CHAPTER TWO

GOOD AND EVIL: THE THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

This chapter attempts to analyse the ethics of good and evil from a perspective that is essentially Christian, as Christianity is the faith Murdoch chose to portray in her study of the said ethics in the nine novels selected for study. I have given a brief history of ethics and then proceeded to the Christian concepts of good and God, evil and theodicy. A detailed analysis is required because the core of Murdoch’s works is formulated in these concepts.

The word ethics is derived from the Greek ‘ethos’ which means character. It refers to the systematic study of the nature of value concepts of ‘good’ ‘bad’, ‘right’, ‘wrong’ and of the general principles which justify us in applying them to anything. Ethics is also termed as ‘moral philosophy’ as derived from the Latin word ‘mores’ meaning customs. In ethics by using the term ‘good’ what is meant is, what is intrinsically good, not what is good only as a means to something else.¹ There are various theories regarding this:

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 8, p. 752.
1. Happiness as the only good: this thought was propounded by the Hedonists, and the Utilitarians. In Greek ‘hedone’ means pleasure. The term is used to cover all sorts of joys and satisfaction. Yet some thinkers insist on making a sharp distinction between happiness and pleasure. They normally mean by happiness a state of feeling, involving a qualitatively valuable kind of pleasure, more durable than ordinary transient pleasure.

2. Perfection as the good: this view finds the good of a being in the fullest development of his faculties. The theory of perfectionism has sometimes taken on egoistic forms as in Plato and Aristotle.

3. Pluralistic views of the good: this view is seemingly impossible, hedonism being discarded to find a single formula which will cover all cases of intrinsic goodness. It has sometimes been said that moral virtue is the only real good, but it is hard to hold that it does not matter at all, whether the virtuous man is happy or miserable.

G. E. Moore (1903) in Principal Ethica laid down the principle of ‘Organic wholes’ according to which the value of a whole need “bear no regular proportions to the sum of the values of its parts”. The following
historical sketch traces the main lines of the development of ethical theory in Western philosophy.²

I Greek and Greco-Roman ethics:- (1) Socrates (2) Plato (3) Aristotle (4) Cynics and Cyrenaics (5) Stoicism (6) Epicureanism (7) Roman Stoicism and the Academy (8) Neoplatonism

II Medieval Ethics:


III Modern Ethics:

A. 17th and 18th century theories


²  Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 8, p. 754.
B. Later Theories.

(1) Nietzsche (2) the development of Utilitarianism and its critics (3) Ethical Relativity (4) Pragmatism (5) Existentialism (6) Logical Positivism and analysis.

Ethics has to do with human conduct. The special concern of Christian ethics is to relate an understanding of God to the conduct of men and women, more specifically, to explore the response to God which Jesus Christ requires and makes possible. The Bible's ethical teaching is essentially God centred, 'the power of the good rests entirely on the one who is good'. Of moral behaviour for the sake of an abstract good, there is none. The notion of unconditional love is genuinely Christian and the idea that God's blessings reach out, both to the good and the evil is biblical. The aspect of 'Kenosis' or of self emptying is not just the Creator becoming identical with the points on the circumference but God becoming the suffering servant. Biblical religion is prophetic. The unimagined goodness of God is revealed in Jesus as the innocent person who embodies human

---


4 ‘God makes His sun rise on good and evil alike and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous’ Matthew 5.45 (The Bible NKJV).
existence par excellence in justice and love, even through enduring injustice. Doctrine is inseparable from ethics in scripture. The ethical demands of the Decalogue are deliberately based on redemption, and Jesus’ moral teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is presented as a series of deductions from religious premises. If we want to discover the nature of goodness, the Bible directs us to God’s own person as He alone is good.\(^5\) When God promised Moses, ‘I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you’ (Exodus 33:19), Moses was rewarded with a specially revealed insight into the Lord’s character.\(^6\) Hence the fundamental ethical demand in scripture is to imitate God. The repeated Old Testament command from the Lord, ‘Be holy, because I am holy’ (Leviticus 11:44-45) is matched by Jesus’ instruction to his disciples that they should aim to reflect their heavenly Father’s moral perfection.\(^7\) In doctrine it affirmed that there was but one God who had created the world without any hindrance, so that it was good. The book of Genesis affirms that creation was ‘good’ and God saw that ‘it was good’. Grace was the power of God that entered human beings to empower them to good deeds and salvation. The aspect of good is found in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. He advocated a message of love and a love in action.

\(^5\) Mark 10:18.  
\(^6\) Exodus 34: 6-7.  
\(^7\) Matthew 5: 48.
Good becomes (i) a way of belief (ii) a way of worship (iii) a way of life.\(^8\) Good consists in placing one’s trust wholly in the ways of God. It consists of both hope and charity which is love. This aspect of good shifts focus from man to God, and considers man’s need in the light of God’s grace. A number of aspects follow from this stance. Hope becomes the content of Christian worship for it is directed towards the future as God’s future and is the anticipation of the deeds of God which are yet to come. Goodness works itself towards a life of charity or love towards men. Man’s relationship with God becomes fundamental. The essence of faith, love and hope work itself out. Faith is the acknowledgement of God’s love for man in Christ, hope is the expectation of further love from God, and charity is love in action.

C.S. Lewis speaks about the concept of divine goodness. The doctrine of divine goodness differs from our mortal ones. As he denotes, “not as white from black but as a perfect circle from a child’s first attempt to draw a wheel. But when a child has learned to draw, it will know that the circle it then makes is what it was trying to make from the very beginning”\(^9\). The doctrine is presupposed in scripture. Christ calls men to repent, to be holy, just as He is Holy. He appeals to our existing moral judgement, “Why even


of yourselves, judge ye not what is right".\textsuperscript{10} By the goodness of God we mean almost exclusively His lovingness, for God is love. The relationship between the Creator and creature is unique and it cannot be paralleled with any other. Our life is supplied by Him. God loves man, this love is an unconditional love, from a loving God. God has no needs. Human love as Plato teaches us, is the child of poverty or a want or lack; it is caused by a real or supposed good in its beloved which the lover needs and desires. But God's love causes all the goodness which the object has, loving it first into existence and then into real loveability. God is goodness. He can give good and therefore gives and receives, very often, nothing in return: "Before and behind all the relation of God to man, is the abyss of a Divine act of pure giving since God is the origin of all goodness."\textsuperscript{11} Christianity bids us to "put on Christ"-to become like God. It is not simply that God has arbitrarily made us such that He is our only good. Rather God is the only good of all creatures, and by necessity, each must find its good in that kind and degree of the fruition of God which is proper to its nature.

The root of all goodness then, is God and it is important to analyse the nature and the character of God. The Christian view of God comes from the

\textsuperscript{10} Luke. 12: 57. KJV.

\textsuperscript{11} C.S. Lewis, \textit{The Problem of Pain},(London: 1940), p.27.
Biblical revelation, in which mankind's maker appears as mankind's redeemer, unchangeable and unchallengeably sovereign in creation, providence and grace. The attributes of God, what may truly be ascribed to Him-concern either His way of existing as compared with ours, or His moral character as shown by His words and deeds. The main points in historic Bible-based, time-tested Christian theorism with regard to the way in which God exists are these.12

1. God is self-existent, self-sufficient, and self-sustaining. God exists necessarily, this is His aseity, the quality of having life in and from Himself.

2. God is simple, perfect, immutable.

3. God is infinite, bodiless, omnipresent, omniscient and eternal.

4. God is purposeful, all-powerful and sovereign in relation to His world. He has a plan and purpose for the history of the universe and He governs and controls all created realities.

5. God is transcendent over, and, immanent in His world.

God is impassable. The Christian mainstream has construed impassibility as meaning not that God is a stranger to joy and delight, but rather that His joy is permanent, clouded by no involuntary pain. When dealing with the character of God, one must note that character is personal moral nature revealed in action. In God’s dealings with mankind His character is fully displayed supremely in the incarnate Son. God is Jesus like, for Jesus is God in the flesh. Concerning God’s character the key statements appear to be these.¹³

1. God is holy love: The essence of all love is giving, prompted by goodwill, with joy in the recipient’s benefit. The statement ‘God is Love’ (1 John 4:8) is explained in context as meaning that God gave His Son as a sacrifice to quench His wrath against human sins and so bring believers life. Agape is the regular New Testament word for love that gives even to the unlovely and undeserving. But God is also the ‘Holy One’ and holiness always qualifies the divine love.

2. God is moral perfection. God's revealed ways with mankind render Him not only awesome but adorable by reason of His truthfulness, faithfulness, grace, goodness, wisdom and other attributes; all of which find exercise as functions of His love to believers, as well as in His sustained dominion over a rebel world which He governs with both goodness and severity.

A distinction has to be made between two sets of questions related to the concept of good. These are i) ethical problems about how to elaborate reasonable criteria of goodness, where goodness is conceived as a characteristic of human actions, also ii) there are questions regarding the goodness of God. Christian philosophy has always stressed upon the meaning of divine goodness "God is good in Himself. He is the creator of all goodness, He is benevolent, the source of criteria whereby all acts are deemed morally good or evil".¹⁴ Whatever else is good is such derivatively and by participation in the goodness of God. In Christian thinking all creation was attributed to God and since no existence is conceivable apart from God, whatever exists is good by definition. Evil has no positive ontological character and is to be defined as pure negativity. Evil comes from the ill will of human beings on diabolic creatures involved with

freedom of choice and of abusing this freedom. Some Christian philosophers and theologians have discussed the questions "are the criteria of good and evil, given us by god, arbitrarily or intrinsically valid? Is the good 'good' because God has decreed it to be good or has God told us that it is good because it is good in itself?"\textsuperscript{15} If God is good in Himself, it is essential in Christian terms that we should love Him, not only as a benefactor and Saviour but because He is who He is. Many Christian mystics and other theocentrically oriented writers stressed this point and argued that God is not only the highest good but the only good proper. The idea of divine goodness as a non-relative property does not seem to be a product of pure philosophical speculation. It is rooted in the old tenets of Christian religion that affirms that creation as such is good and therefore the Creator is good.

I shall elaborate further by expounding upon certain philosophical as well as theological thought on the concept of good. I will begin with St. Augustine (354-430) who was the greatest theologian among the Latin Fathers and one of the greatest of all time. For both Catholics and Protestants he remains a major theological resource. St. Augustine stressed upon the goodness of creation and adapted the neo-Platonic approach to evil

by viewing it as the absence of good, lacking substantial reality. In his writings he stressed upon the aspect of “will as an intermediate good when it cleaves to the unchangeable good. The happy life, that is, the disposition of soul cleaving to the unchangeable good, is the proper and first good of man. The will, which cleaves to the unchangeable good, that is common to all, obtains man’s first and best good, though it itself is only an intermediate good”.16 All good is from God. Hence there is no natural existence which is not from God.

Eric Osborn states that “the one God, who has spoken in one word, the one Son of God, has given one law, one commandment and one way of life that all may follow. As there is one God so there is one goodness”.17 The good life consists in becoming like God who has made man free to follow His law and regard His likeness. Because God is one and God is good, the only path to goodness is that of becoming like God. If there is one God and He alone is good, then the one way should aim at perfection. So the Christian claim for moral excellence is supported by even more radical demands. The teaching of Jesus shows the rigor and lack of compromise

---

16 Augustine (354-430) His Christian Platonism entertained a high estimate of man’s moral and spiritual potential. He projects solid reality beyond this word, to heaven and the future.

which perfection requires. The eye is to be plucked out, or the hand is to be cut off, love of enemies, kindness and mercy are all a part of the Christian way. The claim of the Sermon on the Mount is a call to perfection. Perfection comes from the sense of the universal presence of God, for He rules the whole of the life of the believer. Because of this sense of the presence of God, Christian moral perfection is far beyond that of other persuasion; this is achieved by careful observance of teaching and also by scrupulous avoidance of any occasion for sin. The total giving is the purity of heart by which man sees God and finds life. The sight of God brings life and man passes into God because God has first passed into man. Christ becomes our pattern, He gives us illumination at baptism and brings us to become sons of God. From sonship we move to perfection and immortality. Salvation is life and light. There is no half way home between light and darkness and the end belongs to those who believe and who will rise again.

The Christian moves on to perfection in the way of Christ. We hold on to what is good and what is truly ours. We follow God in faith by confessing Him who suffered and by doing good to men. Just as Jesus showed nothing extravagant, so our lives must always be simple. Simplicity or singleness should mark the servants of one God. Perfection is the path of oneness. “Within the unity of the good life there are different degrees of achievement. The perfect man is according to the image of the Lord, not in
shape or even in virtue, but as a friend of God, sharing in the perfection of God”. It is possible for man to become like the one God, because his soul is made in God’s image. Made in God’s image, man knows good and evil. Obedience is good, disobedience is evil. God made man, but man may attain to sharing in the glory of God. On the basis of divine simplicity, Robert Brown, prefers the equivalence of God’s goodness and will. According to him, impeccability is an essential trait of His splendid character. He is reality’s centre as the best person and both His essence and existence are necessary. His acts are deeply contingent and in complete harmony with the sublimity and integrity of His superior and supreme goodness. Brown further states “the smallest semblance of plausibility that God will sin is not only too high a theological and philosophical price to be paid. It is inconsistent too... The true God is too good not to be and He is too good to sin. God is truly good.” H.M. Vroom in an essay ‘God and Goodness’ declares that God’s goodness is one of His most important properties. Believers claim to rely on God’s goodness and to ask Him for that goodness. The question however is “what is implied by the phrase, ‘the

---


goodness of God\textsuperscript{20}. He proposes to examine closely two claims about God's goodness: (I) God as a perfect being is necessarily good, (II) God transcends the distinctions between good and evil. The issue is complicated and a number of problems arise in connection with the relation between God and the good. There are three different ways in which God can be considered good: (I) metaphysical goodness, (II) moral goodness, (III) supererogatory goodness.\textsuperscript{21} When one takes up the question whether God is necessarily good, the sort of goodness in view needs to be more precisely determined and there the ontological and the epistemological aspects of the problem can then be determined. In the process one encounters the relationship between 'the God of the philosophers' and 'the God of the Bible'. As love, 'God empties Himself to save suffering humanity. The idea of 'Kenosis' (self emptying) reaches the deepest understanding of God and of goodness. The 'Kenosis' of God is the 'pleroma' (fullness) of God''.\textsuperscript{22} The notion of unconditional love is genuinely Christian. The doctrine of the atonement points to God the Father as the one who cares for justice and Jesus as the one

\begin{footnotes}


\footnotetext[22]{An essay entitled 'God and Goodness' by H.M. Vroom in the same text as above p.254.}
\end{footnotes}
who suffers. God’s goodness is acknowledged as overwhelming precisely because God in His love is concerned about evil as well as the good. The doctrine of trinity is consequently central in the Christian understanding of God since it is the expression of God as unsurpassable love. The doctrine of the trinity is an expression of the fact that God’s goodness is in actuality the same as it is revealed in Jesus.\textsuperscript{23} One of the most profound Biblical images of God’s love and power is that of the Lamb in the midst of the throne; the intermingling of the Creator and the suffering victim (Revelation 7:17). The Cross is the Christian symbol of God’s power, love and goodness.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) expresses his school of thought about the aspect of good in his work Ethics. Bonhoeffer was a theologian and the leader of the Confessing Church in Germany until his martyrdom by the Nazis. He remains one of the most provocative voices in contemporary Christianity. He was involved in the young ecumenical movement,\textsuperscript{24} in opposition to Hitler, and he refused any alliance between Christianity and Nazism. His work Ethics was published posthumously and it moves towards a theological account of human responsibility. In an account on ‘Christ Reality and Good’ Bonhoeffer states that whoever wishes to take up the


\textsuperscript{24} The prominent 20th Century quest for church unity.
problem of a Christian ethic must be confronted at once with a demand which is quite without parallel. He must from the outset discard as irrelevant the two questions which alone impel him to concern himself with the problem of ethics. 'How can I be good?' and 'How can I do good?' The aim of all ethical reflection is that I myself shall be good and that the world shall become good through my actions. The problem of Christian ethics according to Bonhoeffer is "the realization among God's creations of the revelational reality of God in Christ. The question of good becomes the question of participation in the divine reality which is revealed in Christ".  

Good is now no longer a valuation of what it is, it is no longer a predicate that is assigned to something which is in itself in being. Good is the real in itself. It is not the real in the abstract, the real which is detached from the reality of God, the real which possesses reality only in God. There is no good without the real, for the good is not a general formula, and the real is impossible without the good. The wish to be good consists solely in the longing for what is real in God. Good is not in itself an independent theme for life; only if we share in reality can we share in good. "Good is not the correspondence between a criterion which is placed at our disposal by nature or grace and whatever entity one designated as reality, good is reality itself,

---

reality seen and recognized in God”.26 The question of good embraces man with his motives and purposes, with his fellow-men and with the entire creation around him; it embraces reality as a whole, as it is held by God. The divine words ‘Behold, it was very good’ (Genesis 1:31) refer to the whole of creation. The good demands the whole, not only the “whole of man’s outlook, but his whole work, the whole man, together with the fellow-men who are given to him. Man is an indivisible whole, not only as an individual in his person and work but also as a member of the community of men and creatures in which he stands”.27 This indivisible whole, this reality which is founded on God, and apprehended in Him, is what the question of good has in view. Participation in the indivisible whole of the divine reality - this is the sense and the purpose of the Christian enquiry concerning good. The Christian ethic “speaks in a different sense of the reality which is the origin of good, for it speaks of the reality of God as the ultimate reality without and within everything that is.”28 It speaks of the reality of the world as it is, which possesses reality solely through the reality of God. In Jesus Christ the reality of God entered into the reality of this world. Participation in this reality is the true sense and purpose of the enquiry concerning good.

27 Ibid., p.193.
28 Ibid.
The will of God is nothing other than the becoming real of the reality of Christ with us and in our world. The will of God which became manifest and was fulfilled in Jesus Christ is the sole fountainhead of all good.

If philosophy provided the method, it was the Bible which provided the material for an argued account of God. One cannot present, in one chapter, all that the Bible and especially the New Testament says about God, goodness and truth. One must go back to the text and decipher what it has to say about the one God. Were being, goodness and truth relevant questions or did the first theologians impose them on the documents of piety? Are they related to the questions of ethics and logic? The works of St. Matthew and St. Paul and John can be subjected to specific study. Matthew speaks of one Son of God who fulfils and will fulfil. Paul analyses one Christ who reconciles and brings all together while John writes about the one Word, and the fullness of God. The questions of God, goodness and truth were already old when Jesus came. The Old Testament is about one God who is above all time, measure, likeness and limits, who cannot be touched or seen, yet is ever present and inescapable. He is the source of all creation. With regards to the question of goodness, one can perceive that the ethical demands of this God are clear in His calling and in His command to love. Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic writers point to the ethical demands of the unique God
who had delivered Israel.29 Matthew in continuity with the Old Testament
denotes God as the source of being, goodness and truth. This emerges as an
affirmation of life, goodness and wisdom and a negation of death, sin and
falsehood. He states that the one good is God (Matthew 19:17). He also
elucidates upon the notion of righteousness. This aspect is declared in the
Sermon on the Mount, especially in the beatitudes which promise that they
who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled (Matthew 5:3-12).
Righteousness is a matter of doing good works and avoiding evil. Hearing
and doing must be kept together. The good tree is always known by its
fruits (Matthew 12:33) and the good man produces good from the treasures
within him (Matthew 12:35). On the day of the last judgement, the Son of
man declares the universal law of doing good, which is faith and works
together. According to St. Paul and the Pauline theology, “there is one
sovereign good God, one world for one Christ, one way of faith and life, one
truth of one Gospel. There is one sovereign good God, who is the creator of
all that exists”.30 His unity and goodness are seen in His sovereign grace and
the power of its righteousness. God is the Lord of life, goodness and truth.
As being, He creates, gives life and raises the dead. As good, He requires

29 Deuteronomy is the fifth book in the Old Testament of the Bible. Deuteronomy
6:5 expresses the fact that God requires total love from man. Deuteronomy 4:37
states that God loved and chose the fathers and their children.

and gives righteousness. As truth, He reveals His mystery and gives the light of knowledge to those who are in darkness. Paul also states that the one God is uniquely and actively good. As good and unbegotten, His goodness is ultimate. Yet divine goodness, calls man to follow, to imitate God in self control, righteousness, love and all that is befitting before Him.

Bonhoeffer’s thesis upon ‘History and good’ speaks of the relationship between ‘good and life’. He states that “it is as creatures and not as creators that we enquire about good. The question of good cannot be separated from the question of life, of history”.31 Good is life as it is in reality, in its origin, essence and goal; it is in ‘life’ in the sense of saying ‘Christ is my life’ (Philippians 1:21) Good is not quality of life, but it is life itself. To be good is to live in the true sense in Christ, where Christ becomes our life. The knowledge of good and evil seems to be the aim of all ethical reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge. Thus Christian ethics often stands so completely alone that it becomes questionable whether there is any purpose in speaking of Christian ethics at all. Already in the possibility of the knowledge of good and evil Christian ethics discerned a falling away from the origin. Man at the origin knows only one thing: God. It is only in the unity of his knowledge of God that he

knows of other men, of things, and of himself. He knows all things only in God and God in all things. The knowledge of good and evil shows that he is no longer at one with this origin. But man cannot be rid of his origin. He interprets according to his own possibilities. 'The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil'. (Genesis 3:22). After partaking of the forbidden fruit, man knows about good and evil which signified the complete reversal of man's knowledge which hitherto had been solely knowledge of God as his origin. Man knows good and evil but because he is not the origin, the good and evil that he knows are not the good and evil of God but good and evil against God. They are good and evil of man's own choosing, in opposition to the eternal election of God. To elucidate further one most denote an important illustration from the Bible namely that of the Pharisee. It is in Jesus' meeting with the Pharisee that the old and the new are most clearly contrasted. The correct understanding of this meeting is of the greatest significance for the understanding of the Gospel as a whole. The Pharisee is not an adventitious historical phenomenon of a particular time. He is the man to whom only the knowledge of good and evil has come to be of importance in his entire life. Every moment of his life becomes a situation of conflict where he has to choose between good and evil. "The freedom of Jesus is not the arbitrary choice of one amongst innumerable possibilities; it consists on the contrary, precisely in the complete simplicity
of His action, which is never confronted by a plurality of possibilities, conflicts or alternatives, but always only by one thing". This one thing Jesus calls the will of God. This will of God is His life, He lives and acts not by the knowledge of good and evil, but by the will of God. ‘Judge not that ye be not judged’ (Matthew 7:1) is a blow struck at the heart of man who knows good and evil. It is the word of Him who speaks by virtue of His unity with God, who came not to condemn but to save (John 3:17). In knowing good and evil man is essentially a judge. Jesus demands that the knowledge of good and evil be overcome, He demands unity with God. The Pharisaic action is a judgement of the other man, it desires to be seen, to be judged, and if only in the sight of his even self, to be acknowledged as good. ‘All their works they do for to be seen of men’ (Matthew 23:5). It is only a particular form of expression of his knowledge of good and evil, it is false action, of hypocrisy. Only Christ can overthrow the authority of the Pharisee which is founded upon the knowledge of good and evil. ‘Judge not’ is the summons addressed to disunited man by Him who is reconciliation; it is the call to reconciliation. In knowing Christ, “man has a new knowledge, not merely that of good and evil but of the one who bears the image of God”.

33 Ibid., p.33
doing of His will. The Sermon on the Mount is there for the purpose of being done. The Bible lays emphasis upon doing as the only appropriate conduct of men. Doing of God's will, rendering a firm belief unto Him. It wishes to take away from man every possibility of self justification before God on the basis of his own knowledge of good and evil. The error of the Pharisees did not lie in their strict insistence on the necessity for action, but in their failure to act.

Thus God and good are interlinked with one another. And since God is love, love becomes the decisive word which marks the distinction between man in discussion and man in the origin. Love is the reconciliation of man, with God in Christ. It is as men who think and act, that we are loved by God and reconciled with God in Christ and it is as whole men who think and who act, that we love God and men. Christ then belongs wholly to both the good and the bad, it constitutes the pattern of Christian living and becomes the dynamics of the theology of word and deed.

The apparent contradiction in the coexistence of evil and a good God is perhaps the commonest charge levelled by critics against theism. A number of philosophical systems have tried to resolve this dilemma by

offering a different view of either the nature of evil or the nature of God. Some forms of pantheism claim that evil is not real, or at least less than real. One form of dualism contends that evil is eternal, like its perpetual war with the good. Some schools try to settle the issue by their definition of God and assert that God is either not all good or not all powerful, or both. The classical theist, however, cannot resolve the problem of evil by denying or limiting either the reality of evil or the goodness and power of God. 35

One of the difficulties faced by the theistic exponents of the problem of evil is that, according to theism, God is the author of everything. Therefore if evil is something, it follows that God is its author. Theists challenge the premise that evil is something. However evil could be a real privation or lack of some good thing. I shall in this chapter make an attempt to analyse the concept of evil and the various opinions pertaining to its thought and formation. Evil could exist in a good thing as an imperfection of it, hence it does not follow that God is its author. Yet, if God is the perfect author of all things, everything He makes has to be perfect. How then can His creatures be the origin of evil? Classical theists agree that God is the perfect creator. One of the perfect things God created was free creatures. Without free choice, neither good nor evil could be chosen. Since

---

free will is the cause of evil, imperfection can arise from the perfect. Thus, God created the fact of freedom, man performs the acts of freedom. Theists insist that evil will be defeated without the destruction of free choice. If God is all-powerful He can defeat evil. Since evil is not yet defeated the very nature of the all-powerful, all-good theistic God is the guarantee that evil will eventually be defeated. 36

J.S. Whale in an essay on evil, states that evil is a fact which presses on relentlessly before us. The paradoxical truth is that God cannot be made responsible for moral evil. According to him, if sin were necessitated by God, it could not be sin as morality would cease to have any meaning. Jesus never worked out any formal theory about evil in God’s universe, for Him evil was not a conundrum for the intellect but a task for the will. He accepted the fact of evil and dealt with it. The evils which men suffer fall roughly into two classes. 37 There are moral evils for which on the whole we are responsible and physical evils for which we are not. Moral evils constitute the whole problem of sin. Physical evils present the problem of suffering. Though they are distinct from one another they are closely interlinked. The Christian solution to the problem of evil lies in the triumph


of Christ. Whale states that “the Cross is the supreme instance of the fact that the worst evil faced in the right way can be made to yield some good not attainable in any other way”. Roger Lloyd also states that Christ accepts evil as a fact to be fought.

Theodicy in what is usually taken to be its classical or canonical form; is a philosophical as well as a theological exercise involving a justification of the righteousness of God. This justification requires the theodicist to reconcile the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and morally perfect divinity with the existence and the considerable scale of evil. The term theodicy originates from the Greek “theos” -meaning ‘God’ and ‘dik’ meaning ‘just’ and it thus seeks, in Miltonic terms, to justify the ways of God to man, showing that God is in the right and is glorious and worthy despite contrary appearances. Theodicy asks how we can believe that God is both good and sovereign in the face of the world’s evil. All theodicies view evil as making for a good greater than is attainable without it. Thus Leibniz who coined the word theodicy in 1710, argued that a world containing moral and physical evil is better, because it is metaphysically

---

richer, than one containing good only and that God must have created the best of all possible worlds.

The problem of evil is deemed by its proponents to have a reversible ancestry, and was apparently first formulated by Epicurus (341-270 B.C) in the form of a dilemma. The prevailing consensus among those who operate within theodicy's canonical tradition holds a long strand in the history of theology from St. Augustine via St. Thomas Aquinas and the Reformers to Schleiermacher and modern times. Since about the seventeenth century when the canonical form of the theodicy problem began to acquire its decisive formulation, the 'God' of theodicy has very much been the divinity known as the 'God of the philosophers'. During this time the 'problem of evil' almost imperceptibly and with the consent of the theodicists has become the problem of the God of 'philosophical theism'. In Walter Kasper's words philosophical theism is "the abstract theism of a unipersonal God who stands over against man as the perfect Thou or over man as imperial ruler and judge". Within the Augustinian intellectual context, evil is treated in explicitly psychological terms, and little or no scope is allowed for any of the metaphysical or ontological strategems that are inextricably bound up with the enterprise of theodicy today. Augustine sees the individual as a being hopelessly constrained by the continuity of memory.

The problem of 'evil' cannot be solved by resorting to philosophical manoeuvres. Philosophy has a merely provisional and secondary status. The true goal of the true Christian is the attainment of blessedness and there is no way to this path except that which God has revealed in Christ, because God has wrought His gracious work of redemption in Christ. It lies therefore in the unfathomable will of God, to transform one's will and thought.\textsuperscript{41}

Augustine's treatment of evil has to be located in its proper historical context, a context in which Christianity had come to an accommodation within the Roman Empire. In the fourth century Constantine's decision to legalize Christianity ensured that the Christians were no longer compelled to live as members of an outcast eschatological community. After the Edict of Milan (313) Christianity which had hitherto been marginalised by the prevailing social and political order came to enjoy official patronage and subvention. Martyrdom ceased and Christians were able to occupy positions of power and prestige. This imperial assimilation of Christianity which culminated in 389 with Theodosius' decree that Christianity was hence forth to be the official religion of the empire, is the background within which Augustine's reflections on the problem of evil must be situated. His reflections are intended for the spiritually damaged subject, engaged in a

restless quest for the healing of the soul. Augustine’s approach to the problem presupposes an epistemology which pivots on the neo-Platonist notion of a divine illumination of the human mind, and the solution must await God’s revelation of Himself.

A more comprehensive approach will be attempted by the classification of theodicy into two types. These are: (I) Theodicies with a ‘theoretical emphasis’ and (II) Theodicies with a ‘practical emphasis’.

A) Theodicies with a theoretical emphasis are marked by four approaches-

1. The free will defence as formulated by Alvin Plantinga.

2. The ‘Natural Law’ theodicy.


4. The ‘soul-making’ Theodicy.

(I) The free will defence as formulated by Alvin Plantinga.

---


43 Alvin Plantinga (b.1932) Member of the Christian Reformed Church and an American analytic philosopher, best known for his work on the theistic proofs and on the problem of evil. His theology includes a sophisticated version of the classic ‘free will’ defence.
This defence has a long ancestry, sometimes alleged to extend as far back as St. Augustine. Plantinga maintains that the free will defence shows that,

1. God is omnipotent and omniscient.

2. Evil exists.

3. Evil exists because of the actions of free, rational and fallible creatures.

(II) The 'Natural law' theodicy:

Richard Swinburne\(^{44}\) has also used a version of the free will defence as an explanation of the existence of human evil. But he has circumvented the need felt by Plantinga to ascribe the existence of physical evil to the agency of Satan and his legions by arguing that the existence of physical evil is a logically necessary condition of the existence and the avoidance of moral or human evil. In his scheme, the existence of physical or natural evil is viewed as a precondition of the viability of the free will defence. His

\(^{44}\) Swinburne's treatment of the problem of evil is denoted in his work *The Existence of God* and specific philosophical objections have been raised against this position in D.Z. Phillips *The Problem of Evil.*
thesis is stated by him in this manner: the existence of many natural evils... is logically necessary.... if agents are to have knowledge of how to bring about evil or prevent its occurrence, knowledge which they must have if they are to have a genuine choice between bringing about evil and bringing good.\textsuperscript{45} His argument concludes that the existence of natural evil is a precondition of knowing how to penetrate and to prevent human evil, and since this knowledge is the essential basis of responsible human action, it follows that God has a good reason for permitting evil to exist.

(III) Process Theodicy:

It is a philosophical theology based on the metaphysical system by A.N. Whitehead (1861-1947). The core of this conceptualization of divinity is supplied by the principle that God, while He is absolute and unsurpassable is also personal, social and temporal. God is bi-polar, that is, He is a synthesis of concrete and abstract aspects: the latter comprising His 'necessary' attributes and the former His' 'contingent' attributes. The distinctive feature of this concept of God is the thesis that God depends upon His creatures to affect or shape the course of His experience, that God in His concrete aspect, is created by His creatures. Hartshorne, who developed this

thesis, is emphatic that God alone is infinite. He is not only an absolute and infinite being, He is also supremely relative.

(IV) The ‘Soul-Making’ Theodicy.

Associated with John Hick.46 Central to the understanding of this theodicy is Hick’s distinction between two basic kinds of answers to the ‘problem of evil’.47 One ‘answer, the Augustinian excludes the idea that a God who endows His creatures with freedom and a modicum of power will intervene on the scale needed to prevent evil from occurring’. Another ‘answer’, the Irenanean-sees evil an integral feature of an environment in which souls are shaped by God who deserves all creatures to grow into an ultimately perfect relationship with Him. Hick’s theodicy stands within the Irenaean tradition. Hick believes that his defence must be incorporated into a theistic ideology, the cardinal tenet of which would be the affirmation that God creates us as free beings for a purpose. This freedom is a ‘cognitive freedom’ in relation to God. Hick believes that evil and suffering are constitutive of the ‘soul-making process’. This process reaches its climax

46 John Harwood Hick (b.1922) philosopher of religion and radical theologian. Pleads for a return from a Christocentric to a theocentric theology with all the systems alike providing access to the ‘Ultimate reality’ of God.

47 John Hick’s central work on theodicy was Evil and the God of Love.
when all human beings enjoy a perfect relationship with their maker. Hick’s theodicy seeks to resolve the ‘problem of evil’ by asking us to view occurrences of evil and suffering in the large context of a total history which would lead to our eternal joy. It presupposes the possibilities,

I) of a post-mortem existence.

ii) of a consummation of the course of history.

iii) of God being able to and guaranteeing the ultimately salvific outcome of history.

B. Theodicies with a practical emphasis:

Attention will be focussed on three exponents of the “practice-oriented approach to the problem of evil”. This approach concerns itself essentially with questions of the God of salvation who acts decisively to overcome evil. The three practitioners considered are Dorothee Soelle, Jurgen Moltmann and P.T. Forsyth. Soelle (b.1929) in her work Suffering expounds upon the problem of theodicy. It begins with a polemical critique of what Soelle calls ‘Christian masochism’ and its concomitant ‘theological...
sadism'. It is necessary for Christians to purge themselves of this 'masochism' before they can legitimately aspire to work for less dehumanized and dehumanizing social formulations. Soelle quotes with approval Bonhoeffer's dictum that 'man is challenged to participate in the suffering of God at the hands of a Godless world'. The proposition that the pain of Christ and that of all human beings in God's pain is virtually an axiom in Soelle's treatment of the theodicy-problem. The resolution of this problem is to be sought in God's deed on the Cross of His Son and in His indwelling in all dark, shameful places where death, agony and degradation are inflicted on those who are weak and vulnerable. The problem of evil is thus to be resolved by adverting to a theology of the Cross. It contains some of the ingredients integral to any sustained theological engagement with the phenomenon of 'protest' atheism. These ingredients, the idea of God as a co-sufferer; the denial that God is impassable, and the insistence that the crucial theodicy-question is not the question of the intelligibility of God but that of his salvific activity to overcome evil-are given full expression in the writings of Jurgen Moltmann. Moltmann (b.1926) in his work The Crucified God maintains that God is no passive onlooker who isolates

---

49 Ibid.
Himself from human pain and dereliction.\textsuperscript{50} It differs from Soelle, in claiming that it is not sufficient merely to cast the pain and death of Christ in the context of a Christian theodicy or to simply cite a doctrine of salvation. Before the event of the Cross can be located in such a context, it is necessary to relate the death of Christ to God Himself, to the inner being of the Godhead. The concept of God as an immutable and impassable being 'evacuates' the Cross of divinity. God must be able to suffer and change if the pain and death of the Son on Calvary is to be the pain and death of God Himself. Moltmann resolves the 'problem of evil' by placing evil within the divine nature itself. God becomes the God of the godless and the abandoned. Implicit in this theology of the Cross is a doctrine of justification. By dying in Jesus 'for us' God took upon Himself, guilt and sin, so that in Christ we might become His righteousness in the world. Moltmann states that this communion with the crucified God 'involves' man in a realistic divinization (theosis) in which we live in God and from God\textsuperscript{51} The Cross liberates and Moltmann's theology of the Cross is grounded in a thoroughgoing eschatology. Only at the end of history will evil be finally overcome. For the present, we have God's promise through Christ that evil

\textsuperscript{50} Jurgen Moltmann \textit{The Crucified God}, (London: 1974).

\textsuperscript{51} Jurgen Moltmann (b. 1926) is a reformed theologian and professor of systematic theology. \textit{The Crucified God} is one of the most important modern studies of the Cross.
and suffering will not have the final word in the world's history. Moltmann refuses to grant evil and sin the positive status accorded to them by Hick, but suggests instead that the only answer for those in pain and dereliction is God's redemptive deed on the Cross. The third account on theodicy to be considered is that of Peter Taylor Forsyth (1848-1921). In his work Forsyth analyses the fact that a historical theodicy rooted in the historic Gospel, will recognize the futility and the absurdity of God which is acceptable to the human conscience and to our powers of reason. The justification of God (theodicy) must become God's justification of Himself at Golgotha (The Theology of the Cross). This move from theodicy to 'theologia crucis' is very much the explicit focal point of 'The Justification of God'.\(^5^2\) Forsyth's theology is theocentric - it asks how shall human beings be just with God – it is also Christocentric, for Christ is the salvation of the world.

All of these principles affirm that God is in some sense a deity who suffers with His creatures, and that the God who suffers cannot be an immutable an impassable deity. The most important question regarding suffering is not the aspect of 'is theism unintelligible because I am suffering?' but 'Is this God a God of salvation? Is this a God who can help?'

John Hick in his work *Evil and the God of Love* poses the question—can the presence of evil in the world be reconciled with the existence of a God who is unlimited both in goodness and power? Hick states that this time wrought problem can be approached in an impious spirit or with irreligious presuppositions but it can also be approached with the utmost humility and sincerity of spirit and from a firm Christian commitment.\(^{53}\) The spirit of inquiry will vary from individual to individual. Hick states that evil is one of a constellation of words that must be defined in relation to each other. Moral evil is that which originates from human beings and natural evil is that which originates independently of human beings. John Cowburn elucidates these two categories by stating that moral evil occurs when a person recognises a moral obligation and deliberately acts against it. Morally evil acts have been committed from the very dawn of history and in today’s world ‘there is immorality, there is unethical behaviour, there is wrong doing’. The normal effect of sin, is not to make a person aware of moral evil so much as to dull that awareness, ‘every sin makes us blind to that awareness by sin’.\(^{54}\) Committing sins does not make a person sympathetic towards sinners; Christ who was sinless can also be harsh. Sin is in all its forms an enmity against God, as fratricide and as self destruction-

---


\(^{54}\) Ibid.
it is then seen as that which is out of place and will never be in place. Sin does not fit in anywhere in creation, nor does it have any potential and right of actualization. The idea that God directly wills moral or any other evil is manifestly absurd. In response to the school of thought which advocates the idea that God is responsible for sin, Cowburn states that God knew undoubtedly the potential of His creation - so does that make Him responsible? He does not positively will moral evil or sin, nor is He responsible for it. The Bible tells of God’s commandments not to sin, of His anger at the people when they do, His severe judgement on sinners, and the punishment inflicted on them. God is totally opposed to sin.

Hegel, a closet pantheist, held that all apparent evil is really good in the making; it looks and feels bad only because its character as good is yet incomplete. Process theologians picture their finite God struggling against evil in the hope of mastering it someday. Biblical theists reason differently. Affirming with Augustine that evil is a lack of good or a good gone wrong, they begin by agreeing that:

---


56 Process Theology is the Theological System that is derived from the text that reality is a process of becoming, not a static universe of objects.
1. Pain though it hurts, is often not really evil. Pain can purge, refine and ennoble character. Pain may thus be a gift and a mercy.

2. Virtue (choosing good) is only possible where vice (choosing evil) is also possible. Though not sin’s author, God created a possibility of sin by creating the possibility of righteousness.

3. Moral growth and maturity are only possible when the consequences of action are calculable. God means this world to be a school for moral growth as frustrations through miscalculations and natural events are inevitable. We mature morally through coping with them. Beyond the point in theodicy, speculations intrude.

The Protestant Reformation brought a reaffirmation of the Augustinian position on sin and grace. Martin Luther⁵⁷ argued that sin is so entrenched in human nature that the law cannot really guide one in the way of righteousness but can only serve to confirm one’s sin. Justification is by grace through faith alone.⁵⁸ Luther in his treatise denotes how grace not

---

⁵⁷ Martin Luther (1483-1546) Entered the Augustinian Order in 1505, ordained priest in 1507. He addressed the great central theological themes—grace, sin, faith, the theology of the Cross—and God’s righteousness.

⁵⁸ Grace: The Biblical words translated ‘grace’ are ‘hen’ (Hebrew) ‘charis’ (Greek) Grace is usually God giving Himself for man.
only justifies but also sanctifies the sinner. For him, the divine scriptures deal with our sin in two ways, in one way through the law of God, and in another way through God’s Gospel. Karl Barth’s theodicy extends itself upon the belief that Christ is not only God’s son but He is also a man who is not a sinner. 59

He is true man in the absolute sense, and it is in His humanity that we have to recognize true human nature in the condition and character in which it was willed and created by God. Barth then states that when we inquire about the true nature of the man and seek an answer in terms of the unity of man and humanity, we are on firm ground. For, the human nature of Christ has not ceased to be true and has not ceased to show man’s true nature to us.

Rienhold Niebuhr, also explores how it can be that people are so radically capable of evil while yet remaining both human beings and God’s good creatures. Niebuhr develops a view of persons as finite individuals existing in dialectical tensions between their own determinate limitedness and their own capacities for self transcendence. Analysing this view Martin Luther revealed a two-fold evil. (i) inward (ii) outward. Inward evil is

59 Karl Barth (1886-1868) is regarded to be the most significant theologian of the twentieth century. His works constitutes one of the major critical responses to the Enlightenment with a significant place in the intellectual history of Europe.
something we inflict on ourselves. It is sin and the corruption of nature. Outward evil is something God inflicts. It is wrath, death and being accursed. It is often difficult to recognize these various aspects as evil. The Gospel deals with sin to remove it, and follows the law. The law introduces us to sin and it does this so that we may seek to be freed, for the Gospel also teaches and preaches two things: i) Righteousness, and ii) The grace of God. Grace produces peace of heart until a man is healed from corruption. It is a greater good than righteousness. It is the outward good; God's favor, and the opposite of wrath. Faith on the other hand is the gift and inward good which purges the sin to which it is opposed. These are two goods of the Gospel against the two evils of the law, the gift on account of sin, and grace on account of wrath.

In the wake of enlightenment and criticism of the classic doctrine of sin, there were those who sought to recover its essential meaning while recognizing that certain of its features were no longer credible. The Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard, was one of these, dismissing the historicity of the fall, yet taking the existential condition of sin with utmost seriousness. In 1848, he stated "the self has a conception of God and yet does not will as He

---

wills, and thus is disobedient”.

For Him, sin is before God in despair not to will to be oneself or before God in despair to will to be oneself. Kierkegaard states that the opposite of sin is not virtue, but the opposite of sin is faith and this is one of the most decisive definitions for all Christianity. From Augustine on, Christian theologians have tended to conceive of evil in anthropological terms, that is, as sin or as punishment for sin. Modern science, has however, brought to light conditions of evil on a much more broader scale. There is a corresponding need for theology to rethink the meaning of evil, and in particular the relationship of natural evil to the good intention of God. Austin Farrer, a twentieth century Anglican provides an imaginative approach to this problem. The world is not a system, it is an interaction of systems innumerable. Thus it is not possible to state that evil is a single system, which can be banished from the world. Philosophers when called upon to define the physical are inclined to proceed continuously and sceptically-they feel that we do not know, in any absolute sense, what the physical thing is, we must be content to discover how it can

---


62 “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Romans. 14:23).

63 Austin Farrer (1904-68) His philosophical theology has roots in both substance-philosophy of medieval scholasticism and modern metaphysics of action and clarification based on linguistic usage.
most usefully be diagrammatized in our formulae.⁶⁴ Such approaches are useless in theology, the theological question is not, how convenient for us to think, but what God has made; what sort of an existence they have; what sort of creatures in themselves they are.

In spite of the various theodicies that prevail, there are opinions formulated upon the wholesome goodness of God.⁶⁵ Being a father God, He commands us to obey Him. We ought to obey Him because He is good and omniscient. His knowledge of effects and consequences will make Him a better moral guide than anyone else. The mystery of evil is viewed in myriad ways even from a theological point of view. It is in Charles Journet’s words immense and in a sense timeless.⁶⁶ John Stott states that even in the aura of the crucifixion, what looks like the defeat of goodness by evil on the Cross, is also the defeat of evil by goodness.⁶⁷ He states that the victim became the victor and the Cross is still the throne from which He rules the world. The conquest is extended as the Church goes out on its mission in the power of the spirit to preach a Christ crucified and to summon

⁶⁴ From Austine Farrer’s philosophical theology.
people to repent and to believe in Him. The second coming of Christ will depict the destruction of all evil dominion, authority and power and the triumph of Christ. The Christian challenge is to resist the devil by standing firm in the faith.  

One can state thus, that the doctrine of God and the doctrine of sin, in other words the concept of good and evil, are in ways more than one, aspects which are at the center of theological debates especially in the second half of this century. While the doctrine of God and good is dependent upon what God is revealed to be, upon God’s self-disclosure attested in the Bible, the doctrine of sin is the negative presupposition of the whole of Christian faith and theology. However in reaction to the traditional orthodox doctrines of the fall and original sin the liberal theology of the last century played down the doctrine of sin. John A.T. Robinson states in an essay on ‘The Revolution In Ethics’ that prayer and ethics are simply the inside and outside of the same thing. From the Christian point of view, they could be defined as “meeting the unconditional in the conditioned in unconditional personal relationship”.  

No sanction in the Gospel proclaims that the Christian ethic

---

is for the 'the religious only'. It is for all men, based upon the nature of
man, and for all men universally.

Love or 'agape' sums up the character of God. It follows then, that the
most important of God's ethical commands is that people should reflect
this 'agape' in their lives. It is a love which reaches beyond family,
friendship and nation. The Biblical account of creation sets out some
significant theological truths about mankind which determine Christian
ethical principles. However, it is the doctrine of sin which provides the most
powerful analysis of life as we know it today. Man's rebellion against God
resulted in the blurring of ethical knowledge, the weakening of the will to do
right, the complicating of moral judgement. Sin weakens the will. This
accounts for the presence of a strong penal element in Biblical ethics. In a
sinful world, ethical issues become extraordinarily complex. Situations arise
where every possible line of action is less than ideal. The Bible accepts and
reflects this dilemma by advocating the choice of the lesser evil.

Against this sombre background, God's redeeming intervention provides an escape

---

70 The commonest Hebrew word for love is 'aheb'. In Greek, there are several
words used 'storge' (natural affection), philia (as between friends), 'Eros' (sexual
yet even philosophical). Agape was used to describe the love of God as revealed
in Christ. It seeks the highest good because its source is God and its pattern is
Christ.

71 Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright ed. A New Dictionary of Theology
(Leicester: 1980).
route from moral despair. Ethically, the Bible's doctrine of redemption makes four special contributions.

I. It recalls fallen men and women to know God and follow His example.

II. It provides a stimulus to do right and avoid wrong.

III. It sets goals for moral living.

IV. It points to a source of supernatural power to strengthen the failing human will.

The kingdom ethic is also a present reality and the in dwelling Holy Spirit produces His fruit in the believer's life.\textsuperscript{72} There is no automatic triumphalism in this aspect of the Bible's teaching, but there is a clear promise of potential. Biblical ethics does not stop at setting out certain principles and at analysing the effects of sin. It points believers to redemptive power that can transform their lives and life styles. The Christian Gospel and its ethics carve an almost impossible niche in the contemporary world. As stated earlier, the belief that God is good is

\textsuperscript{72} Taken from Ferguson and Wright's text.
impossible to anyone who looks at life as it really is unless Christ becomes their image. The experience of evil and suffering is the main decay of religious faith. Real freedom means the possibility of evil as well as good. To some the very origin of evil remains a mystery. The Christian answer to evil points to a good man in whose mouth was no guile, was crucified, who died but rose again. It calls a wholly new world into being. God means this world to be a school for a moral growth; frustrations through miscalculations and natural events are inevitable. We mature morally through coping with them. John Hick posits universal salvation arguing that nothing less can justify all the evil that God for soul-building purposes permits in His world. Advocates of the free will defence speculate that God cannot prevent humans from sinning without destroying their humanity. Some Calvinists envisage God permissively decreeing sin for the purpose of self-display in justly saving from their sin and justly damning others for and in their sin. But none of this is Biblically certain. The safest way in theodicy then, is to leave God's permission of sin and moral evil as a mystery, and to reason from the good achieved in redemption.

In this fallen world, God alone has taken the responsibility to save individuals and to renew the cosmos. The Cross denotes how much He

loves the sinner and induces responsive love in all whom He calls to faith. God enables believers as forgiven sinners to relate to all evil in a way that brings forth good; both moral and spiritual growth and wisdom, so that facing evil becomes for them a value creating a way of life. In heaven, where the full fruit of Christ’s redemption will be enjoyed, earth’s evils will in retrospect seem trivial. Through God’s sovereign goodness evil is overcome; not theoretically so much as practically in human lives.74 This unspeculative, confessional, pastoral theodicy leaves with God the secret things, justifies and glorifies God for what is revealed, calls forth wonder and worship, making Christians declare that whatever it be God is in the right.