 24 respondents (11.3%) chose 'A/AS'.

Question 45: Women need freedom from male authority

Seventy-one (33.3%) persons chose 'AS/A', while over twenty percent of respondents were 'NC' (21.2%). Over forty-five percent (45.5%) of persons were not in support of this idea. Admittedly, this is a strongly worded statement, but two denominations were in support of this idea with a majority. Anglican respondents with 10 out of 18 (55.5%) supported it, as did United Church of Canada respondents with 8 out of 8 (100%). Twenty-nine of forty-eight persons (60.4%) surveyed in my non-denominational group choose 'D/DS' for this question. As alluded

³⁷⁴⁴ Sanders (1998: 212).

³⁷⁴⁵ Sanders (1998: 213).

³⁷⁴⁶ Sanders (1998: 214).

³⁷⁴⁷ Sanders (1998: 214).

³⁷⁴⁸ Compatibilistic free will.

³⁷⁴⁹ Hick (1970: 381).

to earlier, this non-denominational group is not an actual denomination, but some of these persons were from independent, fundamentalist Baptist churches in the United States that have very conservative views that would *minimally* preclude women from elder and clergy positions.³⁷⁵⁰

Question 46: The world is becoming more evil

With these questions the scale changed, and is now ranging from 1 to 5, 1 being ‘little’ and 5 being ‘much’. One hundred and eleven respondents (52.1%) chose ‘4 to 5’ meaning a majority favour the proposition.. Sixty persons (28.2%) chose ‘1 to 2’ and 42 (19.7%) chose ‘3’.

Question 47: Churches are losing the battle against social evils

The largest single response was ‘3’ with 68 respondents (31.9%). Eighty-six persons (40.4%) chose ‘4 to 5’ while 59 persons (27.7%) disagreed with the question choosing ‘1 to 2’.

Question 48: Church attitudes are influenced by society

There was solid agreement with this question, with 140 (66%) persons choosing ‘4 to 5’. Only 26 (12.2%) respondents were in disagreement.

Question 49: The Bible should still be obeyed

One hundred and seventy-four (81.7%) respondents chose ‘4 to 5’. This response is an

³⁷⁵⁰ I reason from months of research on the internet that many American, non-denominational, independent, Baptist churches with leaders and attendees that filled out my survey, were quite conservative and would have certain fundamentalist doctrines that I as a moderate conservative would not accept. This thesis has limited space and a different focus and therefore I will not discuss these differences in detail.

indicator that to some degree, the respondents take the position of those, such as Lindsell, seriously.³⁷⁵¹ This does not mean that these groups will all interpret major Biblical doctrines in the same way, but demonstrates that the great majority takes the Bible very seriously in regard to Christian faith. It also does not mean that all Christian groups place equal priority on the Bible in establishing doctrine. Pattison and Woodward write that practical theology is often unsystematic, and in a way can be discarded and reinvent itself for future use.³⁷⁵² They note that since practical theology is experimental,³⁷⁵³ people's experiences and data used for theological reflection are sometimes given status alongside Scripture.³⁷⁵⁴ This concept would be unacceptable for many within conservative and moderately liberal Christian traditions. Erickson points out that Scripture is always given primacy in theological matters.³⁷⁵⁵ Having worked with practical and empirical theology with my MPhil and PhD theses, I view practical and empirical theology as having importance but coming from a Reformed tradition, still as Erickson notes, place priority on the Bible for doctrine.³⁷⁵⁶ Erickson makes it clear that Biblical doctrines may not necessarily be maintained precisely with the same form of expression as they were in Biblical times, and notes philosophical truth can be found from other sources.³⁷⁵⁷ Much of this thesis is based on theoretical deduction, which I reason is in agreement with Scripture in general terms, although some particular views may not be clearly explained in Scripture.

Question 50: Rich people suffer less than poor people

One hundred and seventeen (54.9%) persons agreed 'little' choosing '1 to 2' with 85

³⁷⁵¹ Lindsell (1976: 185).

³⁷⁵² Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 14).

³⁷⁵³ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

³⁷⁵⁴ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 15).

³⁷⁵⁵ Erickson (1994: 37).

³⁷⁵⁶ Erickson (1994: 37).

³⁷⁵⁷ Erickson (1994: 37).

(39.9%) choosing '1'. I am in disagreement with the majority of respondents, but to answer this question in an in depth manner could require a major sociological study.³⁷⁵⁸ My view is tentatively that rich persons generally will suffer less, but that all persons suffer from the problem of evil. Excessive wealth allows one to avoid some extreme results of the problem of evil, such as many health problems, whereas the poor especially, are likely to be more impacted. Everyone dies due to a failure of the body, but I reason that the wealthy often have a definite advantage over others, in regard to the degree to which certain evils are experienced. I agree with Gebara, there is a 'geography of evil' that impacts poor women everywhere.³⁷⁵⁹ Poor women³⁷⁶⁰ and poor persons will be more impacted by suffering than their wealthier counterparts overall. Therefore the poor require a response by the church community in a way that needs are met.³⁷⁶¹

Question 51: The world is being judged by God

One hundred and six (49.8%) chose '5' and another 39 (18.3%) chose '4', therefore 68.1% supported this idea. I reason that God may judge throughout history, but as far as a final judgment is concerned, this will be a climactic one at the end of history. Charles Ryrie states God may have issued judgments throughout history, but there shall be one final and climactic judgment.³⁷⁶² I therefore would support the idea that God is willingly allowing human beings to participate in evil, and the problem of evil shall take its course. From a Biblical perspective,

³⁷⁵⁸ A purpose in asking this question was not so much to come to a conclusion, but to measure bias. I wanted to know whether my primarily middle class respondents thought their rich counterparts had an advantage in avoiding the results of the problem of evil in comparison to their poor counterparts.

³⁷⁵⁹ Gebara (2002: 12).

³⁷⁶⁰ Gebara (2002: 12).

³⁷⁶¹ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 10).

³⁷⁶² Ryrie (1974: 39).

eschatological, final judgment is inevitable.³⁷⁶³ Walter M. Dunnett (2001) an expert in Biblical literature, explains the Scriptural concept that sin and death are banished, and that which sin has defiled is restored, following God's final judgment.³⁷⁶⁴

Question 52: Churches should assist exploited women

One hundred and forty-one (66.2%) chose '5' as an option. With adding another 36 (16.9%) that chose '4', this brings the total to 177 persons (83%) that supported this idea. Gebara explains that the Church should understand the physical, psychological, and social suffering of women in regard to the cross.³⁷⁶⁵ The community suffering of women needs to be understood,³⁷⁶⁶ and this obviously should include those persons that need extra assistance³⁷⁶⁷

Question 53: Using embryonic stem cells for research is okay

One hundred and twenty-eight (60.1%) persons chose '1 to 2' with 103 (48.4%) of those choosing '1'. I am not attempting to discuss or debate the science or ethics of embryonic stem cells, but the question was attempting to find out if the majority of respondents would take a position deemed conservative, that would oppose the use of these cells. The National Institutes of Health in the United States writes that embryonic stem cells are derived from embryos that develop from fertilized eggs,³⁷⁶⁸ and then donated for research purposes with informed consent of the donors.³⁷⁶⁹ From my research, this idea is opposed by the majority of my respondents who

³⁷⁶³ Ryrie (1974: 39). Thiessen (1956: 496).

³⁷⁶⁴ Dunnett (2001: 102).

³⁷⁶⁵ Gebara (2002: 110).

³⁷⁶⁶ Gebara (2002: 110).

³⁷⁶⁷ Pattison and Woodward (2000)(2007: 10).

³⁷⁶⁸ The National Institutes of Health (2006: 1).

³⁷⁶⁹ The National Institutes of Health (2006: 1).

take a somewhat conservative position, and do not want to see human embryos³⁷⁷⁰ used for scientific research.

Question 54: Religions should not be beyond criticism

‘Five’ was chosen by 111 (52.1%) persons. This combined with 44 respondents (20.7%) who chose ‘4’ means 155 persons (72.8%) supported this concept.

Question 55: Differing religious views should be tolerated

One hundred and twenty (56.3%) persons supported this idea. So examining Questions 54 and 55 together, one can conclude that the majority of respondents think that religions should be criticized, but also tolerated. A key issue to ponder on is how much should a religion be criticized before it is no longer tolerated.³⁷⁷¹

The next section began with the question asking ‘How much have the following helped you to understand the problem of evil?’ The scale is the same being ‘1’ is ‘little’ and ‘5’ is ‘much’.

Question 56: Television

One hundred and eight (50.7%) respondents chose ‘1 to 2’. Seventy-nine of those (37.1%) chose ‘1’ as the option. Christian television in the Western world is not generally known for complex theological teaching on topics such as theodicy.³⁷⁷²

³⁷⁷⁰ The National Institutes of Health (2006: 1).

³⁷⁷¹ This is an important societal issue in regard to freedom of religion.

³⁷⁷² This is not the forum to evaluate televangelism, but I should state that in North American Christian television at least, there is very little scholarly teaching presented and therefore it would be difficult for one to learn about theodicy through Christian programming. This is unfortunate as television could provide opportunities for scholarly debate and dialogue.

Question 57: Preachers

One hundred and thirty-two persons (62%) chose '4 to 5'. This does not indicate that many preachers/ministers are teaching on theodicy, but that when it is taught the majority of church attendees have heard it discussed in church.

Question 58: Books

One hundred and thirty-three (62.4%) respondents chose '4 to 5'. Interestingly this statistic is almost identical to the previous question concerning preachers. This does not mean that many books on theodicy are being read, but that the majority view books as a source for the topic. This statistic is, of course, not a measure of the academic quality of the material reviewed by the respondents.

Question 59: Personal Experience

One hundred and forty-four (68%) persons chose '4 to 5'. This statistic shows that many people learn about the problem of evil from personal experience. There is a need for practical theology to complement philosophical theology, in order for persons to make rational sense of their experiences.³⁷⁷³ Anderson writes that in post-modern thought, theory and practice need to be discerned together as practice includes theory, and theory can be understood through practice.³⁷⁷⁴ Persons need to understand their experiences through theological theory, and also understand theology as they live it.³⁷⁷⁵

³⁷⁷³ Anderson (2001: 21-22).

³⁷⁷⁴ Anderson (2001: 21-22).

³⁷⁷⁵ Anderson (2001: 21-22).

Question 60: Bible Study

One hundred and fifty-eight (74.2%) persons strongly supported this idea by choosing ‘4 to 5’. This statistic is not a surprise since 81.7% reason that the Bible should still be obeyed, as was discussed previously. The Bible is not crystal clear on God’s reasoning in allowing evil, but does assert that God will bring about his completed Kingdom in a meaningful way through the work of Christ in history.³⁷⁷⁶ Geivett, when discussing God’s reasoning for allowing evil, states that God cannot commit the logically impossible.³⁷⁷⁷ God cannot violate his own good nature, and is therefore not a contradictory being theologically by willingly allowing evil in his creation.

Question 61: Formal Education

Ninety-five respondents (44.6%) chose ‘1 to 2’, 62 persons (29.1%) chose ‘4 to 5’. This connects to my idea that theodicy is not efficiently taught within formal education. By including the ‘3’ option (56 persons at 26.3%) with ‘1’ and ‘2’, over 70% (70.9%) of persons who attend Christian churches and completed this questionnaire, have not learned significantly about theodicy through an education process. This is a problem within the Christian church where every person suffers under the problem of evil. There is no surprise that my sovereignty theodicy is somewhat rejected and misunderstood from these empirical findings, when just fewer than 30% of my respondents have received any formal training on the subject.³⁷⁷⁸ Practically, there appears to be a need for church courses dealing with the subject of the problem of evil, presented from atheistic, eastern, free will, soul-making and sovereignty perspectives.³⁷⁷⁹

³⁷⁷⁶ Moltmann (1993: 338).

³⁷⁷⁷ Geivett (1993: 41).

³⁷⁷⁸ From my research, these fewer than 30% of respondents are more likely to have been taught free will, as opposed to sovereignty theodicy.

³⁷⁷⁹ In order to provide a thorough presentation on theodicy.

Preaching from the pulpit is not mainly an academic forum,³⁷⁸⁰ but if over 70% of persons have not received any formal kind of training in regard to theodicy, this may be a serious spiritual problem. I am not suggesting that a PhD or MPhil level course on theodicy, free will and determinism should be routinely taught in Christian churches, but perhaps at a Bachelor's degree level, some of the very serious issues concerning theodicy should be presented in church course settings.

Question 62: Audio Tapes

Option 1 was chosen by 121 respondents (56.8%).

Question 63: Video/DVD

Options 1 and 2 were chosen by 131 persons (62%). It can be reasoned that there is more need for serious and yet practical teaching to make available information concerning theodicy in audio, video, and DVD form. It is a difficulty that all of humanity suffers with the problem of evil, and yet there is so little serious academic material available for people to digest in a non-written form. It can be deduced that many persons would be more entertained and less intimidated studying about theodicy in audio/video form rather than trying to read through several texts.

Question 64: Internet discussion groups

Option 1 was chosen by 167 respondents (78.4%). The internet is gaining in popularity

³⁷⁸⁰ Many evangelical churches may wish to avoid serious theological teachings in church courses, but do not oppose members/attendees attending Bible School, seminary and University.

and I reason that more persons³⁷⁸¹ in the future shall learn about theology through internet discussion groups, Facebook, and blogs.³⁷⁸²

Question 65: Friends and family

Options 4 and 5 were selected by 111 persons (52.1%). This result is not surprising as many times tragedy occurs within the family structure, and support can also be found within that structure. The family is a core social relationship by which people exist and develop as persons,³⁷⁸³ and can offer support in times of suffering.

Question 66: Other, please specify

One hundred and seventy-seven persons (83.1%) selected option ‘1’ which means ‘little’. This ‘other’ option was largely rejected.

4. Theology and Application

The following is theology and application concerning selected questionnaire propositions.

God Reveals Himself in the Bible

It can be deduced that although conservative and liberal Christians can disagree on the

³⁷⁸¹ In particular those that are presently young adults and younger.

³⁷⁸² There are already a growing number of theology blogs present on the internet.

³⁷⁸³ Anderson (2001: 255).

nature of Biblical revelation, they do agree that it exists.³⁷⁸⁴ David A. Pailin (1999) explains that since the Enlightenment era, the traditional propositional view of revelation has widely, but not completely, been replaced by the understanding that divine revelation comes through events.³⁷⁸⁵ The Enlightenment has been mentioned previously in this work in the context of Enlightenment era writers,³⁷⁸⁶ but greater explanation is better placed here. Veith explains that this age of reason features scientific discovery,³⁷⁸⁷ and the rejection of much of revealed religion in favour of a reliance on reason.³⁷⁸⁸ It was thought for a time that science could explain all of existence.³⁷⁸⁹ The term ‘Enlightenment’ refers to the philosophical movement among seventeenth and eighteenth century Western intellectuals.³⁷⁹⁰ Enlightenment thinkers tended to reject external sources of knowledge and elevated human reasoning.³⁷⁹¹ Biblical doctrines were therefore under suspicion.³⁷⁹²

The Bible records these revealed events and they are perceived through faith for significance.³⁷⁹³ Lindsell would support a traditional understanding of Biblical revelation where he states that through special supernatural revelation in Scripture, Jesus Christ is revealed to selected persons.³⁷⁹⁴ Lindsell does not believe that a human being can be saved outside of this revelation.³⁷⁹⁵ The 97.7% support for God revealing himself in Scripture is not necessarily resounding intellectual support for either a traditional or Enlightenment view on revelation.

Grenz and Olson explain that Christianity has been changed and influenced since the

³⁷⁸⁴ This is a key within Christian tradition. God has revealed self through revelation, although there are disagreements on how literally this is done within certain Scripture.

³⁷⁸⁵ Pailin (1999: 505).

³⁷⁸⁶ Most notably with my review of Kant.

³⁷⁸⁷ Veith (1994: 32-33).

³⁷⁸⁸ Veith (1994: 32-33).

³⁷⁸⁹ Veith (1994: 32-33).

³⁷⁹⁰ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 44-45).

³⁷⁹¹ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 44-45).

³⁷⁹² Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 44-45).

³⁷⁹³ Pailin (1999: 505).

³⁷⁹⁴ Lindsell (1976: 17).

³⁷⁹⁵ Lindsell (1976: 17).

Enlightenment, and it will never be the same.³⁷⁹⁶ Christians ignore the Enlightenment to the peril of theology.³⁷⁹⁷ The Enlightenment is not only an aspect of liberal progressive theology,³⁷⁹⁸ but has effected conservative theology as well.³⁷⁹⁹ Grenz and Olson point out that the Enlightenment understanding of reason would no longer allow the Church to be the sole teacher of Bible and Christian doctrine.³⁸⁰⁰ Individuals with the use of reason would need to question Church teaching.³⁸⁰¹ Individual church members and attendees understanding of Scripture and theology is an integral part of modern evangelical thought,³⁸⁰² and this can be traced back to Enlightenment thinking,³⁸⁰³ and to some degree the Reformation. Christianity and the Enlightenment are not completely antithetical, as they are both modernist³⁸⁰⁴ philosophies which overlap at points in their pursuit of truth.³⁸⁰⁵

God is Close to All Persons

Immanence has been previously discussed within Chapter Five, and was the subject of an important questionnaire proposition and, therefore, I provide further explanation. It is the concept of God being present in, involved, and close to his creation.³⁸⁰⁶ Christian theology reasons that God is always immanently involved in his creation,³⁸⁰⁷ although separate from it in

³⁷⁹⁶ Grenz and Olson (1992: 15-16).

³⁷⁹⁷ Grenz and Olson (1992: 15-16).

³⁷⁹⁸ Grenz and Olson (1992: 21).

³⁷⁹⁹ Grenz and Olson (1992: 21).

³⁸⁰⁰ Grenz and Olson (1992: 21).

³⁸⁰¹ Grenz and Olson (1992: 21).

³⁸⁰² Grenz and Olson (1992: 21). Veith (1994: 32-33).

³⁸⁰³ Grenz and Olson (1992: 21). Veith (1994: 32-33). Pailin (1999: 505).

³⁸⁰⁴ Modernity was the dominant worldview heavily influenced by the Enlightenment. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 79-80). Veith writes that in the late twentieth century these views have been replaced by post-modernism, which has less emphasis on absolute truth. Veith (1994: 19). This is not to state that post-modernism completely sets aside the concept of truth, but post-modern philosophies are often less dogmatic in approach than ones from the modern era.

³⁸⁰⁵ Veith (1994: 43).

³⁸⁰⁶ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 63).

³⁸⁰⁷ Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 63).

nature. Concerning immanence, J.I. Packer (1973) explains that God knowing a person is initially more important than the person knowing God.³⁸⁰⁸ Within Packer's theology, God takes the initiative in knowing an individual.³⁸⁰⁹ Kreeft and Tacelli explain that God's immanence means the creator must give created beings what they need.³⁸¹⁰ If God was not actively communicating being³⁸¹¹ to all his creation, his creation would cease to exist.³⁸¹² God's immanence would not indicate that each individual knows God personally in the sense of salvation.³⁸¹³ God is providentially involved in human affairs,³⁸¹⁴ and immanence makes divine contact with those outside of the Christian faith possible.³⁸¹⁵

God is Beyond His Creation

According to Grenz and Olson, it is true that God is divinely transcendent and immanent.³⁸¹⁶ God is above the world and beyond creation as transcendent, but as an immanent God is involved in history.³⁸¹⁷ Whale writes that unless God reveals himself in history, God remains in a mysterious depth of infinitude, inaccessible and unknowable.³⁸¹⁸ God has bridged the divide between himself and humanity in history.³⁸¹⁹ Kreeft and Tacelli note that God as transcendent is not part of the material universe.³⁸²⁰ God is 'other' than his creation yet maintains it as transcendent.³⁸²¹ Earle Craig (2004) explains in his article 'Pagan Christianity' that God as

³⁸⁰⁸ Packer (1973: 37).

³⁸⁰⁹ Packer (1973: 37).

³⁸¹⁰ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 93-94).

³⁸¹¹ Kreeft and Tacelli with the use of the word 'being' are stating that God, in an abstract sense, is communicating himself to his creation.

³⁸¹² Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 93-94).

³⁸¹³ This would require election as discussed previously.

³⁸¹⁴ Pojman (1996: 599).

³⁸¹⁵ Erickson (1994: 312).

³⁸¹⁶ Grenz and Olson (1992: 10).

³⁸¹⁷ Grenz and Olson (1992: 16).

³⁸¹⁸ Whale (1958: 56).

³⁸¹⁹ Whale (1958: 56).

³⁸²⁰ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 93).

³⁸²¹ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 93).

transcendent is the creator of reality and has sovereign control over that reality.³⁸²² God's transcendence, therefore, can be comforting to Christian believers since his distance from persons does not detract from his control over every day lives as he works for the greater good. Interestingly, forty-one (19.2%) respondents were 'NC' for this question. Perhaps the notion of transcendence is confusing for some, and is not being explained significantly in church teachings.

God is in All Things

Erickson discusses immanence and pantheism together.³⁸²³ With immanence God and nature have independent status,³⁸²⁴ with pantheism they do not.³⁸²⁵ Within pantheism God could not exist prior to natural order,³⁸²⁶ and therefore there is not a creation concept.³⁸²⁷ S.A. Nigosian (1994) notes that a pantheist is a person who believes that all laws, forces and existing phenomena in reality are manifestations of God who is everything and everything is God.³⁸²⁸ D.W.D. Shaw (1999) writes that the word 'pantheism' is derived from the Greek words *pan* meaning all and *theos* meaning God.³⁸²⁹ For pantheism everything is in the mode of one single reality,³⁸³⁰ and therefore God and nature are identical.³⁸³¹ Pantheism is incompatible with Christianity as God is immanent and is distinct from his material creation in traditional Christian

³⁸²² Craig (2004: 1).

³⁸²³ Erickson (1994: 303).

³⁸²⁴ Erickson (1994: 303).

³⁸²⁵ Erickson (1994: 303).

³⁸²⁶ Erickson (1994: 303).

³⁸²⁷ Erickson (1994: 303).

³⁸²⁸ Nigosian (1994: 487). Pojman (1996: 598).

³⁸²⁹ Shaw (1999: 423).

³⁸³⁰ Shaw (1999: 423).

³⁸³¹ Shaw (1999: 423).

thought.³⁸³²

God Does Not Cause Evil

At the end of my Chapter Three, I discussed three practical theological ramifications of sovereignty theodicy. I explained that with an evaluation of the empirical data, I was planning to develop practical theology for those suffering under the problem of evil that hold to Reformed, Calvinistic thought.

Theologically, throughout this thesis I have discussed and concluded that God is sovereign,³⁸³³ indicating that he is almighty and has control over events in creation and the universe.³⁸³⁴ Therefore, anything that occurs within his creation, both good and evil, is sanctioned by him.³⁸³⁵ God also has providence over his creation, which is the method by which he rules.³⁸³⁶ The fact that God is sovereign and has providential control over his creation does not mean everything that takes place is within God's perfect will,³⁸³⁷ as some things that occur are within God's permissible will.³⁸³⁸ For Erickson, God's perfect will, will 1 as he calls it, is God's general intention and what pleases him most.³⁸³⁹ God's will 2, is God's specific intention in every given situation and what God actually decides will occur.³⁸⁴⁰ This is permissible will. Erickson explains that there are many times when evil and sin occur that God, in his perfect will, does not wish these events to take place, but permits them.³⁸⁴¹ Erickson writes that with will 2,

³⁸³² Erickson (1994: 303).

³⁸³³ Pink (1968: 20). Geisler (1986: 63). Green (1971: 7). Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 101).

³⁸³⁴ Pink (1968: 20). Geisler (1986: 63). Green (1971: 7). Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 101).

³⁸³⁵ Edwards (1729)(2006: 414).

³⁸³⁶ Boulnois (2002: 444). Edwards (1731-1733)(2006: 553). Sanders (1998: 212).

³⁸³⁷ Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁸³⁸ Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁸³⁹ Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁸⁴⁰ Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁸⁴¹ Erickson (1994: 361).

since God does not intervene to prevent particular evil and sin, he permissibly wills it.³⁸⁴²

Therefore, Biblically and theologically, in one sense, God causes evil.³⁸⁴³ When God does not intervene and prevent evil and sin, he therefore willingly allows it and is the cause of it.³⁸⁴⁴

Erickson points out that God never tells someone to commit evil or sin.³⁸⁴⁵ Since God is infinite,³⁸⁴⁶ omnipotent,³⁸⁴⁷ and omniscient³⁸⁴⁸ as discussed, when he does not follow his perfect will causing only good and, instead, follows his permissible will, which at times causes evil and sin, he therefore, theologically, is the cause of evil.³⁸⁴⁹

It needs to be stated that by God permissibly and willingly allowing evil does not make him evil and sinful in nature.³⁸⁵⁰ God's motives remain pure in the simultaneous willing of human actions that are evil and sin.³⁸⁵¹ Calvin wrote that human beings and their actions were freely committed, and at the same time were willed and determined by God.³⁸⁵² God's motives in willing an action are always pure, working toward the greater good even while human beings freely sin.³⁸⁵³ Therefore, practically speaking from a Reformed influenced sovereignty perspective, God causing evil does not make God evil and sinful, as his motives remain pure. He uses evil for his greater purposes.³⁸⁵⁴

In the context of this question, God is the primary cause of all actions including ones

³⁸⁴² Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁸⁴³ As the first cause of all things. Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

³⁸⁴⁴ This concept provides opportunities for a critic such as Roth to state that God should repent of his evil. Roth (1981: 10). Atheists will often conclude that such a God is nonsensical and conceivably some incompatibilists will reason this God is unworthy of worship.

³⁸⁴⁵ Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁸⁴⁶ Erickson (1994: 272). Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 92).

³⁸⁴⁷ Thiessen (1956: 126). Erickson (1994: 276). Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 96).

³⁸⁴⁸ Thiessen (1956: 124). Erickson (1994: 275). Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 96).

³⁸⁴⁹ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2). As explained in Chapter Three.

³⁸⁵⁰ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁸⁵¹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁸⁵² Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁸⁵³ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁸⁵⁴ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

leading to evil and sin,³⁸⁵⁵ and human beings are the secondary cause.³⁸⁵⁶ In this way the act is entirely determined³⁸⁵⁷ by God as the primary cause and yet is done voluntarily by the secondary human cause without force or coercion.³⁸⁵⁸ This is in line with Calvin and Feinberg's theological explanations.³⁸⁵⁹ Philosophically, God can determine actions that are also committed by secondary causes,³⁸⁶⁰ and this does not necessarily mean that the reasoning and motives of the primary and secondary causes are identical or similar.³⁸⁶¹ I conclude that theologically and philosophically God, with pure motives, can will and permit evil and sin that human beings will and commit with rebellious attitudes, using limited compatibilistic³⁸⁶² free will and not under compulsion.³⁸⁶³

Compatibilism and the Questionnaire

(1) At the end of Chapter Three, I stated it was rather meaningless for a Christian to readily accept a notion of God willing all things for the greater good within Reformed, Calvinistic thought when the greater good is not practically explained meaningfully. Perhaps with much Reformed and Calvinist theology, the negative aspects of a God who has the power and does cause evil,³⁸⁶⁴ overshadows the positive aspects in the minds of respondents.³⁸⁶⁵ The

³⁸⁵⁵ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁸⁵⁶ Pojman (1996: 596).

³⁸⁵⁷ Pojman (1996: 596).

³⁸⁵⁸ Pojman (1996: 596).

³⁸⁵⁹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40). Feinberg (1986: 24).

³⁸⁶⁰ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

³⁸⁶¹ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁸⁶² Feinberg (1986: 24). Feinberg (1994: 60). Greenspan (1998: 1). Pruss (2003: 216).

³⁸⁶³ Pojman (1996: 596).

³⁸⁶⁴ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2).

³⁸⁶⁵ These positive aspects are often speculative and those such as Gebara are looking for the greater good now and not primarily in some future realm. She suggests for example, that we need 'Everyday Resurrections.' Gebara (2002: 121-132). Phillips reasons that there is not actual hope for persons after death in another realm. Phillips

positive aspects being that if God has this much control over his creation, matter, the universe, and this world, that he ultimately can deliver his people from the problem of evil, and does so through the work of the gospel and the second coming of Christ.³⁸⁶⁶ This type of theodicy would be in agreement with Biblical promises of a restored Kingdom of God in Revelation Chapters 21-22.³⁸⁶⁷

(2) With my second and third points at the end of Chapter Three, I discussed God's love and the logical and reasonable nature of sovereignty theodicy. I stated that God's love within Reformed, Calvinistic systems needs to be demonstrated. In my opinion, a Reformed, Calvinistic sovereignty theodicy is Biblical, logical and reasonable by nature.³⁸⁶⁸ At times there is a heavy reliance on complex theology and philosophy which is not generally taught in Sunday school, Church sermons, televangelism, devotional Christian books and, quite frankly, in many University, college, and seminary classes.³⁸⁶⁹ Basically, most Christians, even persons with some level of post-secondary education, are just not familiar enough with the complex theological and philosophical material³⁸⁷⁰ to accept the notion of God causing evil,³⁸⁷¹ because the idea comes across as implying God, who is perfectly good, is also evil and uses compulsion in having his human creation commit evils acts and sin.³⁸⁷² This would hardly be a loving God! This would be

(2005: 248). This would appear empirically true, but if the Biblical resurrection is true there hope for those in Christ.

³⁸⁶⁶ Mounce (1990: 350).

³⁸⁶⁷ Robert Mounce in his commentary on *Revelation* provides many helpful insights. Figurative language is definitely used within the book of Revelation, but an actual culminated Kingdom of God is being mysteriously described. Mounce (1990: 368-397).

³⁸⁶⁸ As argued in particular within Chapter Three.

³⁸⁶⁹ I reason that a reasonable goal is for one to be able to present aspects of complex Reformed theology and philosophy in an understandable and practical fashion. Philosophical theology always has practical ramifications and these need to be understood and explained by those that teach Reformed views.

³⁸⁷⁰ If these concepts were taught academically often with practical application, more persons may gain a greater understanding of Reformed, Calvinistic doctrines.

³⁸⁷¹ Edwards (1754)(2006 2.1: 1-1-2). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁸⁷² From this perspective, one can understand why many persons reject Reformed and Calvinistic doctrines.

an evil being that needs to change into something better if possible.³⁸⁷³ The complex theology and philosophy of Reformation theology and Calvinism³⁸⁷⁴ in regard to theodicy needs to be partnered with the idea of God's love and the desire to restore his creation.³⁸⁷⁵ Calvin described heaven as a place where complete and full enjoyment of glory would take place.³⁸⁷⁶ I do not favour a watering down of Reformed doctrine in order to change its meaning, but the love of God in willing evil for the God's glory³⁸⁷⁷ needs to be better explained.³⁸⁷⁸

Within the Christian Church, the problem of evil, and other controversial theological and philosophical topics related to the nature of God, are often avoided in favour of sociological and psychological approaches to teaching Christian doctrine.³⁸⁷⁹ I am not opposed to sociological and psychological methods of teaching theology in sermons and post-secondary classrooms,³⁸⁸⁰ but there is need for individuals, who as leaders, are willing to discuss tricky doctrinal issues professionally from a Christian perspective that many may wish to avoid attempting to teach.³⁸⁸¹ A rejection of the concept raised within this question by a majority indicates that although free will theodicy has some educated and intelligent proponents, such as Augustine³⁸⁸² and Plantinga,³⁸⁸³ that the related Reformed, Calvinist concepts are not being taught adequately.³⁸⁸⁴

³⁸⁷³ Roth (1981: 10). Carey (2002: 116).

³⁸⁷⁴ In particular the theology of those such as John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards.

³⁸⁷⁵ It needs to be philosophically and practically demonstrated that Reformed theodicy is not just another failed Christian approach that Phillips would view as postulating a happy ending that is a fraud. Phillips (2005: 247).

³⁸⁷⁶ Calvin (1552)(1995: 415).

³⁸⁷⁷ Calvin (1552)(1995: 415). A glory that saved humanity is to participate in. Barth (1932-1968: 12).

³⁸⁷⁸ Reformed, Calvinistic doctrines need to be correctly taught with an open mind for revision, but God's love cannot be overlooked in the context of willing evil for the greater good. The greater good includes his love for humanity, in particular those in Christ. Concepts of God's justice and love need to be taught simultaneously.

³⁸⁷⁹ Pastors should not be expected to present theological lectures, but are to preach and this includes the use of theology.

³⁸⁸⁰ Psychology and sociology can be useful tools in presenting practical theology.

³⁸⁸¹ This is my mind would be a major reason for teachers within the Church to work on obtaining Doctorates in the fields of Theology, Philosophy of Religion, and Biblical Studies.

³⁸⁸² As discussed in Chapters Two and Three. *On Free Choice of the Will* in my view is his primary, but not only text related to this issue.

³⁸⁸³ As discussed in Chapters Two and Three. *God, Freedom, and Evil* is his primary text, while *The Nature of Necessity* provides overview at a future date.

Feinberg's writings provide a good counter to Augustine and Plantinga and their free will perspectives, as do the atheist writings of Flew³⁸⁸⁵ and Mackie.³⁸⁸⁶ However, it is much more difficult to find secondary sources that specifically wrote on Feinberg's sovereignty view than those who wrote on free will theodicy.³⁸⁸⁷

Within my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church of North America, 34 (16%) persons out of the overall data were 'AS/A' in choosing to support the idea that God does not cause evil with Question 22.³⁸⁸⁸ With 34 out of 46 respondents, in agreement with the proposition, this means 73.9% of persons in my denomination disagreed with my concept. Only 6 (2.8%) respondents out of 46 chose 'D/DS', which would be 13.0% of my denomination in agreement. I reason that free will theodicy dominates the conservative evangelical North American landscape, and this is very relevant to theodicy and has affected Reformed churches.

(3) In our modern Western society there is a major emphasis placed on personal freedom, and I largely support this philosophy. The political and religious freedoms persons have in North America, Western Europe and Oceania are very important.³⁸⁸⁹ I reason that the rejection within my data of the idea of God causing evil is related to concepts of human freedom.³⁸⁹⁰ Tim Mawson writes that incompatibilism, which is closely related to libertarianism in regard to human free will,³⁸⁹¹ states that true human free will must be uncaused by preceding states³⁸⁹² This

³⁸⁸⁴ Reformed theology is likely often watered down in many cases as Reformed churches are marketing themselves as primarily evangelical as opposed to primarily Reformed. Church attendance can be so low in some cases that it is more marketable to avoid teaching and dealing with controversial Reformed concepts.

³⁸⁸⁵ 'Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom' is a key Flew text on this issue.

³⁸⁸⁶ 'Evil and Omnipotence' is a key text for Mackie in regard to criticizing free will theodicy.

³⁸⁸⁷ Feinberg's is well-known in Reformed and evangelical circles. Kreider (2003: 1). However, his work is not as academically discussed as the material of Augustine, Plantinga and Hick. Calvin and Edwards are much better known in the Reformed tradition than is Feinberg but Feinberg's work unlike that of Calvin and Edwards has the benefit of being modern and able to deal with modern objections.

³⁸⁸⁸ I surveyed 46 persons from my denomination.

³⁸⁸⁹ And I support them personally.

³⁸⁹⁰ Mawson (1999: 324). Geisler (1996: 429).

³⁸⁹¹ Mawson (1999: 324).

³⁸⁹² Mawson (1999: 324).

view would rule out God as a preceding force that determines the human will and actions.³⁸⁹³

Libertarianism³⁸⁹⁴ is often viewed as a form of indeterminism.³⁸⁹⁵ An action cannot be predetermined by any circumstance or desire.³⁸⁹⁶ Indeterminism is defined as the idea that there are no antecedent (preceding conditions) or simultaneous causes of human actions.³⁸⁹⁷ All human actions are only free if a person could have done otherwise.³⁸⁹⁸ I reason that many church attendees in our modern society make a connection, perhaps unconsciously, between libertarian political,³⁸⁹⁹ religious, social type freedom, and libertarianism³⁹⁰⁰ in regard to God. However, political forces that grant some freedoms are finite (limited) entities and should not be equated with the freedom allowed by the infinite, omnipotent, omniscient God.³⁹⁰¹ At the same time, God's power to determine events is much greater than any political entity.³⁹⁰² With a compatibilistic model, if the infinite, omnipotent God restrains himself and allows his permissible rather than perfect will to take place,³⁹⁰³ his will is still being done, and he is still determining events, by allowing evil and sin to occur and not intervening.³⁹⁰⁴

The Bible States that All Persons Will Follow God

In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus uses an illustration relating to the ultimate destiny of individuals and explains that few persons enter by the narrow gate, and the wide and broad way

³⁸⁹³ Mawson (1999: 324).

³⁸⁹⁴ Libertarianism supposes that human free choice is not causally determined, but is not random either. Blackburn (1996: 218).

³⁸⁹⁵ Geisler (1996: 429).

³⁸⁹⁶ Mawson (1999: 324). Blackburn (1996: 218). Geisler (1996: 429).

³⁸⁹⁷ Geisler (1996: 429).

³⁸⁹⁸ Geisler (1996: 429).

³⁸⁹⁹ Political libertarianism maximizes individual rights and the state has its power minimized. Blackburn (1996: 218).

³⁹⁰⁰ Blackburn (1996: 218).

³⁹⁰¹ God as understood within traditional Christian theology as discussed within Chapter One.

³⁹⁰² God has sovereign power over heaven and earth. Pink (1968: 20).

³⁹⁰³ Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁹⁰⁴ Erickson (1994: 361).

of destruction is found by many.³⁹⁰⁵ R.T. France (2001) explains that from these verses, and the perspective of Christ, true discipleship is a minority religion.³⁹⁰⁶ He notes that in context, the narrow way should not so much be understood to be a difficult or hard path to travel on,³⁹⁰⁷ but rather should be viewed as a restricted path.³⁹⁰⁸ The narrow way of Christian discipleship is restrictive,³⁹⁰⁹ and requires a particular type of religious devotion taught further by Christ and his Apostles.³⁹¹⁰ There are many religions and religious persons in the world,³⁹¹¹ but the restrictive³⁹¹² nature of Christ's gospel requires God to enlighten persons to what Christian tradition understands as true religion,³⁹¹³ as opposed to human attempts at religion.³⁹¹⁴ Within a sovereignty perspective, God will choose whom he wills to be present in his culminated Kingdom.³⁹¹⁵ Sentimentally,³⁹¹⁶ universalism is definitely more personally humanly satisfying, but it appears that Jesus disagreed with Hick on universalism.³⁹¹⁷ Laurence E. Porter (1986) describes a scenario in Luke 13:24-28 where some religious persons are rejected by God.³⁹¹⁸ It is not a popular idea in much of today's society and religious academia, but based on these texts,³⁹¹⁹ Jesus did not accept the theology that a sincere religious devotion alone would lead one to God's presence in the culminated Kingdom of God.³⁹²⁰ This is not my hope for any individual person,

³⁹⁰⁵ France (2001: 146).

³⁹⁰⁶ France (2001: 146).

³⁹⁰⁷ France (2001: 147).

³⁹⁰⁸ France (2001: 147).

³⁹⁰⁹ France (2001: 147).

³⁹¹⁰ France (2001: 147).

³⁹¹¹ Admittedly non-Christian worldviews can contain much truth.

³⁹¹² France (2001: 147).

³⁹¹³ France (2001: 146). Porter (1986: 1211).

³⁹¹⁴ These attempts would fail not because there was no truth within the religious systems, but because Christ was not leading these religionists via the Holy Spirit.

³⁹¹⁵ This idea is a key aspect of sovereignty theodicy, as God's election of some is very important in the creator overcoming the problem of evil and ultimately culminating a Kingdom.

³⁹¹⁶ I am not denying there are academic arguments made for universalism. I am stating that the idea of all persons rejecting sin and evil for God is more intellectually satisfying for most than the alternative.

³⁹¹⁷ Hick (1970: 381).

³⁹¹⁸ Porter (1986: 1211).

³⁹¹⁹ France (2001: 146-147). Porter (1986: 1211).

³⁹²⁰ Porter (1986: 1211).

but it is the theology that these verses appear to teach.³⁹²¹ From a traditional Christian perspective,³⁹²² some persons will never believe and follow the Biblical God.³⁹²³

The World is Becoming More Evil

The question was asked if individuals are becoming more evil, making the world more evil, and/or are incidents of evil simply being reported in greater numbers due to more television stations and the internet. It would take a thesis beyond the scope of this one to answer the first part of the question, but the answer to the second part is ‘yes’ in my view. News networks such as CNN³⁹²⁴ provide a worldwide perspective on the problem of evil to local markets, whereas in the 1960’s and 1970’s local stations primarily provided local news with a secondary emphasis on national, and international news.³⁹²⁵ The internet and the world wide web also provide worldwide coverage of events and therefore the problem of evil on a global scale can be digested by persons in local markets, and evil can appear to be greater in amount than it was thirty to forty years ago.³⁹²⁶

Churches are Losing the Battle Against Social Evils

The societal move from modernity to post-modernism³⁹²⁷ would demonstrate that the Church is in many cases losing the battle against social evils³⁹²⁸ because of decreased influence.³⁹²⁹ However, the Christian Church is a very large, multi-faceted group of smaller churches and it would take a major academic study outside of the depths of this one, to

³⁹²¹ France (2001: 146). Porter (1986: 1211).

³⁹²² Including from a Reformed perspective.

³⁹²³ Whale (1958: 63). Geivett (1993: 216).

³⁹²⁴ This was founded in 1980 by Ted Turner. Turner (2007: 1).

³⁹²⁵ In the Western world there are far more television stations available today than in the 1970s.

³⁹²⁶ There is also an emphasis on ‘bad’ and controversial news which often attracts readership and viewership.

³⁹²⁷ Veith (1994: 27-46).

³⁹²⁸ These would be perceived social evils where Christianity would differ in society from its secular counterpart.

³⁹²⁹ Veith (1994: 27-46).

conclusively answer this question, but cultural trends point towards a decline of influence of the Christian Church in the Western world.³⁹³⁰ Hal N. Ostrander (2004), Chair of the Religion & Philosophy Division at Brewton-Parker College in Washington State,³⁹³¹ writes that in today's post-Christian era and society, Christians will face cultural and intellectual challenges to the faith.³⁹³² The Church is in a defensive position where it needs to defend a faith, not accepted by most in Western society.³⁹³³

Church Attitudes are Influenced by Society

Elaine Graham (2000)(2007) writes that in a post-modern age of uncertainty,³⁹³⁴ many of the foundations of Western society are dissolving.³⁹³⁵ Graham reasons there needs to be new ways of looking at Christian practice and the understanding of Divine reality³⁹³⁶ which feature the use of empathy and solidarity with others.³⁹³⁷ For some on the liberal, progressive side of Christianity, secular society can perhaps offer some practical, theological improvements to the historic faith.³⁹³⁸ Therefore this question may be answered with agreement and yet viewed as a positive occurrence.³⁹³⁹ Traditionalists such as Lindsell, will view any move within the Christian Church away from Biblical teaching as a negative.³⁹⁴⁰ Lindsell provides the opinion that many Christian institutions have slowly over time moved away from orthodox, Biblical theology and

³⁹³⁰ Veith (1994: 27-46). Ostrander (2004: 1).

³⁹³¹ Ostrander (2004: 1).

³⁹³² Ostrander (2004: 1).

³⁹³³ Ostrander (2004: 1).

³⁹³⁴ Graham (2000)(2007: 106).

³⁹³⁵ Graham (2000)(2007: 106).

³⁹³⁶ Graham (2000)(2007: 106).

³⁹³⁷ Graham (2000)(2007: 106).

³⁹³⁸ Graham (2000)(2007: 106).

³⁹³⁹ Graham (2000)(2007: 106).

³⁹⁴⁰ Lindsell (1976: 185).

have gone astray.³⁹⁴¹ Some from the conservative perspective, who answered this question in the affirmative, may view secular influence on the Church as leading it into error.³⁹⁴²

5. Summary

My questionnaire data does not demonstrate a complete rejection of Reformed, Calvinistic, sovereignty theodicy, which is not accepted on key points in contrast to the acceptance of free will theodicy.³⁹⁴³ It can be reasoned that Reformed compatibilistic concepts have been primarily rejected.³⁹⁴⁴ With the very important Question 22, if God does not cause evil according to the majority of respondents, the reasonable conclusion would be an acceptance of the idea from free will theodicy that human beings alone cause evil and corruption.³⁹⁴⁵ A compatibilistic model, as noted within the work, views both God and humanity as the cause of evil³⁹⁴⁶ with God as the primary cause,³⁹⁴⁷ but with sinless motives.³⁹⁴⁸ There is also the important non-support of the ideas of God causing human actions, and deciding who shall follow him in election,³⁹⁴⁹ which are essential within a compatibilistic framework for God to fulfill his purposes and turn certain sinful human beings into members of his everlasting Kingdom.³⁹⁵⁰ Sovereignty theodicy is not as publicized as free will theodicy,³⁹⁵¹ is not taught as much in post-secondary education, and is not as culturally relevant in Western society as free will concepts, which

³⁹⁴¹ Lindsell (1976: 185).

³⁹⁴² Lindsell (1976: 185).

³⁹⁴³ It can be reasoned from the results that Reformed theology in the context of theodicy is not dominating Christian theological thought.

³⁹⁴⁴ This is significant enough to demonstrate that Reformed theology in regard to theodicy and free will and determinism has been overshadowed by the free will/incompatibilistic research and work of those such as Augustine and Plantinga.

³⁹⁴⁵ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8). Plantinga (1982: 184-189).

³⁹⁴⁶ Erickson (1994: 361). Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁹⁴⁷ Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁹⁴⁸ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40).

³⁹⁴⁹ Whale (1958: 63). Calvin (1543)(1996: 136).

³⁹⁵⁰ Calvin mentions in his Acts Commentary that people who were strangers to the Kingdom of God, were purchased by Christ and flourished within. Calvin (1552)(1995: 415).

³⁹⁵¹ This is quite clear from several years of academic research.

support libertarianism.³⁹⁵²

In order for Reformed concepts of compatibilism and theodicy to gain increased prominence within the Christian Church,³⁹⁵³ sovereignty theodicy needs to be correctly explained, but theoretical theodicy is not sufficient in itself as its practical ramifications must be explained. A major reason why a sovereignty theodicy explains God wills all things, including evil and sin or the greater good,³⁹⁵⁴ is that with this and in particular, through the results of the atoning work and resurrection of Christ, God will ultimately rid his creation of the problem of evil.³⁹⁵⁵

³⁹⁵² Blackburn (1996: 218).

³⁹⁵³ In particular within Reformed churches.

³⁹⁵⁴ Cranfield (1992: 204). Mounce (1995: 187). Admittedly human beings often greatly struggle to see and understand this theoretical greater good. Davis (1981: 23). Roth reasons some evil willed by God is simply and only that and should be repented for by God. Roth (1981: 10).

³⁹⁵⁵ Moltmann (1993: 256). Calvin (1552)(1995: 415). Feinberg (1994: 141). Mounce (1990: 369-397).

CONCLUSION

Within this thesis I have evaluated three philosophical theodicy approaches from four authors. Using questionnaires, propositions were taken from these philosophical approaches and data provided.³⁹⁵⁶ I have concluded that a sovereignty theodicy, one of which is presented by John S. Feinberg,³⁹⁵⁷ is the most coherent form of theodicy,³⁹⁵⁸ although free will and soul-making theodicy approaches should not be disregarded as in error on each and every point.³⁹⁵⁹ I reason a perspective with greater emphasis on God's sovereignty³⁹⁶⁰ makes better overall sense and defends the concept of God existing within a creation where evil flourishes,³⁹⁶¹ better than the other two options.³⁹⁶² The sovereignty approach, like all theodicy attempts, is not a remedy to the problem of evil, but rather an explanation.³⁹⁶³ I have noted on several occasions that the work of the gospel, Christ's atoning and resurrection work and a culminated Kingdom of God, is the

³⁹⁵⁶ Within Chapter Six and the Appendix. As noted data was provided as well through the use of feminism/feminist work and general theology questions.

³⁹⁵⁷ Within Chapter Three.

³⁹⁵⁸ I have raised some objections to Feinberg's approach and provided alternative perspectives.

³⁹⁵⁹ I have agreed with aspects of both of these views. Gebara has shown that issues concerning women and the problem of evil are also very important.

³⁹⁶⁰ God has the power to willingly allow evil and to eventually rid his creation of it. God has power over good and evil. Edwards (1729)(2006: 414).

³⁹⁶¹ All the views reviewed reason evil flourishes.

³⁹⁶² Even as I acknowledge and review the serious academic criticisms of those such as Saunders, Pinnock, Griffin, Phillips, Roth and several others. A successful Reformed theodicy through the use of Feinberg's material, my material, or other within Reformed theology, does not end the debate. Frankly, in this world there is just too much suffering and often not enough answers to end intellectual debate even though I reason I am philosophically on the right track.

³⁹⁶³ A philosophical explanation in regard to the problem of evil may solve intellectual problems, but may not assist with many of the everyday consequences of evil. This is where pastoral care and practical theology is important.

theistic, Christian remedy to the problem of evil.³⁹⁶⁴

With the use of empirical data, within this Conclusion, I wish to examine what could be considered *praxis*³⁹⁶⁵ for each of the theodicy presented. As noted in previous footnotes, Simon Blackburn writes that the term *praxis* originated in the era of Aristotle³⁹⁶⁶ and included the concept of goal-directed action, the action in itself being part of the end.³⁹⁶⁷ Praxis is not concerned with merely applying theoretical knowledge but adding to knowledge in the process of practically applying theory.³⁹⁶⁸

Free Will Theodicy Praxis Versus Sovereignty Theodicy Praxis

The focus within a short Conclusion is not to review each proposition concerning each theodicy,³⁹⁶⁹ but in general terms, to consider what would be the theological end result of an acceptance of a theodicy.³⁹⁷⁰ The practical application of each theodicy view will be presented. When free will is practically applied, what are the results? A rejection by some within the Christian Church of the Reformed idea that God predestines with soft determinism individuals to salvation is important.³⁹⁷¹ This would work hand in hand with the rejection of the idea that God causes evil by allowing sin to exist.³⁹⁷² In both cases God's divine sovereignty is downplayed, by Reformed standards.³⁹⁷³ With free will theory God would be viewed as allowing

³⁹⁶⁴ Traditional Christian perspectives, Reformed and non-Reformed, sovereignty and free will, would typically accept this understanding. However, John Hick and soul-making theodicy rejects a traditional understanding of salvation. Hick (1970: 172). Atheistic critics, as has been demonstrated within this thesis, reject this concept as hyper-speculative and unreasonable.

³⁹⁶⁵ Blackburn (1996: 298). Anderson (2001: 22).

³⁹⁶⁶ Blackburn (1996: 298).

³⁹⁶⁷ Blackburn (1996: 298).

³⁹⁶⁸ Anderson (2001: 22).

³⁹⁶⁹ This was done within Chapter Six and can be seen in the form of graphs in the Appendix.

³⁹⁷⁰ The praxis.

³⁹⁷¹ For some, non-determinism alone allows for significant human freedom. Geisler (1986: 75).

³⁹⁷² Erickson (1994: 361).

³⁹⁷³ God is not in control of human salvation as this is up to human free will. God can influence persons only and in no way can determine, even simultaneously, a truly free human act. McCann (2001: 115). Geisler (1986: 75). As

the problem of evil for greater purposes, but not willing it.³⁹⁷⁴ A praxis of free will theodicy would be that God can desire to save all persons, but cannot because human beings refuse to turn to God.³⁹⁷⁵ Moral choices are not caused or uncaused by another being, but are self-caused.³⁹⁷⁶ God therefore would be unable to save persons that freely reject him and they have made a moral choice to oppose God.³⁹⁷⁷ In contrast to the sovereignty perspective, since God does not cause evil and does not predetermine human actions such as who shall believe in him,³⁹⁷⁸ human beings are a greater impediment to a culminated Kingdom of God with a free will theodicy than with a sovereignty one.³⁹⁷⁹ This fits into Plantinga's reasoning that in every situation transworld depravity will cause wrong human actions.³⁹⁸⁰ Transworld depravity provides the concept that in any possible world, including our own, each person would make at least one wrong decision and the resulting bad action would lead to evil occurring within creation.³⁹⁸¹ It can be reasoned that the praxis related end goal of free will theodicy is for God within an incompatibilist, libertarian system to convince many human beings to accept Christ and turn from evil in order to fully establish the Kingdom of God.³⁹⁸²

In contrast, with a compatibilistic sovereignty perspective, God is reasoned to transform

human beings have incompatibilistic libertarian free will they have caused evil and God is not morally blamable for this because he could only prevent this evil by cancelling significant human freedom. Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33). A problem here is Reformed and atheistic critics have postulated that God could have created significantly free creatures that would not commit evil. Mackie and Flew reason human beings could be made in such a way, and I acknowledge that a type of human being could be made in order to have significant freedom and not sin. I also reason that the angels that did not fall likely are significantly free and did not choose to sin. I here deduce angelic beings are significantly free and not merely robotic as some angels fell and some did not.

³⁹⁷⁴ Geisler (1986: 75). McCann (2001: 115).

³⁹⁷⁵ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

³⁹⁷⁶ Geisler (1986: 75).

³⁹⁷⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33). Geisler (1986: 75).

³⁹⁷⁸ Blackburn (1996: 31). Geisler (1986: 75). McCann (2001: 115).

³⁹⁷⁹ An atheist and critic could reasonably and rightly suggest that persons use free will to such a corrupt degree that God will never be able to culminate a Kingdom where significantly free creatures do not continue to at times commit horrendous evils.

³⁹⁸⁰ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

³⁹⁸¹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

³⁹⁸² This assumes that human beings by grace through faith can be convinced into belief in Christ and then regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

and mould persons he chooses for salvation,³⁹⁸³ so that the culminated Kingdom takes place at God's appointed time.³⁹⁸⁴ Both free will and sovereignty perspectives accept the Biblical idea of the culminated Kingdom, but free will places much more emphasis on the individual freely deciding that this is for him/her, rather than being determined in any way to do so.³⁹⁸⁵ Free will advocates will understand the process as God making an offer and over time convincing persons to believe it.³⁹⁸⁶ A devotion to God can only be a good thing when persons freely accept it.³⁹⁸⁷ Sovereignty perspectives reason that God alone makes the choice to begin a regeneration process that leads to salvation in a human being.³⁹⁸⁸ F.F. Bruce (1996) explains that because of the universal fact of human sin, there is no way to be accepted by God by human means.³⁹⁸⁹ This divinely guided change in a person must occur in order for salvation to ever take place within a human being with a corrupted nature.³⁹⁹⁰

Free will theodicy, unlike soul-making theory, does not necessarily accept universalism³⁹⁹¹ as part of its praxis and it could logically be argued that Plantinga's transworld depravity would apply in all post-mortem situations.³⁹⁹² In my view, these are perils of a praxis that rejects compatibilism and soft determinism. Even as traditional Christian free will theory would not accept universalism,³⁹⁹³ it still reasons eventually those citizens saved by Christ would not sin within the culminated Kingdom.³⁹⁹⁴ Those within the Kingdom will have been brought to

³⁹⁸³ Luther (1525)(1972: 133). Calvin (1543)(1996: 204).

³⁹⁸⁴ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 3, 6). Calvin (1552)(1995: 13).

³⁹⁸⁵ Geisler (1986: 75). McCann (2001: 115).

³⁹⁸⁶ Foulkes (1989: 55). Browning (1997: 301).

³⁹⁸⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 78).

³⁹⁸⁸ Regeneration consists of the Holy Spirit of God beginning the salvation process of spiritual re-creation in a human being. Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling (1999: 101).

³⁹⁸⁹ Bruce (1996: 93).

³⁹⁹⁰ Bruce (1996: 93).

³⁹⁹¹ Contrary to Hick. Hick (1970: 381).

³⁹⁹² Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

³⁹⁹³ Kreeft and Tacelli (1994: 286).

³⁹⁹⁴ Revelation Chapters 21-22 although containing figurative language describe a world free from tears and death and pain (21: 4). The New American Standard Version Bible Version (1984: 1417).

God through Christ.³⁹⁹⁵ The resurrection work would be reasoned to change the entire nature of saved persons to sinless and allow everlasting life,³⁹⁹⁶ but without God also determining³⁹⁹⁷ that sin would never again occur, I reason that transworld depravity could always be a concern.³⁹⁹⁸

A praxis of sovereignty theodicy would be that, from start to finish, salvation is primarily the goal directed³⁹⁹⁹ plan of God. Human beings are not brought to Christ through compulsion,⁴⁰⁰⁰ but when predestined in election⁴⁰⁰¹ shall be convinced to accept the offer of salvation.⁴⁰⁰² Praxis shifts from the incompatibilism of free will that assumes God desires to save all persons, but can only save those who are eventually persuaded to believe,⁴⁰⁰³ to an understanding that whom God desires to save shall be regenerated and placed in a process of salvation.⁴⁰⁰⁴ The problem of evil is therefore not primarily subject to, and in existence, because human sin is stalling the culmination of God's plans.⁴⁰⁰⁵ I do not doubt that human beings do often oppose God's plans, but God being almighty can overcome the problem of evil, and is working through this process slowly in history. Within a sovereignty perspective human sin does oppose God, but God will use sin for his purposes and regenerate and mould those he chooses towards salvation. As long

³⁹⁹⁵ Augustine viewed the atoning work of Christ as a means by which humanity can be brought back to a proper relationship with God. Augustine (398-399)(1992: 178). Christ would mediate humanity back to God. Augustine (398-399)(1992: 219).

³⁹⁹⁶ Augustine reasoned the resurrection would save believers from everlasting death. Augustine (400-416)(1987)(2004: Book 4: Chapter 13: 11).

³⁹⁹⁷ Geisler (1986: 75). McCann (2001: 115). I reason that as human nature has already demonstrated that it can fall, in the restoration it will need not only culminated perfect nature through resurrection, but also the influence of the Holy Spirit in heavy measure. Citizens will be filled with the Holy Spirit as was Stephen in Acts Chapter 6, for example. The New American Standard Version Bible Version (1984: 1234-1235). As God has developed saved persons to freely follow him with his guidance, I do not see why this would change within the everlasting realm.

³⁹⁹⁸ Without compatibilism in my view, incompatibilism and free will theory is left with the problem of explaining how human corruption and Plantinga's transworld depravity will not prevent the salvation of persons and the completed and finalized Kingdom of God.

³⁹⁹⁹ Teleological. Bloesch (1987: 19).

⁴⁰⁰⁰ Shedd (1874-1890)(1980: 136-137 Volume 2).

⁴⁰⁰¹ Whale (1958: 63).

⁴⁰⁰² Feinberg (2001: 637).

⁴⁰⁰³ Peterson (1982: 104). McCann (2001: 115). Feinberg (1994: 64).

⁴⁰⁰⁴ Calvin (1543)(1996: 204).

⁴⁰⁰⁵ Peterson (1982: 104). McCann (2001: 115). Feinberg (1994: 64).

as one can accept the idea that a perfectly moral God wills and allows evil⁴⁰⁰⁶ within his plans for the greater good,⁴⁰⁰⁷ there is a degree of intellectual certainty with sovereignty theodicy that free will theodicy lacks. God could inevitably bring about, through the use of the regeneration⁴⁰⁰⁸ and the resurrection of elected human persons,⁴⁰⁰⁹ the end of human corruption,⁴⁰¹⁰ and even Plantinga's concept of transworld depravity.⁴⁰¹¹ If God willed and created a finalized Kingdom of restored persons that had experienced the problem of evil and were saved from it, then it could be reasoned that with God's constant persuasion through the Holy Spirit⁴⁰¹² and human experience and maturity, transworld depravity⁴⁰¹³ would never take place again. No human wrong decision⁴⁰¹⁴ would need to occur as God always determines otherwise, and restored human beings do not lack experience as did the first humans who rebelled against God causing corruption. I speculate that theological praxis of sovereignty theodicy is more certain and comforting than free will theodicy, as transworld depravity is overcome by taking the primary choice of human belief in God away from corrupted human beings⁴⁰¹⁵ and placing it in the hands of a sovereign God.⁴⁰¹⁶

⁴⁰⁰⁶ Erickson (1994: 361). Many theistic and atheistic critics find this intellectually untenable. Mesle (1986: 418).

⁴⁰⁰⁷ Calvin (1543)(1996: 37-40). Edwards (1729)(2006: 414).

⁴⁰⁰⁸ Murray (1937-1966)(1977: 172).

⁴⁰⁰⁹ Whale (1958: 65-70).

⁴⁰¹⁰ Berkouwer (1962: 192).

⁴⁰¹¹ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

⁴⁰¹² Franke (2005: 151). Lindsell (1976: 28-40). Thiessen (1956: 45).

⁴⁰¹³ Plantinga (1977)(2002: 53).

⁴⁰¹⁴ Moral wrong decisions is meant here. A lack of infinite knowledge could still lead to a human being making a non-moral mistake, for example, not playing a perfect game.

⁴⁰¹⁵ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8). Plantinga (1982: 184-189). Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 2, 7). Luther (1516)(1968: 31). Feinberg (1994: 126-127).

⁴⁰¹⁶ Pink (1968: 20). Green (1971: 7).

Soul-Making Theodicy Praxis

A praxis of soul-making is that there is epistemic distance⁴⁰¹⁷ needed to exist between humanity and God in order for persons to properly develop as individuals outside of God's direct influence.⁴⁰¹⁸ Hick and soul-making theodicy deduce that with free will many will reject God in temporal life,⁴⁰¹⁹ but in post-mortem existence universal devotion to God will ultimately occur for all.⁴⁰²⁰ Since Hick rejects compatibilism,⁴⁰²¹ ultimately God must inevitably convince human beings to freely follow him in a way that was amiss for many in their earthly lives.⁴⁰²² Contrary to traditional Christian and Reformed doctrine which assumes corruption due to sin,⁴⁰²³ Hick's soul-making philosophy reasons that human beings are not fallen, but immature and child-like⁴⁰²⁴ and need to evolve to a status of being able to worship and follow God.⁴⁰²⁵ There exists a praxis of progression from spiritual immaturity and inability to follow God⁴⁰²⁶ to the eventual point where all will follow God. The end goal and praxis is to take persons that are distant from God,⁴⁰²⁷ and to freely bring them into mature community with God.⁴⁰²⁸

A sovereignty view also believes God shall bring persons into a finalized community with him,⁴⁰²⁹ but God must determine and persuade selected persons within that process.⁴⁰³⁰ A

⁴⁰¹⁷ Hick in Davis (2001: 48). McDowell (2005: 2).

⁴⁰¹⁸ Hick in Davis (2001: 48). Geivett (1993: 36).

⁴⁰¹⁹ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

⁴⁰²⁰ Hick (1970: 381). This is the view of universal salvation as discussed in Chapter Four. Ankerberg and Weldon (1999: 503).

⁴⁰²¹ Hick (1970: 381).

⁴⁰²² Hick (1970: 381).

⁴⁰²³ Augustine (421)(1998: Chapter 13: 8). Luther (1516)(1968: 31). Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 2, 7).

⁴⁰²⁴ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41). Hick cites the views of Irenaeus for support. Irenaeus (c 175-185)(2005: Book IV: Chapter 39: 2).

⁴⁰²⁵ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

⁴⁰²⁶ Hick in Davis (2001: 40-41).

⁴⁰²⁷ Hick in Davis (2001: 48).

⁴⁰²⁸ Hick (1970: 289-290).

⁴⁰²⁹ Calvin (1539)(1998: Book II, Chapter 3, 6).

⁴⁰³⁰ Feinberg (1986: 24-25).

soul-making process could be considered an aspect of sovereignty theodicy.⁴⁰³¹ As Hick accepts universalism,⁴⁰³² he rejects the notion that God would select some and reject others for everlasting hell.⁴⁰³³ For soul-making the evolutionary development process leads to the salvation of all persons and, therefore, a universal community of each human being God has ever made will eventually exist.⁴⁰³⁴ For Hick, God must save all persons or his creation would be a failure.⁴⁰³⁵ Free will theodicy also consists of an idea of human progression, as God would convince certain persons within this temporal life to follow him.⁴⁰³⁶ It does not accept that all persons will eventually follow God and credits this to free will.⁴⁰³⁷ I have explained my difficulty with the idea that God can save corrupt human beings that reject him without the use of compatibilism throughout this thesis.⁴⁰³⁸ Free will theory would not view a finalized God ruled Kingdom, that is missing some persons, as a failure⁴⁰³⁹ as God desired all to be saved,⁴⁰⁴⁰ but some refused God's offer of salvation and call to election.⁴⁰⁴¹ This was done freely and is not God's fault that some have rejected him, as to have these people follow him would require determinism and these persons would be less than significantly free.⁴⁰⁴²

Critical/Atheistic Praxis

The three approaches all take an ultimately positive view towards reality and that God

⁴⁰³¹ Not identical to Hick's approach, however.

⁴⁰³² Hick (1970: 381).

⁴⁰³³ Hick (1970: 284).

⁴⁰³⁴ Hick (1970: 381).

⁴⁰³⁵ Hick (1970: 378).

⁴⁰³⁶ Augustine (398-399)(1992: 178).

⁴⁰³⁷ Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33).

⁴⁰³⁸ A difficulty shared by critics that are both atheistic and Reformed.

⁴⁰³⁹ Any failure in context would be placed at the feet of humanity. Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33). Plantinga (1982: 167). Schreck (1984: 21). Foulkes (1989: 55).

⁴⁰⁴⁰ Foulkes (1989: 55).

⁴⁰⁴¹ Foulkes (1989: 55). Thiessen (1956: 156).

⁴⁰⁴² Plantinga (1982: 166). Augustine (388-395)(1964: 33). Mawson (1999: 323).

would eventually succeed in his purposes.⁴⁰⁴³ These three theodicy view evil as part of the end goal praxis of bringing about a greater good and justifying God, his perfect goodness and plans in the end. C. Robert Mesle has noted these types of views that use greater good arguments make God the author of evil and make evil less than genuine.⁴⁰⁴⁴ As noted, atheist William Rowe states that not all evil can be used for the greater good and certainly some must be gratuitous.⁴⁰⁴⁵ The greater good argument can always be challenged with good counter-arguments,⁴⁰⁴⁶ and although I disagree with the concept of gratuitous evil, I accept Rowe's point that some evil is inscrutable,⁴⁰⁴⁷ which is evil that cannot be understood reasonably well by human beings⁴⁰⁴⁸ An atheistic⁴⁰⁴⁹ praxis concerning the problem of evil could be that life has no deeper meaning or purpose beyond physical death,⁴⁰⁵⁰ and that all persons suffer and die with no further meaning to life.⁴⁰⁵¹ Science does not offer humanity an end directed goal of continued life.⁴⁰⁵² As noted earlier in this work, Darrow writes the best one can do is basically cling to life on earth as we head toward 'a common doom.'⁴⁰⁵³ An atheistic praxis coming from this type of view could be criticized as negative,⁴⁰⁵⁴ but science cannot be primarily sought for support of theodicy,⁴⁰⁵⁵ and theodicy should be based on solid religious and philosophical reasoning. In the case of free will

⁴⁰⁴³ A positive view of ultimate reality has been well challenged by those such as Phillips, Roth and Darrow within this work. Phillips (2005: 247). Roth (1981: 19). Darrow (1932)(1973: 453). An intellectual problem being that free will, sovereignty and soul-making perspectives are all very speculative and state that eventually reality will be different and far better than it obviously is now empirically. Tennant, contrary to Hick, reasons with his evolutionary view of theodicy that evil might always exist. Tennant (1930)(1956: 195). Hick (1970: 252-253).

⁴⁰⁴⁴ Mesle (1986: 418).

⁴⁰⁴⁵ Rowe (1990: 1-3).

⁴⁰⁴⁶ Rowe (1990: 1-3). Mesle (1986: 418).

⁴⁰⁴⁷ Rowe (1990: 3).

⁴⁰⁴⁸ Rowe (1990: 3). Philosophically certain evils and sufferings are inscrutable as Rowe states, but they can still treated with appropriate pastoral care. Collins explains that the needs of persons are attempted to be met through counsel within a Christian context. Collins (1988: 26).

⁴⁰⁴⁹ And certain deistic and agnostic praxis as well.

⁴⁰⁵⁰ Darrow (1928)(1973: 266).

⁴⁰⁵¹ Darrow (1932)(1973: 453).

⁴⁰⁵² Darrow (1932)(1973: 453).

⁴⁰⁵³ Darrow (1932)(1973: 453).

⁴⁰⁵⁴ Phillips (2005: 247). Darrow (1932)(1973: 453).

⁴⁰⁵⁵ I will not support a theodicy that is clearly against science, although I reason that metaphysical theodicy approaches are not scientific.

and sovereignty perspectives, there is a heavy reliance on Scriptural revelation which is based in history.⁴⁰⁵⁶ Hick's view has an understanding that God could begin to be understood to some degree in metaphorical terms through the writings of a variety of religious traditions.⁴⁰⁵⁷ He takes a Kantian understanding⁴⁰⁵⁸ that God could not be affirmed as an actual or possible concept,⁴⁰⁵⁹ although God can be assumed as possible.⁴⁰⁶⁰ Hick takes this idea of Kant's and deduces that when it comes to religious doctrine the noumena realm that relates to the phenomena realm may have little in common with resulting phenomena.⁴⁰⁶¹

Certainly, an idea behind the writing of this thesis has been to make it clear that blind faith fueled theodicy is not intellectually acceptable.⁴⁰⁶² Theodicy should be based on research and reason using and considering a variety of perspectives.⁴⁰⁶³ I reason this thesis has demonstrated a support for a reasonable Reformed theodicy and examined its strengths and weaknesses, as well as objectively reviewing other perspectives.

⁴⁰⁵⁶ This has been discussed previously within Chapter Three and is a major reason I support sovereignty theodicy as an overall approach.

⁴⁰⁵⁷ Hick (1993: 126). Smid (1999: 10).

⁴⁰⁵⁸ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 1). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 3). As discussed within Chapter Four.

⁴⁰⁵⁹ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 1). Smid (1999: 10).

⁴⁰⁶⁰ Kant (1788)(1898)(2006: 1). Guyer and Wood in Kant (1781)(1787)(1998: 14).

⁴⁰⁶¹ Hick in Geivett (1993: 230). Peters (2005: 4).

⁴⁰⁶² That type of approach does not reasonably answer the objections and problems of those within and outside of the Church.

⁴⁰⁶³ As with this thesis and with my MPhil thesis, although I favour a Reformed approach, I do examine other Christian and secular perspectives.

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