

**ISLAMIC THEOLOGY AND THEODICY- AN EVALUATION OF THE
CONCEPT OF EVIL IN ISLAM**

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**AN ORIGINAL ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
RELIGIONS, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY
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BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) HONOURS DEGREE IN RELIGIONS**

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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned hereby certify that this project work was carried out by **Christabel Merit ILELEJI with matriculation number ART2101152** in the Department of Religion, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City and that it is sufficient in both scope and content in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Art(B.A.) Degree in Religions.

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DEDICATION

To God Almighty, who in his awesome faithfulness grants me grace to complete this educational pursuit. To him I dedicate this study.

Finally, I dedicate this project to every student who strives daily to balance faith and academics, believing that with God, all things are possible.

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the concept of evil within the framework of Islamic theology and theodicy. It explores how Islam reconciles the existence of evil with belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God (Allah). The research analyzes classical and contemporary Islamic perspectives on moral and natural evil, emphasizing the theological explanations offered by key schools of thought such as the Ash‘arites, Mu‘tazilites, and Sufis. Central to the discourse is the Qur’ānic understanding of divine wisdom (ḥikmah), human free will (ikhtiyār), predestination (qadar), and the ultimate purpose of trials and suffering as instruments for moral growth and spiritual purification. By engaging both philosophical reasoning and scriptural exegesis, the work evaluates whether Islamic theodicy provides a coherent and satisfying response to the problem of evil. The study concludes that while Islam does not eliminate the mystery of suffering, it offers a distinctive synthesis that underscores divine justice, human accountability, and eschatological hope.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

One of the most argued themes in religion and also the universe as a whole is “Evil”, the concept of evil, the causes and different views and approaches towards this problem “Evil”. Both philosophers and religious scholars have tried to proffer solution to this problem with the evaluation of its concept but all to no avail. There seems to be conflicts between the “theist” (those that believe in God and His existence) and the “atheist” (those that do not believe in God) on the concept and the problem of evil. The Atheist sees this theme as an opportunity to disbelieve in God while the theists look at it the other way round (Inagbor, 2006).

This work therefore is set to study this concept of evil, the problem and its causes from the perspective of the living religion of Islam and how Islam sees this concept. Also, the concept of evil among few selected world religions and renowned philosophers shall be evaluated vis a vis the position of Islam.

1.2 Statement of Problem

It is no news that evil exists in the universe and the problems facing man as a result of evil. We see it every time we switch on our television set to watch the news update, starting from the Nepal earthquake which happened on the 25th of April this year, landed properties worth millions of naira was destroyed and thousands of lives were lost. Recently in June, one of the deadliest earthquakes happened in Malaysia rendering thousands of

people homeless, dead and thousands injured. These are only few of the evidence to show that really evil exists in the world and it is a problem not just to man alone but to everything that relates with man in the universe.

The causes of these problems are farfetched as there is no convincing solution to these problems where scientists see this problem as a result of man's daily activity in the universe, most theologians see it as a sign of the end time fast approaching.

Furthermore, most of the world religions are of the view that they are sign of the world coming to an end. Islam which is one of the world living religions and one of the world's most populous and respected religion, see this problem of evil as a result of man's disobedience to the will of Allah and thereby urging its adherents to worship and serve Allah fervently in order to attain paradise after death.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically analyse Islamic theology and the theodicy; while the objectives are:

1. to assess the position of Islamic theology to the concept of evil.
2. to critically evaluate the solutions of evil in the universe according to Islamic theology.
3. to present the basic tenets and principles of Islamic theology.
4. to assess the relationship between Islamic theology, theodicy and other religions as well as philosophers on the concept of evil in the universe.

5. to present the study of a modern universe according to Islamic theology with the two fundamental schools of Islamic philosophy on the concept of evil.

1.3 Methodology of the Study

The methods applied in this work are historical, philosophical, phenomenological, and critical, with the view of representing an impressive evaluation of the problem of evil and Islamic stake on it as one of the living religion of the world and trying to solve the problem of evil as it affects man. Work of religious theorists and great philosophers, journals and books are used as reference materials.

1.4 Scope of Study

The scope of the study is not limited to the Islamic theology alone but also includes the ideas of other philosophers like St. Augustine and Teilhard de Chardin and also other world religions. These are studied for basic comparism with the Islamic position on Evil.

1.5 Significance of Study

The significance of this study is for basic comparism with the Islamic position on the concept of evil which holds that there is no absolute evil in Islam, as a fundamental universal principle that is independent from and equal with good in a dualistic sense. Thus, a moral Muslim must use his natural instinct along with Allah's guidance to make a choice.

1.6 Clarification of terms

1.6.1 *Evil*

Many philosophers have tried to give a definition to this term amongst which are St. Augustine of Hippo, the Stoics and St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Augustine found philosophical justification for Christianity in metaphysics of Plato, as reinterpreted by the

Neo-Platonist Plotinus. St. Augustine was able to make philosophically intelligible to himself the concept of a transcendent realm, a realm of being beyond the spatio-temporal universe that contains the source of all that is real and good (Brooke & Bruder, 2002). Evil occurs when we fail to live up to our true nature: what we could be and should be. So, behaving like an animal, for example, is to fall short of the qualities of a human being. So evil is an imperfection, an absence of goodness when we turn away from our true nature and God is therefore absolved from responsibility (Mike & Cluett, 2001). St. Augustine sees evil as a non being because it was not created by God as a privation.

St. Thomas Aquinas defines evil from a philosophical framework for Christian thought that was essentially Platonic; Aquinas says that the good for each kind of thing is defined with reference to the function or the nature of that kind of thing. In the case of humans, goodness is happiness. Aquinas was also of the opinion that the natural or moral law, which is God's eternal law as it is applied to man on earth, is apprehended by us in the dictates of our conscience and practical reasoning which guides us to our natural goal, happiness on earth, according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2002). The Stoics believed that it is only natural for a person to seek such a life. The Stoics were much influenced by the cynics, who went out of their way to find hardship, acquired the ability to remain untroubled by the pains and disappointments of life. The Stoics thought there was some sense in this. It occurred to them that troubledness or serenity is a desirable state indeed.

The stoics, however, had a metaphysical justification for their ethics. All that occurs, the Stoics believed, occurs in accordance with natural law, which they equated with reason. Natural law, they said, is vital force that activates or energizes all things. It follows that:

- i. Whatever happens is the inevitable outcome of logic of the universe.
- ii. Whatever happens, happens with a reason and therefore is for the best.

So, according to the stoics' philosophy, you can do nothing to alter this course of event because they have been fixed by the law of nature. Do not struggle against the inevitable, the Stoics said. Instead understand that what is happening is for the best, and accept it. (Mike & Cluett, 2001)

Finally, the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary defines evil; having a harmful effect on people; morally bad. It went further to say that it is a force that causes wicked or bad things to happen; wicked behavior: eternal struggle between good and evil, and its existence in the universe, which underpins the ability of evil to control the universe as a force. (*The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2002).

1.6.2 Islam

Islam according to the *Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary*, (2002) can be defined as; the Muslim religion, based on belief in one God and revealed through Muhammad as the prophet of Allah.

The Islamic theology emphasizes the absolute power and sovereignty of God in the universe. Everything in the universe is under absolute control of God as creator, hence man

must submit to the absolute will of Allah for Islamic theology therefore, “evil is part of God’s purpose in the universe and it must have a positive role in the scheme of things according to God’s plan. The Islamic theology sees sufferings, pains, misfortunes and all sorts of odds in life as a test of faith in God. (Mike, A. Cluett, 2001)

Thus, the word Islam is derived from the Arabic word “*Asalam*” meaning peace, purity, submission and obedience that is; submission to the will of Allah in total obedience to his law only by this can one achieve true peace and enjoy everlasting purity (Al-Hakimi, 2017). Evil is a kind of instrument used by God to test if one’s faith is unshakable. This means too that evil is under the sovereign control of God, for nothing is outside his control. What is termed or called evil must be part of Allah’s purposes in the universe and it must have a positive role in the scheme of things according to God’s plan. (Alizamani & Sadathashemi, 2014)

1.6.3 Theodicy

Theodicy originated from two Greek words “*theos*” meaning God and “*dike*” meaning justice. Theodicy is the reasonable justification of the nature, structure and goal of evil in an order of things considered to be created by God, considered as the transcendent author of righteousness and all good things (an eternal, absolute object or “being” before all things). (Al-Qawl Al-Mufid, 2014).

Instead of considering evil as a mystery, theodicy tries to explain the reasons for its presence and seeks to unveil its principles. In this way, the civilizations of goodwill are in possession of the tools to make (if possible) constructive use of evil, or to avoid it

altogether. All handlings with evil have to be from the side of understanding and true justice always gives the last word to compassion (Al-Raja, 2020).

1.6.4 Islamic Theology

Theology according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2002), can be defined as; the study of religion and beliefs; a set of religious beliefs. Theology is called “*Aqiqah*” or “*Aqidah*” which is an Islamic term meaning “Creed” or “belief”. It emphasizes reason and rational thought and inquiry and that the Qur’an, albeit the word of Allah, was created rather than uncreated, which would develop into one of the most contentious questions in Islamic theology.

Islamic belief on the concept of evil is that, everything comes from Allah, whether it is perceived as good or bad by individuals and things which are either disasters or illnesses or caused by humanity’s freewill to disobey Allah’s orders.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAM

2.1 Pre-Islamic Arabian

Before the advent of Muhammad (SAW) and the living religion of Islam, the whole of Arabian Peninsula and indeed the whole world was plunged in serious darkness and this period, was called the period of ignorance. During this period, some members of the society could read and write, but in spite of this, they were a lot of annual seasonal poetical fare or display where laurel were granted to whosoever emerged as a poet of the year with their poem written and suspended on kha'bah, yet they committed a lot of sins against God and crimes against humanity.

Hence, Nicholson (1969) painted a picture of the situation thus: “one may conclude that *Jululiyah* in the world true sense applies to the pre-Islamic Arab barbarous practices that savage temper by which idolatry is distinguished from Islam; the haughty spirit, the tribal pride and the endless tribal tends, the cult of revenge and all the other pagan characteristics which Islam was destined to reform”.

Also, before Islam, the peninsular was made up of numerous tribal principalities. Owing to lack of any political institution and constituted authority or government in the peninsular, there were perpetual conflict and warfare among the tribes.

Arabs of the *Jaluliyah* period were essentially known for their polytheism, raiding and plundering, infanticide, gambling, adultery and fornication, internecine, warfare and

tribal tends, favoritism and nepotism borne out of tribal loyalty, brigandage survival of the fittest, anarchy, intoxicant, divination by arrow, slavery, usury, vengeance etc. which was later censored by Islam and this was the reason why Muhammad (SAW) was seriously persecuted. (Al-Razi, 2014)..

Furthermore, Arabs of the Jaluliyah period were equally notable for some few virtues like bravery, forbearance, loyalty, hospitality and horsemanship as well as brotherhood based on tribalism.

The social life of the Arabs during the period of ignorance was of two classes: *AhlHadr* – that is, the civilized Arabs or the dwellers of towns and cities as well as villages and *AhlBad'u'* or the *Badions* – that is the nomads who loved in tents and wandered over the desert in search of pasture for their flocks of cattle. The town dwelling Arabs on the other hand used themselves with commerce, agriculture, craft and animal husbandry. They engaged in caravan trade and carried merchandise from Persia, and India to Syria and vice versa. They excelled all through the world in horsemanship as their horses, asses and camels gained a worldwide reputation of being the best breed. The virtue most cherished by the pre-Islamic Arabs were bravery in battle or in the face of trial and tribulations, patience in misfortune, loyalty to ones fellow tribesmen, generosity to the needy and the poor and resolute in revenge. (Alston, 2018).

In centuries, before the advent of Islam, Arabian Peninsula was a great center of idolatry and idolaters. Through, both Judaism and Christianity claimed a considerable following, yet it was predominated by paganism. The pre-Islamic Arabs regarded women

as non-entity or better still chattels to be bought and disposed off at will. Their belief was that women were a burden as they could not take up arms and fight at battles. Some of them buried alive or dead because of flimsy reasons. Whoever amongst them was allowed to live was looked down upon with contempt as they were denied the right of inheritance whereas they were to be inherited along with estate of their husband. They denied naked on the courts and chambers of the monarch for entertainment of the monarch and those of his courtiers. The Arabs of the days of ignorance were addicted to women, wine and wealth passionately. They were also engrossed in gambling so much that they could gamble with their wives and children. (Al-Zamakhsharī, 2019).

To the Arabs, vengeance was considered as an obligation which should be pursued with zeal and vigor whether on one's behalf or any member of ones kinsfolk when a person is killed or murdered, he is believed to belong for vengeance and be thirsty for the blood of the murderer. If the vengeance is not promptly carried out the soul of the victim according to their belief will appear crying out "give me blood until the murder is avenged" (Rahim, 1981).

Politically, the Arabs lived in the same country, essentially belonged to the same race and spoke common language, yet they were not a united state or nation. The various tribes constituting the nation were always at loggerhead. This was the prevailing situation as there was no constituted authority or rather organized government to enforce law and justice. (Anslem, 1965).

Several clans formed a tribe and at the head of a tribe was a *shahk* or *sayyid* elected via a progress delegation within the elders who are collectively referred to as *Ahl-al-Ikhtiyar*. people who were old enough to have proper sense of justice or sense of decision. He was not a sovereign in the true sense of the word but the first among the equals as executive power was not vested in him. He was just a figure head who followed rather than led the opinion of the tribe (Philips,1980).

2.2 The Origin of Islam

1. According to the teachings of Islam, the religion of Islam was founded by Allah; it is therefore a cumulative effect of all the teachings of all prophets sent by Allah which got to its Zenith in the prophethood of Muhammad (Qur'an 5:3).

The origin of Islam can be dated as far back in 610AD when Muhammad was forty. He claimed to have had a revelation during which he was told to recite (a word which in Arabic is Qur'an and from which the sacred book of the Islamic religion derived its name) (Omogbe, 1993) One night in the fortieth year of his life, when he was deeply immersed in meditation and yearning for the truth in cave of mount Hira because he usually passes several nights and days at a stretch in this state of sober reflections to ponder on how the prevalent *Jahiliyyah* or period of ignorance can be changed, Jubril (Angel Gabriel) appeared to him and said: "Read O Muhammad", the prophet replied " I can't read" where upon Gabriel pressed him so tightly that he thought his breathe was going out of him, this was repeated three times, at the third time, Gabriel then asked him to "read in the name of your Lord who created you" Prophet Muhammad (SAW) then read after angel Gabriel.

This was the first five verses of Saratul Alaq (the chapter of Clot) and that was his call to Prophethood. This first vision was followed by several others in the course of which the content of the Qur'an is believed to have been revealed to Muhammad by Angel Gabriel.

However, in the fourth year of his mission he received a divine command to invite all his people to this faith. This he did with the invitation of the Quraysh to a meeting on mount Safa where he disclosed to them his invocation as a prophet and declared to them the intents of his new faith. He condemned and explained the folly of idolatry, pointing out the vices and anti-social practices which were endemic amongst them. Warning them of the terrible blazing fire of hell and untold chastisement which await the idolaters in the hereafter and invite them to adhere to his new religion. This invitation caused a problem with the people who left with an indication that the battle line has been drawn. This led to opposition from the people of Mecca because of religious economic, political and social reasons as they have benefited from the period of ignorance which led Muhammad to migrate to Abyssinia and also after much persecution, he had his followers migrated from Mecca to Medina in 622CE (Aretha, 2015).

It was during this migration to Medina that he was given a rousing welcome and this was the place where the first mosque was built and this migration was what gave rise to the Islamic religion. Muhammad later returned victorious to his native city Mecca and eventually died in 632CE (Aristotle, 1999).

2.2.1 Teachings of Islam

Islamic teachings encompass every aspect of life that is, it is not just a religion, but a way of life built upon five pillars which are referred to as faith and duties as the first while the rest four are duties expected of those who profess the faith (Kannel,& Sheikh 2019)

Pillars of Islam (Qawaid-ul-Islam):

- i. Iman – faith or belief in God
- ii. Al-salat – prayer
- iii. Al-sawn-fasting in the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of Islamic calendar
- iv. Al-zakat – Islamic tax or charity
- v. Al-Hajj – Pilgrimage to Mecca and its precinct

2.2.3. Islamic Theology

Since Islam is a way of life as comprehensive as it is, it therefore has its philosophy of life and world view and the Islamic was world view has six basic principles; Al-Tawheed, Al-Risalah, Belief in scriptures/divine books, Al-Ihsan (Destiny and Freewill), Yawmuddhin (the day of judgment), and Akhirah (life after death) (Qur'an 3:159)

1. Al-Tawheed (oneness of God): this refers to Islamic concept of God whose unity, essence and existence is not compromise able. This is closely connected with his relationship with his creatures. The position of Islam is that there cannot be a design without a designer (Nadwi,2021) and in this regard, the heaven and the earth could not have evolved by themselves not by a “big bang” as we are made to understand.

So, the truth about the universe uphold by Islam is that Allah is its architect (Tawheed, 1979) created them all and what they contained nurtures and cherishes them. Allah created everything for the service of man who was the last of all to be created. While man is to serve God, every other thing is made subservient to man so as to make it easy for him the service of his Lord. Also, Allah sent man guidance over his mission on earth as it would not go well for man to be left alone to go in darkness, hence the scriptures that was sent to man to be his manual of life.

2. Al-Risalah (Belief in prophet/messengers): it refers to the messengers sent by God to man. Since man is ignorant of his caring to earth and since Allah created man for a purpose, the need therefore arise that man should be made to have a correct understanding of the purpose for which he had been created. This is the reason why Allah had been sending inspiration through his angels to his chosen ones (the prophets or messengers) (*Qur'an* 35:24) Islam teaches that as man needs food and water to grow physically, man equally needs the divine guidance of Allah (*Hidayyah*) for his spiritual development and growth as well and it is referred to as spiritual diet (*Qur'an* 33:40) This is borne out of the fact that man is composed of matter and spirit and so the two components should be nurtured together. The messengers sent are said to be 124,000 and it is obligatory to believe in all of them in general whether we know their names or not (*Qur'an* 4:164) Allah has made mandatory recognizing them all, for they are like a chain whose rings are connected

to one another. A person who acknowledges some of the messengers and denies the others as though he has broken their chain (Al-lahim, ,1991)

3. Belief in Scriptures (Divine books): the belief in the divine scriptures is one of the articles of faith. And it is believed that they are revealed and sent down by Allah mentioned in the Qur'an. There are about 104,000 books sent and revealed by Allah but only five are in existence which are the Tawrat (the torah of Moses), the Zabur (psalm of David), the Injil (the gospel of Isa), the Suhuf Ibrahim(the scrolls of Abraham) and the Qur'an sent down to Muhammad (PBH) (Al-lahim, ,1991).

Apart from the Qur'an, the other books are not in their original languages and are distorted and mixed with human words as they have been in existence for many centuries. The holy Qur'an was given to prophet Muhammad (PBH) who is not the founder of Islam but rather a messenger of God (Qur'an, 20:20,5:3)

According to Qur'an chapter five verses three Allah says "I have perfected for you, your religion and completed my favour upon you and chosen for you, Islam as a way of life". Every revealed book was sent to man as a solution and guidance to the problems of evil in the universe and man's consciousness. The Qur'an contains the fundamental teachings of Islam and every true Muslim must believe in these holy books.

4. Belief in Destiny and Freewill (*Al-Ihsan*): the destiny of man is to be obedient and submissive to Allah but Allah has given man the freewill to dominate other creatures and spread throughout the universe. He does not force man to obey or

disobey and the fact that Allah is all-knowing does not mean that man do not have freewill . Man has the choice to either make or mar his life which brings about *Taqdir Aqiqi and Tadir Maliki*. (Asad, 2018).

Taqdir Aqiqi is not manouvoured because man cannot decide the circumstances surrounding his birth, death, color, family race, pigmentation of his skin, religion, etc. and the destiny of the tongue is to speak but if it speaks evil, it will be punished ⁽¹⁸⁾. While *Taqdir Maliki* means that man has the freewill to do whatever he wants with his life, whether to obey or disobey. To marry or not, to have children or not to have. Man is made up of 50% destiny and 50% freewill. Man is responsible for what he is knowledgeable about and has the choice to do what is right and be rewarded or to do what is wrong and be punished. The destiny of the mouth is to drink but when a man drinks poison, God will not be blamed and he will bear the prawn (Augustine,).

When he fails carryout his responsibilities given to him by Allah, he will be reduced to the lowest of the lowest. In other for man to be able to differentiate from good and evil, Allah sent messengers and divine books to give man guidance to do what is right

Yawmuddhin (the Belief in the Day of Judgment): the day of judgment is the day of reckoning, accountability, and sorting people out. Man will be held accountable for their deeds. (Azouzu, 2011). He who does good will be rewarded and he who does evil will suffer the consequences. Everyone will be held responsible for his own deeds after Allah the exalted will resurrect the creatures once again. It is the day when man's deeds will be reviewed by the Angels on the day of reckoning The ultimate purpose of believing in the

day of judgment is to make believers make vigorous efforts to achieve good deeds and discourage others from committing imperious deeds and acts of disobedience and the results of the tests and afflictions in the world will become evident in the life after death (Az-Zuhd,1985).

Akhirah (life after death): life on earth is meant to be a preparation for the life after death. Life is meaningless if people of good actions are not rewarded and people of bad conduct are not punished at the Day of Judgment. Man will be rewarded for their good deeds by admitting them to “*Janah*” paradise and wrongdoers will be punished in “*Annar*” hell fire Therefore, death is not the end of life rather it is a borderline between the short transitional life and eternal life (Bahreini, 2011).

2.3 Islamic Concept of Theodicy

The term theodicy literally means “Justifying God”, the vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil. From the Islamic point of view God did create evil, but it is man who does mischief and spreads corruption on earth. Abu said: “who created Satan?” and He replied: “glory be to allah! Is there any creator other than Allah? Allah created Satan and he created good and created evil, I seek the protection of Allah’s perfect words from the evil of whatever He has created...”, “...but if good comes to them, they say, “this is from God, and evil befalls them, they say “this is from you” “all things are from Allah

Everything that exists has to be created; it cannot be that something exists but was not created. “God created the earth and the skies and everything in between them in six

days...” Evil exists but people have the option of not doing evil. They both exist but there is no need to be involved in them, as the act of doing bad is an option by itself. People are judged by the good and evil that they do, making it a choice for the people to do it and not making it a compulsion for them to do either good or evil. “So whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it”. (Qur’an 99:7-8). This verse refers to the judgment of good and evil in the hereafter. Evil and good both measure down to the atom’s weight and God says explicitly that he does not change people until they change themselves. Evil exists on earth no doubt hence it was created and God is the creator of everything that we can see, feel, and even what we do not know or don’t yet know. Does God spread corruption? No it is humans that do it and not God as mentioned in the Qur’an, God does not like corruption and He does not like wrong doers but man does evil as a choice.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. GENERAL APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

3.1. Evil as a Reality

Since the beginning of time, mankind has murdered, tortured, raped and pillaged. Only recently, the technological revolution which has exposed our capacity for evil with the advent of internet scams and other vices as well as good. This is not only confined to human activities, cats will torture their prey; foxes in a frenzy of blood lust will slaughter chickens that they do not eat; dogs naturally fight; and plants crowd out and exterminate competitors. According to the Ahmadiyya understanding of Islam, evil does not have a positive existence in itself and is merely the lack of good, just as darkness is the result of lack of light (Tola,2014).

3.2. Forms of Evil

There are two main types of evil, namely, natural evil and moral evil

Natural evil is when people have little or no control over certain events that affect man and his environment, and it is a fundamental feature of the world. It is independent of human activities and it is often referred to as natural disasters such as famines, earthquakes, floods, etc. Natural evil may be conceived of as simple part of nature and not evil at all.

Moral evil arise from human activities whether it is individuals, groups or political systems. It is sometimes described as the “fall of man”, e.g. foolishness, selfishness etc. this type of evil, covers the willful acts of human beings such as murder, rape, incest etc.

Furthermore, evil exists in the universe with nobody getting to know how it came into existence. However, there are those who think that it may be possible to accept that God accepts moral evil and such evil may have a purpose of explanation consist with the existence of a supreme being but that there could be no good reason for God to have natural evil in the universe (Philip, 2001).

3.3. St. Augustine's View on the Problem

St. Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430) was a Christian theologian. He sees evil as a privation, since God can only create goods, God did not create evil and therefore evil is not a thing or a substance. Evil is instead a lack of goodness or a privation, so God created health and lack of health is sickness. this lack of health St. Augustine says is due to our own choices (Philip, 2001).

As regards moral evil, Augustine says that it has no other source beyond the free-will of man who makes an evil choice. So, the origin and the cause of moral evil is man's misuse of his freewill by making an evil choice. If you try to find the efficient cause of this choice, there is none to be found, for nothing causes an evil will, since it is the evil will itself which causes an evil act. (Brooke & Kenneth, 2012)

3.4. Teilhard De Chardin on the Problem of Evil

The evolutionist philosopher sees evil in the world as part of the evolutionary process of the world. For the world is an evolutionary world which is gradually developing and evolving through a long process. He sees evil as an essential disorder, which is inevitable in an evolutionary system it is impossible to have order without passing through

disorder. According to him, the world is still being made; it is still being created through the evolution process. It is not by accident that there is evil in the world but by the very structure of the system until the world gets to its goal, which Teilhard de Chardin call “Omega point” which is the point of perfection.

Teilhard de Chardin feels the presence of evil in the world is a finished product and not to those who see it as a developing and evolving world which has to encounter disorder (evil) in order to overcome it and attain order. You cannot have order without first encountering and overcoming disorder. (Bhaktivedanta, 1969).

3.5. Hinduism and the Problem of Evil

The term Hinduism comes from the Persian word Hindu, meaning “Indian”, and thus Hinduism is the system of belief and way of life of the Indian people. Actually, Hinduism is a western term for the religious beliefs and practices of the majority of the people in India.

Hindus themselves call their religion “the eternal law”, which means both the divine law of the universe and the moral law of the human race. Hinduism has no founder, and it does not depend upon the existence of any one God who created the world or who intervenes in the affairs of man. In fact, one can be a good Hindu and worship a number of gods or no god at all.

The main desire of a Hindu is not to become a perfect human being on earth or a happy dweller in heaven, but to become united with Brahman, the eternal, universal spirit. In Brahman there are no differences or separations, no time and space, no good and evil,

no joy and sorrow, no desires or any kind. Again, Brahman, there is no sense of individuality, but only pure being, consciousness and bliss. A man cannot achieve freedom from his sense of individuality and separatedness from the universe merely by living a life of goodness, charity and humility.

He can achieve it only completely changing his way of thinking and of seeing the world. This change cannot possibly be brought about in a single lifetime and thus Hindus believe in transmigration of souls from one life to another: the rebirth after death of a living being, as an animal or as a man or a woman in a status either happier or much less happy than that of his previous existence. That status is determined by Karma. Karma may be described as the sum of a person's thoughts and actions in all his previous lives. In each life, he changes his Karma for either better or worse.

The individual human being too is a manifestation of Brahman, as Hindus believe that the soul is identical with Brahman and not a separate individual entity. It is an illusion (Maya) for any man to consider himself as an individual entity, separate from Brahman. This illusion leads man to attach himself to illusionary material things and this is the cause of evil in the world. (Pecorino, 2012).

Furthermore, Hindus believe that man brings evil to himself by his illusion about himself and about the things in the world to which he attaches himself, thereby detaching himself from Brahman, the eternal, universal spirit.

3.6. Buddhism and the Problem of Evil

The founder of Buddhism is a Buddha. It came out from Hinduism. Buddha was born in Siddhartha Gantama around 567BC. In the town of Kapilavastu in India. Gautama was born a prince for his father was a ruler of the Kshatriya class. At the age of twelve, he was sent to be trained by the priest where he learnt Vedic philosophy. At the age of twenty-nine, Gautama took the life style that led him to enlightenment, as he decided to leave the royal court, to renounce worldly pleasures, worldly possessions and go into the desert in search of enlightenment. He accordingly left his wife, his son, the palace and went to the desert. Gautama achieved enlightenment as he sat down one day under a tree in a prolonged meditation. Gautama then became the Buddha the enlightened one. After which he began to preach to people, telling them the way to enlightenment, that is, the way to salvation. (Pecorino, 2012).

After his enlightenment, Buddha claimed to have discovered the cause of suffering in the world and how to put an end to it. His whole philosophy is centered on what he calls “the four noble truths” which are:

- i. There is suffering all over the world
- ii. Desire is the cause of suffering
- iii. Suffering can be stopped
- iv. It is by suppressing desire that suffering can be stopped.

The cause of suffering, according to Buddha, is man’s thirst or desire for permanence in an impermanent world, the desire to cling to the insubstantial and illusory

things of this world. A world in which nothing is permanent, nothing is substantial. By seeking permanence in a world where everything is in a flux, man is going against the very system and nature of the world and this causes suffering. (Abubakre, 2017).

3.7. African Traditional Religion (A.T.R) Concept of Evil

African traditional religion has no founder, as it grew out of the cultures of the African people. It has no sacred scriptures like other religions due to the fact that the Africans (Black Africans) until recently had no art or writing. But it is a living religion which is handed down from good number of the African people still practice and live by it.

African traditional religion believes that there is only one God who is the absolute creator who created all things, including mankind. There are two worlds namely: the physical world or mortal men spirits and the spiritual world of those in the spirits. The two worlds interact, for those in the physical world pray to those in the world of the spirits for help and protection while those in the world of the spirits help and protect them in the physical world.

African traditional religion also believes that there some supernatural forces which can be trapped and used for good or evil. Certain persons are believed to have got access to these forces and manipulated it for evil. For example, some witches use these forces to do harm while others (e.g. medicine men) use them to help people. Evil is seen in African traditional religion as a punishment for sin. However, a sin can be cancelled when the appropriate sacrifice is offered and the necessary purification rites are performed. When

this is done, the sinner's condition begins to improve gradually until he is finally liberated from the evil afflicting him.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 THE CONCEPT OF EVIL IN ISLAM

Islam, the living religion of the Muslims emphasizes the absolute power and sovereignty of God in the universe. Everything in the universe is under the absolute control of Allah the creator. The concept of evil in Islam is that, evil is part of God's purposes in the universe which must have a positive role in God's plan of the universe.

Islam, is also of the belief that evil is as a result of the interference of "*shaytan*", the Arabic word for Devil. Shaytan tempts humans to choose evil and a moral Muslim must use his natural instincts along with the guidance sent by Allah to make a right choice. (Adamo, 2019).

4.1 The Teachings of Islamic Theology on the Concept of Evil

Islam teaches that evil such as sufferings, pains, misfortunes and all sorts of odds in life are a test of faith in God and also punishment for sins. However, Islam maintains that everything possible has to be done to alleviate suffering such as giving of alms and showing true repentance and abiding with the tenets of the Holy Qur'an and the teachings of the Hadith (Ahmed, 2020)

Therefore, justice must be served as there is always punishment given to any person or persons that committed evil. But either way, Islamic theology teaches that evil should be endured with patience and total submission to the will of Allah the creator of the universe and mankind.

4.2 Position of Some Schools of Islamic Theology on the Concept of Evil

There are two fundamental schools of Islamic theology and philosophy which are:

4.2.1 *Mu'tazilah*

The *mu'tazilah* literally means “those who withdraw themselves”. It originated from Basra at the beginning of the second century (2 CE). The movement was founded by Wasil bin ‘Ata’, its members were united in their conviction that it was necessary to give a rationally coherent account of Islamic beliefs. In addition to having an atomistic view of the universe, they generally held five theological principles; the unity of God, divine justice, the promise and threat, the intermediate position and the commanding of good and forbidding evil. The last principle is related to this study (Ajayi, 2012).

According to the Mu'tazilites, good and evil are objective and the moral values of actions are intrinsic to them and can be discerned by human reason. Hence, God's justice obliges him to act in accordance with the moral law. For instance, He is thus bound to stand by his promise to reward the righteous with paradise and his threat to punish the wicked with hell fire. More importantly, the reward and punishment which He metes out must be merited by man endowed with free will.

The Mu'tazilites pointed out that at the free will of human beings, evil was defined as something that stems from errors in human acts. Allah does nothing ultimately evil, and he demands not from any human to perform any evil act. If man's evil acts had been from the will of God, then punishment would have been meaningless as man performed God's will no matter what he did Mu'tazilites did not deny the existence of evil that goes beyond

human abuse and misuse of their free will granted to them by God. Al-Asad, M. (Trans.). (1980). They relied on the Islamic doctrine of “*taklif*”, “God does not order/give the soul of any of his creation, that which is beyond its capacity” (Qur’an 2:286) (Alagoa, 1996). This means that the existence of evil acts to prevent a far greater evil.

4.2.2 *Ash’ariyya*:

The Ash’arites was named after its founding thinker, Al-Ash’ari. It was the foremost theological school in Sunni Islam. It originated in reaction to the excessive rationalism of the Mu’tazilah. The Ash’arites insisted that reason must be subordinate to revelation. They are of the opinion that we know the difference between good and evil solely because of God’s revelation and not by the exercise of our own reason.

Allah makes the rules, whatever He decrees is just, yet God Himself is under no obligation: if He wished He could punish the righteous and admit the wicked into paradise. God creates in His creatures both power and choice; He creates in us, the actions which corresponds to these. Nevertheless, we are conscious of a difference between some actions in accordance with our own will and are held responsible for them (Al-Ghazali, 2000).

4.3 Consequences of Evil in Islamic Theology

The consequences of evil according to Islamic theology vary from one community to another depending on its spiritual level. However, there is punishment for any offender that has erred depending on the nature of the evil being committed.

Also, Islamic theology and theodicy that is derived from the Holy Qur’an and Hadith also talks eschatological (Last things or Ultimate things) which refers to the end of

this world and what will happen in the next world or hereafter. This is the final consequence of evil as it covers the death of human beings, their souls after their bodily death. The total destruction of this world, the resurrection of human souls, beatific vision, the final judgments of human deed, rewards and punishment (paradise and hell) (Al-Ghazali, 2020).

The places for those who have endured and submitted to Allah's will in the hereafter are to make paradise and for those that did not, their place is hell. As Islamic theology also teaches of paradise after death for the faithful Muslims to Allah's will and the Hadith, which is the teachings of the prophet and also the Holy Qur'an (Al-Ghazali, 2020).

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Evil in the world today remains a mystery as the more we try to find a solution, the greater the problem starting from the famous St. Augustine who sees evil as man's misuse of his freewill and the result of this is the moral evil, while Teilhard de Chardin the evolutionist philosopher was of the view that evil is part of the evolutionary process which the universe is going through until it gets to the state of perfection which he calls the Omega point. But even with these explanations, evil still exists and have no solution.

Furthermore, various world religions has its own concept of evil. Hinduism sees the causes of evil as the attachment to material things and until man detaches himself from material things, then will man overcome evil. Buddhism sees evil in the universe as the problem of man that is, man goes against the stream of things. Man desires illusion and seeks to cling to illusion which suffering is the end result which makes man the cause of evil in the universe.

For African traditional religion, the problem is seen as a punishment for sin, the idea of a completely innocent man suffering misfortune for no particular reason, is foreign to African traditional thought. It must be either himself or his parent that is guilty of some sin, either in this life or in his previous life because African traditional religion believes in reincarnation and that one can be punished as a result of the sins the person committed in the previous life, so also one be punished for the sins the parents committed.

Islam's take on the concept of evil is that evil is part of God's purposes in the universe and it must have a positive role in the scheme of things according to God's plan as Islamic religion emphasizes the absolute power and sovereignty of God in the universe. Everything in the universe is under the absolute control of God as creator, hence man must submit to the absolute will of Allah.

The Islamic theology and theodicy like the African traditional thought sees sufferings, pains, misfortune and all sorts of odds in life as a test of faith in God. In spite of both religious and philosophical approach to the concept of evil, it is still a problem in the universe today and will also be in time to come.

5.1. Summary

Evil in general context is taken as the absence or complete opposite of that which is ascribed as being good. Often, evil is used to denote profound immorality. In certain religious contexts, evil has been described as a supernatural force. Definitions of evil vary as does the analysis of its roots, motives and causes. However, elements that are commonly associated with evil involve unbalanced behaviors involving expediency, selfishness, ignorance or neglect.

This universe is a complete but complex entity, as it has been inconsistent as a result of the various things which have affected man and the universe which is evil. Its effects can be seen everywhere and every day in the world and man who is the most striking and important creature in nature who intricately disposed to survive try to find a solution to it.

Hence, he uses every method possible to look for a solution starting from religious, moral, ethical, spiritual means etc.

Islam on its own is the religion of Muslims which was founded by Allah and Muhammad was the last prophet after a series of prophets. The concept of evil in Islam, is the believe that evil is as a result of interference of “Shaytan”, the Arabic word for devil. Shaytan tempts humans to choose evil and moral Muslim must use his natural instinct along with guidance sent by God to make a right choice. The religion of Islam which is one of the world’s living religious tries to solve the problem of evil through the evolution of the concept of evil using Islamic theology and theodicy with the teachings of Islam which are found in the glorious Qur’an and also the views of philosophers and the two fundamental schools of Islamic philosophy i.e. Mutazilites and Asharites.

5.2 Conclusion

Conclusively, the concept of evil in Islamic theology is seen as a test of faith in God and also as punishment for sin. Unlike every other religious and philosophical approach to the problem of evil, Islamic theology also has its own criticisms on the problems of evil. Therefore, man should live according to the will of Allah in obedience and submission in order to gradually eradicate evil in our universe.

5.3. Recommendations

1. This work which is not limited to Islamic theology and theodicy alone but also ideas of other philosophers, schools of thought and other world religions can be studied by all religious schools and theology institutions.

2. Those in need of reference materials on evil, Islamic theology and theodicy for scholastic knowledge and information far and wide can use this work.
3. This work can be studied for basic comparism with the Islamic position on the concept of Evil.
4. Also, this work can be of help to scholars who want to learn more about Islamic theology and theodicy coupled with the teachings of Islam.
5. I recommend this work to be taught in secondary and tertiary institutions in other to remove bias perceptions about the existence of God and evil in the universe.

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