
Divine Atemporal-Temporal Relation
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Abstract

Open theists argue that God's relationship to time as conceived in classical theism is erroneous. This is because it is contradictory for an atemporal being to act in a temporal universe as well as experiencing its temporal successions. However, it is glaring from history and in the Holy Bible that God has been interacting with the creatures in time. Further, they argue that the relational nature of God showed in the Bible nullifies the classical doctrine of eternity as lacking a basis in the scripture. As a result, God is rather, everlasting. Yesterday, today and tomorrow make meaning to God. God has His own history. He lives His life with us in time. Because God is in time, He does not know all future propositions. This study argues that divine temporality does not solve the tension of divine-human relationships, especially as it relates to the future. Further, if it is not logically contradictory for an omnipresent being to act in space, then it follows that an atemporal being can act in time. Also, whether time is understood from the metric or psychological point of view, it's part of God's creation and therefore the limitation it places on the creatures regarding the future does not apply to God.

Keywords: Divine Eternity, Divine Temporality, Time, Foreknowledge

I. Introduction

God's relationship to time is another aspect of theism that has been thoroughly scrutinised recently. Classical theism (CT henceforth) holds that God is *timeless* and as a result, everything is eternally present to Him so that He experiences reality at once. Even though this is the case, God is from everlasting to everlasting. This means that contrary to being static or aloof to happenings in history, God is capable of relational experiences in time with its temporal successions. It means that God, despite not being bound by time, acts in time. However, the limitations that come with living *in 'time'* and experiencing its temporal succession do not apply to God. Therefore, God knows the past, present, and future at once.

Classical theologians, namely: Augustine, states that eternity belongs to God. In other words, God is eternal. His relationship to time differs from ours. He doesn't experience time as we do. As a result, He is not ignorant of anything. Augustine clarifies that because time doesn't limit God, He transcends the future, everything comes and goes, but God remains the same. Everything God created is in time, including time; God created it (XI 304, 316-317).

Boethius argues in line with Augustine that to be eternal, it must be that God is above time (5.5). While Saint Anselm argues that God has no yesterday nor tomorrow. However, God *is* in yesterday, today, and tomorrow. God is outside of the realm of human time. Nothing can contain God, but He contains all (xix, xx). One thing that is clear from these three classical theologians is the fact that eternity does not connote a lack of relationality in God. God despite being timeless; is capable of relational experiences, especially in connection to the creatures.

Wayne Grudem a contemporary representative of classical theism defines eternity thus: *“God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in His own being, and He sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time”* (168). He argues that God is immaterial and has always been existing. He has no origin, unlike creation which came into existence through divine activity in time. Since God is immaterial, looking at the relationship between matter, time and space as understood in physics do not apply to God, and therefore it follows that the constraints associated with being material and located in space do not apply to God (Grudem 168).

Stump and Kretzmann in their article “Eternity” examine the relevance of divine eternity as understood in CT to God's relationship with creation. They notice that divine eternity has implications for the tension between divine omniscience and human freedom, divine immutability, and petitionary prayers (429). They clarify that “Because an eternal entity is atemporal, there is no past or future, no earlier or later, *within* its life; that is, the events constituting its life cannot be ordered sequentially from the standpoint of eternity.” (434) They argue “But, in addition, no temporal entity or event can be earlier or later than or past or future with respect to the whole life of an eternal entity, because otherwise such an eternal life or entity would itself be part of a temporal series.” (434). This conclusion is very significant for understanding God's relationship with humans. The argument is that if God is an atemporal being, yesterday, today and tomorrow will be meaningless to Him. As a result, there will be no genuine relationship between Him and humans. One of the tensions highlighted in conceiving divine eternity by Stump and Kretzmann is relevant to contemporary revisionists of eternity. It is the seeming inability to reconcile the involvement of an atemporal being in a temporal world with its temporal successions that leads to the rejection of divine eternity. I will show this shortly.

Contrary to CT, contemporary revisionists namely; open theism (OT henceforth) raises three objections against the concept of eternity in CT. They argue that the doctrine of divine atemporality is incoherently conceived. It is unbiblical and that since creation is temporal, an atemporal being cannot relate to a temporal world. However, history reveals that God has been interacting and is still interacting with humans. The argument for divine atemporality may be formulated thus:

1. A timeless God knows yesterday, today, and tomorrow with absolute material certainty
2. God has changing plans and emotions
3. God is not unchangeable (from 2 and 2)
4. Change to some extent is contingent upon ignorance of the future
5. Therefore God is not all-Knowing (from 2, 3 and 4)
6. Since God does not know the future exhaustively and sometimes looks forward to the outcome of our future actions, it follows that He is not timelessly eternal
7. Therefore, God is everlasting.

In the following subheadings, I will respond to the three objections above.

II. Divine Eternity in OT

II.1 Divine Timelessness is not Biblical

In OT, God is temporal, works in time as well as experiencing time with its temporal successions and durations. Besides these, Sanders argues that God, as revealed in the scripture,



interacts with creatures in history and also changes in His relationships. God has His history. Hence, conceiving God as timeless eternal contradicts the above reality. He clarifies that it makes God more of an abstract concept, just like a number, say 4 or 5, which does not change. Contrary to the understanding of time from the metric point of view, Sanders states that time, as applied to God, must be understood from the psychological point of view, which agrees with Augustine. This is because, prior to the existence of the physical world, God, because of the psychological nature of time, experienced the past and the future. Time, according to Sanders, is not a 'thing', but "it simply refers to the sequence of events in God's experience." (*The God Who Risks* 15, 200 henceforth GWR).

Sanders argues that conceiving God as timeless eternal implies a static view of time and thus determinism. Then all good and evil things, even our sins, will always exist. Eventually, it means that there will be no time where God will triumph over evil as we expect it to happen at the eschaton. Since God knows everything timelessly now, it means He doesn't know what I am doing now. Yes, even Christ, despite knowing His incarnation, didn't know while He was on the cross because He had already known it from eternity. On the contrary, God knows the present. He gave salvation at a particular time. Believers' sins were forgiven when they met the Lord and they are no more. Lastly, a God who is timelessly eternal cannot have plans for creation to be executed in the future. However, as seen in the Bible, God has plans, our sins are forgiven at some points in this life and God will overcome sufferings and evil in the future (*GWR* 203).

Hasker states that: "First of all, it is clear that the doctrine of divine timelessness is not taught in the Bible and does not reflect the way biblical writers understood God...there is simply no trace in the scripture of the elaborate metaphysical and conceptual apparatus that is required to make sense of divine timelessness." ("Philosophical Perspective," 128). The question is if God is timelessly eternal, how can He act in time by responding to the prayers of His children? And above all, how can God be born in time, grow up in time, live with and among men in time, and even die and rise in time in the person of Jesus Christ? This accordingly is a pointer that God is not timeless. From this conclusion, the assertion that God is timeless is a 'strange doctrine indeed.' (*Hasker God, Time and Knowledge* 145-146 *GTK* henceforth).

Hasker argues that conceiving God as timeless denudes God of the personalism and intimacy revealed in the Bible that is extremely essential for our relationship with God. As a result, "the doctrine of timelessness is inadequately motivated apart from Neoplatonic-inspired metaphysic that few Christian philosophers, at this juncture, can bring themselves to embrace." (*Providence, Evil and the Openness of God* 100 *PEOG* henceforth). In relating divine timelessness to divine sovereignty, open theism argues that both divine timelessness and simple foreknowledge are helpless in resolving the tension of divine control and human freedom. It's also not taught in the Bible. Philosophers and theologians are the ones who are rather reading divine timelessness, middle or simple foreknowledge into such verses. For instance, classical theologians hold that the Bible teaches divine eternity in 2 Peter 3:8: "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day." This assertion makes little sense to Hasker. He rejects the idea that the Bible divine timelessness in other passages like Exodus 3:8, John 8:58 and 2 Peter 3:8. (*PEOG* 100). However, he offers no further explanations of these passages as understood in CT.

II. 2.Divine Timelessness as conceived in CT is incoherent

In addressing the incoherent nature of divine timelessness in CT, Sanders argues that two concepts of time are relevant to the discussion on divine eternity. He explains that because CT and FT subscribe to a different concept of time, they will naturally arrive at a different conclusion regarding the nature of divine eternity. He further argues that understanding God from a timelessly eternal point of view has serious challenges in relating the concept of divine eternity to God's activity in history. Sanders refers to the two theories of time; the '*dynamic view*' or the 'A' theory, tense or process theory and the second is the '*stasis view*' or the 'B' theory, tenseless or block theory. In the dynamic theory of time, the present has a special ontological status, and as a result, the past and the future don't really exist. The activities that took place last year once existed in a time, but they are no longer in existence today. The future, in the same manner, despite that we speak about it as a real entity does not exist and is merely a concept in our minds. An essential element to the dynamic understanding of time is that nothing is static or permanent except for change. Contrary to the 'A' theory, in the 'B' theory of time, the past, present and future have equal ontological status, as a result, what has been in existence will always be and some things which are not yet in existence will certainly exist in the future. Whatsoever has existed, is existing and will exist is part of the 'block' because God sees them timelessly in His eternity. These different understandings of time have implications for one's concept of eternity (*GWR* 200-201).

Sanders from the above conclusion states that open theism holds the 'A' theory of time. This means that God is temporal as stated above. He explains that given the distinction between the 'A' and 'B' theories of time and because it is impossible to combine the 'A' theory of time with divine timelessness, yet some thinkers namely: William Lane Craig holds divine timelessness as well the dynamic theory of time at the same time. But, because of the problem associated with divine atemporality and the difficulty involved in reconciling divine eternity which fits better in the 'B' theory of time than the 'A' theory, Sanders argues that it is safer to reject the idea of combining divine timelessness with the dynamic theory of time altogether for divine temporality which connotes relationality; an essential ingredient in the open view of God (*GWR* 201-203). Sanders sees an apparent contradiction in CT, especially in defining eternity where God is timeless and yet acts in time. This is upholding mystery and nonsense (*GWR* 204, 32-33).

OT argues that the traditional concept of divine eternity as timelessly eternal fails in meeting several criteria to be a viable doctrine. Hasker proposes two criteria to measure the relevance and intelligibility of the doctrine of divine timelessness. The doctrine of divine timelessness should be about *God* as understood in the Jewish/Christian faith as the Creator and as the Sustainer of the universe. God has been acting in history. However, the doctrine of eternity as timeless does not represent the Jewish and Christian understanding of God as it does not portray God from the relational point of view. The second issue is that it should provide a better solution to the paradox of divine foreknowledge and human freedom. However, the classical understanding of divine temporality does not solve this problem. As a result, it has no philosophical advantages (Hasker *GTK* 146). In Hasker's opinion, for a doctrine to be intelligible, he argues, it must be:

expressible in grammatically well-formed sentences. (This I assume that a sentence consists of *words*, as opposed to nonsense syllables, of the language in which it is written). We may also require that an intelligible doctrine should not be contradictory or otherwise logically

impossible. It would seem, furthermore, that a proposition is not understood unless it is possible to give an account of at least some of the nontrivial inferential relationships that hold between it and other relevant propositions (*GTK 146-147*).

However, divine timelessness, as understood in CT, does not meet the above requirement of intelligibility. This is because the idea of timelessness is non-existence in our lives as humans. And if we were to sketch an analogy of the doctrine from a human point of view; it will be an *incomplete* analogy. To conceive God from the point of divine timelessness, we must conceive the doctrine in such a way that God '*knows*', '*acts*' and '*responds*' to the temporal activities of temporal beings. Any definition of divine timelessness, according to Hasker, which does not emphasise these three fundamental elements, ceases to be a viable doctrine of divine eternity (*GTK 147, 150-151*).

II. 3. An atemporal being cannot act in time

OT extrapolates that because conceiving God as timelessly eternal places God on a different time frame altogether from ours, it follows that He cannot operate and interact with humans who are operating in a different time frame from His. Besides, the Bible shows that God changes some of His plans. It follows that God is not eternal, otherwise, there will be no reason for any adjustment in His plans because an eternal being will necessarily know from the inception if such plan is successful or not. "That God changes in some respects implies that God is temporal, working with us in time (at least since creation). God is everything through time rather than timelessly eternal. God experiences duration as He interacts with us in history." (Sanders *GWR* 15).

Sanders in relating divine timelessness to future contingencies rhetorically asks: "If God always knew that he was never going to have Saul's line be kings, was God deceitful? There is a give-and-take quality to these texts. If God is affected by creatures and is responsive as these texts indicate then God has a before and after— succession—in his experience. This means that God is temporal and has a history." ("An Introduction to Open Theism" 40-41). There is some level of interconnectedness in how both Sanders and Hasker conceive divine attributes. From the preceding argument, temporality has a connection to mutability and ignorance. Because God is temporal, He cannot know everything in the future. Since not everything in the future is known to God, it follows that in some circumstances God will have to adjust His plans to suit the situation on the ground.

Hasker argues that instead of conceiving God as *atemporal*, OT holds that God is temporal and that He is not timeless. When an allusion is made to God's eternity it does not mean that God is atemporal and therefore temporal categories do not apply to Him. Rather, God is *everlasting*. Contrary to creatures, God has always been existing and will continue to exist. "Time is not an alien medium within which God is 'trapped' or 'limited'; rather time, in the sense of a changeful succession of states is inherent in God's nature." (*The Triumph of God Over Evil* 27). However, Thomas Oord, another open theist, rejects the notion that God is everlasting. He argues that God is rather 'time-full' than everlasting. Oord goes further from divine temporality to divine *pantemporality*. He argues that the Bible teaches that God is '*time-full*' rather than timeless. In conceiving God from the perspective of love, God can't be love and timeless, because love takes time to develop. He clarifies that

The biblical witness more often emphasizes the idea of God is *time-full* than timeless. [The] Old Testament writers use the Hebrew word *olam* to describe God's relation to

time. This word connotes long duration, antiquity, and futurity. Biblical writers use *olam* to speak of remote past or future but also speak of perpetuity. When used with reference to God, *olam* describes God's *extensive time-fullness rather than timelessness. God's experience is everlasting in the sense of being in all times (pantemporal), rather than is always timeless (nontemporal).* (79 Italics added).

Open theists maintain that the future, contrary to the past, is open and unsettled. However, God's timelessness cannot be open and unsettled. Every fact that is timelessly known is determined to occur exactly as it is determined. It logically follows that there is no relationship between a timeless being and temporal beings and their actions. To account for the relationship between divine eternity and future contingencies, Hasker distinguishes between 'hard' and 'soft' facts. That the future is completely settled and we can do nothing about it is a hard fact. However, as understood in the open view, the existence of contingencies is a soft fact. This is because the future is open. As a result of its openness, humans can contribute their influence in bringing to fruition what the future holds. From this conclusion, Hasker argues that "*The doctrine of divine timelessness affords no help in whatever in understanding God's divine providential governance of the world...The theory does not...give any help in understanding the topics of providence, prayer and prophecy.*" (GTK175, 177).

III. Does OT resolved the tension of divine atemporal-temporal relation?

Critiques of OT notice that there are apparent weaknesses in its concepts of divine eternity. As a result, it fails in resolving the tension it intends to solve. It rather raises many objections than a solution. A few among the numerous objections against OT are here presented briefly.

Lawrence Wood from the Arminian/Wesleyan tradition in his "Divine Omniscience: Boethius or Open Theism?" argues that OT is archaic scientifically though somehow postmodern theologically and philosophically. He notes that the nature of time it subscribes to is Newtonian, which receives its interpretation from Lorentz rather than Einstein. This Lorentzian understanding of time places a dichotomy between time and space and denies the simultaneity of occurrences of events in space against the framework of time (52).

Wood clarifies that if time existed before creation, then God will be *in* time. However, if the contrary is the case; then God must transcend time. He argues, "if contemporary physics is right that space-time is a single entity, there is no escaping the conclusion that God transcends time if God also transcends space because they are inseparably connected." (56). Despite that, Einstein's theory of relativity sharpens our understanding of divine eternity; it didn't prove it because his view of God is pantheistic. Einstein only needed some revelation to conceive God as transcending space and time. This will have helped him to avoid the notion that God has predetermined everything in His mind. Wood expresses admiration for open theism. But, bemoans its total rejection of Einstein's theory of relativity. He notes that such a dismissive attitude is reminiscent of the Scopes Monkey Trial with its rejection of modern science (60-61).

He concludes by noting that open theism equivocates time in its allusion that God 'looks ahead.' Contrarily, God doesn't look ahead; He simply 'looks' as understood in the Boethian view of eternity. To overcome the tension in the relationship between an atemporal being and a temporal world, Wood dichotomies time into the standpoints of earth time and God's time because God stands above our time. Notwithstanding, the concept of time as it relates to God is a mystery. But, open theism's alternative which suggests that God has limited knowledge of

the future to the point that He mistakenly believes adds no relevance to the doctrine of divine eternity and therefore; God cannot be trusted for granting wisdom (Wood 63-66).

Norman Geisler offers another critique of open theism from the classical perspective. He argues that “First of all, it should be pointed out that there is a difference between saying God created in time and that He is the Creator of time. There was no time before God made the temporal world; time began with its creation. God 'framed the ages',...so God was ontologically prior to time, but not chronologically prior to it.” (526).

Contrary to the objection that since creation is temporal, the creator must be temporal; Geisler's denies that it must be so. His arguments may be summarized thus:

1. Creation came into existence in time
2. At what point did God become temporal? It seems God was timeless before creation. It makes no sense to assume that an atemporal being becomes temporal after the creation. The creation was done *ex nihilo*, not *ex Deo*. After creation, God did not change in His essential nature, but he changes in His relationship with the creation from an atemporal to a temporal relationship despite remaining an atemporal being. God only undergoes an external, not an internal change.
3. Acting in time does not make God temporal. CT has been upholding that God's actions and His relationship with creation are temporal, but God's attributes are not temporal.
4. Temporality is a nonessential nature of God. Since even open theism admits that there is a real difference between God and creation, the creator, in the same manner, transcends the creature and therefore God, though acts in time, transcends time (527).
5. Despite that God incarnated in time, lived, died, resurrected and concluded the work of our salvation in time, it must be noted that “The Eternal did not become temporal, nor did the divine nature become human at the Incarnation any more than the human nature became divine.” (528). Insisting, on this implies the heresy of monophysitism condemned by the Church at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 454 because it confuses the two natures of Christ. At the incarnation, there was no 'subtraction' of the divine nature; rather, it was a union of two natures that were not commingled.

John Frame a classical theism defender argues that the distinction between creature and the creator must be made. Creation is different from the creator (147). If it is argued that a timeless being cannot act in time, then why not also argue that a “spaceless immaterial being cannot create items in spatial relation to one another with Himself being in spatial relationship to them”? (149). This argument could be taken further to include God's knowledge of an article in a spatial location if He is not in that location. God may not know there is a mouse 'here' because He is everywhere. Further, if God is nonspatial then it must follow that space is not real. Or if God knows the existence of three locations: Igbuila, Zambur and Tattaura; then these three locations must be identical with one another. Frame notes that proponents of open theism argue that the doctrine of eternity is not biblical and a product of philosophy, yet they do not only use philosophy but have not proven how the doctrine should be understood from an exegetical point of view. To settle the debate whether God is timeless or not, the Bible should be consulted (149, 152).

The doctrine of divine timelessness is beneficent to Christian theology in that it exonerates God of the limitations that come with being in time. God has neither beginning nor end, but the world has a beginning. Also, the doctrine provides God with the basis to overcome the limitation that comes with change, ignorance and temporal frustration. Frame concludes that

He cannot present a 'watertight' argument for divine timelessness if libertarian freedom is upheld (153-155, 157). It means that libertarian freedom as understood by OT is incompatible with divine atemporality.

Paul Helm, argues that since the Bible contains anthropomorphism, it should be taken into cognizance in dealing with the relational aspect of God (*Eternal God* 2-4) God has been represented by biblical writers as one who is both in time, yet transcending time. It was not necessary for them to insist that God is timeless or not because they were not proposing philosophical concepts. After all, they didn't have the reflective context to do so (*Eternal God* 11). Since divine timelessness implies divine immutability, therefore; any adjustment in divine eternity automatically leads to an adjustment in the latter (*Eternal God* 11, 94).

Helm, in his response to the assertion that a timeless God cannot act in time, expatiates that "So if God is spacelessly present in his creation there are matters that he cannot know. Just as Christian thought portrays God as knowing when things take place so he is portrayed as knowing where they take place. Accordingly, if the earlier argument establishes the presence of God in time this argument establishes the presence of God in space." (*Eternal God* 44). In his 'Response to John Sanders' 'A' and 'B' theories of time, Helm, argues that Sanders has misunderstood what these theories mean. He also notes that these theories are not universally upheld. They "are not descriptions of two rival *theories* of time; they are simply names for different ways of understanding the temporal series. Further, the stasis theory, which uses the B-Series account of the temporal series, the theory that all times are equally real, does not hold that 'every event exists timelessly (as God does).' It is possible to hold that stasis and to deny the divine timelessness makes sense, and one view the created order is timelessly created with time." (245-246). Further, in his: "Is God Bound by Time?" Helm, argues that "time is not like a container in which the universe is placed, but it is simply the measurement of the changes and the events that occur in the universe." (121). He clarifies that if God lives His life in time as we do, it follows that His life will be stretched out throughout time and therefore, His life will be affected differently. In other words, the life of God cannot be stable. Contrarily to open theism, Helm argues that when it is stated that everything is timelessly present before God, it does not mean that everything is *temporally* present to Him. Rather, it means that despite seeing everything at once, He as well can relate with temporal categories. Since God transcends creation, He equally transcends time. For instance, a few biblical passages that support this claim include 2 Timothy 1:9 and 1 Corinthians 2:7 (*Bound by Time* 122, 125, 127).

Arguing for divine temporality based on the temporal nature of creation is not exclusively plausible. "To act is to bring about something as the result of intending, desiring, or willing it and to have a purpose in doing so." (*Bound by Time* 130). However, God does not act as we do. Since humans, despite living *in* time, propose to act shortly, why not also infer that God could also intend to act in the near future? Eternity, according to Helm, in this case, will be like "to think of one eternal act of will with many numerous effects at different times." (*Bound by Time* 132)

William Craig, argues that the Bible teaches that God is eternal as seen in Isaiah 57:15, Hebrew 1:10-12 among many other scriptural passages. He argues further that the Bible also teaches that God has neither beginning nor end. His existence is permanent. This is contrary to creation which came into existence in time (14). Like Helm, Craig believes that biblical writers were not developing the doctrine of divine timelessness or divine temporality when they were addressing God in such a way that points to divine timelessness or divine

temporality. By the way, as in Helm above, Craig believes that biblical writers “lacked the conceptual categories for enunciating a doctrine of divine timelessness.” (16)

Craig suggests that Proverbs 8:22-23 points to the origin of time. He argues that in the Septuagint, Proverbs 18:23 renders the Hebrew word *me olam* as *pro tou ainios* which is before time including Jude 25, Titus 1:2-3, 2Timothy 1:9 among many others (18-19). He also states that though the writers of the Bible speak of “God as temporal and everlasting, there is some evidence, at least, that when God is considered in relation to creation He must be thought of as the transcendent Creator of time and the ages and therefore as existing beyond time.” (20)

Craig alludes that God can be timeless, yet relating to us in time as well as experiencing the temporal categories of time: “Thus, I think it is evident that God can enjoy interpersonal relations and yet be timeless. So even if we conceded that God is essentially timeless and that interpersonal relations are essential to personhood, it is still not true that if God is timeless, He cannot stand in interpersonal relations.” (86) This argument is contingent upon the relational aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity. He clarifies that for a defender of divine timelessness to relate God's knowledge to time, it is plausible to embrace the static theory of time (111). However, a closer analysis, according to Craig suggests that “A robust doctrine of creation requires a dynamic theory of time.” (214).

Contrary to Sanders' assertion above that open theism's understanding of time is in line with Augustine, I think Augustine is here being misinterpreted. Despite that Augustine struggles to explain time from the psychological point of view as rightly pointed out by Sanders, however, he is not faithfully explicating Augustine's view of time. The following quote will suffice to clear this doubt. Augustine, *The Confessions*:

For if in that place too future things are future, they are not there yet; and if there too past things are past, they are there no longer. Clearly, then, wherever they are and whatever they are, they can only be present. Nonetheless, *when a true account is given of past events, what is brought forth from the memory is not the events themselves, which have passed away, but words formed from images of those events which as they happened and went on their way left some kind of traces in the mind through the medium of the senses.* This is the case with my childhood, which no longer exists: it belongs to past time which exists no longer, but when I recall it and tell the story I contemplate the image of it which is still in my memory.” (XVIII 300) (Italics added).

In the '*in the beginnings*' of Genesis 1 and John 1, it is obvious that divine atemporality is taught consciously. This is because if we admit that passages that taught divine temporality were deliberately penned in such a manner by the writers of the scripture to teach us that God relates with us in time and based on this relationship, divine temporality is taught in such passages. Why not also believe that divine atemporality is consciously taught in such passages where such a concept can be easily deduced? We will not be faithful to scripture to take some of its aspects at a first value while others at a second value. Other passages that may point to divine temporality should be understood based on the context. Next, it will be noted that such expressions are mostly meant to demonstrate the relational nature of God with humans and not to teach divine temporality. The incarnation of the Lord is a typical example of this.

Conceiving God from the open perspective has its pros and cons and in fact, has many pitfalls than what is obtainable in CT. Open theism claims that divine eternity is not biblical. However, as it is with almost all other attributes of God, a doctrine may not be necessarily mentioned in the scripture for such a doctrine to be regarded as biblical. Also, since the Bible

teaches that creation was done in time, at what time did God come into existence? There was no time prior to the creation yet, God planned and brought creation into existence. Why not think that in the same way He brought creation into existence in time He can also bring our salvation into existence in time? Another issue is at what point in the existence of God did time come into existence?

Divine timelessness posits a difficult challenge to the theist. However, FT is not free from this difficulty either. For instance, arguing that in the dynamic view of time, it is the present that matters and that both the past and the future don't really exist will inevitably lead to another question namely: are there actual truths that are not known to God? Are there no memories or connections between the past and the present with the future? Open theism argues that there are no human analogies to represent divine eternity. However, there are also a few doctrines that may not be represented perfectly using a human analogy, yet they are still intelligible in expression (I say this as a theist and I know that there are a few theists who see lots of problems with the doctrine of Trinity). The doctrine of the Trinity is a quintessential example of this. Besides, there are human analogies to show divine timelessness apart from the enormous development in modern science, especially from the time of Einstein. Also, has traditional theism being erroneously and unintelligibly upholding divine eternity from antiquity? I don't think so. As we have shown above, God, though a timeless God as conceived traditionally, has been acting and responding in time. Lastly, how coherent, congruous with scripture and relevance is this view?

The eternity of God as timeless may be likened to an athletic referee who uses the stopwatch to time the athletes yet; is not restricted by that time. He can shout, jump, cry, laughs or even gets angry as they run yet; he is not bound by that time which is meant for the athletes. Consequently, God being outside time does not mean that He cannot relate to temporal issues going on in this temporal world. The scripture shows in Psalm 90:1-2 that God is the dwelling place for His people in all generations. He is eternal, existing before the mountains and everything else. However, it seems both Sanders and Hasker are not ready to settle for the fact that time is part of God's creation. Sanders as seen above argues that prior to creation, God experienced the psychological form of time. In this case, it will seem that time coexisted eternally with God. It makes time uncreated and therefore eternal. One could also argue that since God had psychological time before creation, but was not bound by such time; He can equally act in time today, yet not bound by it. Sanders conclusion about God's relationship to time does not only raise a serious question, but it is not authentically biblical. This is because; it does not take into cognizance all biblical passages in favour or against divine atemporality. It merely plucks favourable passages here and there to justify its claims without considering other passages. To me, it will be better to understand every passage either in favour of or against divine atemporality in its context. For instance, we may accept that the three passages mentioned above teach divine atemporality. However, we should also accept that though God is timeless, He has been acting and will continue to act in time.

If God though omnipresence has been acting in space, then He should also be able to act in time despite filling every time and space with His presence. Yes, if it is contradictory for an eternal God to act temporally then it must equally follow that an Omnipresent being cannot act in space simultaneously unless He is localized to a temporal abode; but if that is not the case then it must follow that an eternal being can still act in time, yet transcends it in His own way not understood by mortals, just as it is shown in the analogy of the athletic referee above. If

God was timeless before creation and was able to act *temporally* to bring creation into existence in time, why not think that He can still act in time yet, remaining timeless after the act of creation. It will really be a bad deduction to suppose that God changes from an atemporal to a temporal being after His act of creation.

It seems conceiving God as temporal as a result of the temporal nature of creation will be less relevant to our faith. The aim of advocating for divine temporality is to show that God is *with us in* experiencing what we are experiencing. At the back of the mind of a temporalist is the search for the *comforting* presence of God in every situation which is commendable. However, the limitations associated with divine temporality outweigh its supposed benefits. For instance, that God doesn't know my affliction before it occurs because He is limited by time adds more salt to my wounds than a solution.

As stated above, contemporary developments in physics have eliminated the dichotomy between time and space, therefore an eternal being can act both in time and space simultaneously. Besides, time is no longer conceived as concrete as space and therefore is relative. Using his $E=mc^2$, Einstein propounded a unified theory of space-time: this—equation integrated time with space. Before him, time's role had simply been to measure what was happening with matter and energy. After Einstein there is no way one can conceive our time as transcending the universe; hence Open Theism's God-in-time isn't transcendent at all and couldn't, therefore, be the creator. The reason for the distinction in space and time is the gravitational force which is also contingent upon mass; but God is simple, possessing no corporeal body like us, hence: God is above time and space, but operates knowingly within them.

IV. Conclusion

I have shown clearly above that O rejects the doctrine of divine eternity on three bases. It argues that the doctrine is not biblical, is incoherent and that the temporal nature of the world demands that God should be temporal and in other words, everlasting. After all, history reveals this relationality and temporality. However, a closer examination reveals that the accusations levelled against CT are unwarranted. CT has been conceiving God both from the temporal and relational points of view. Further, conceiving God from the FT's perspective either makes times to be coeternal with God or it makes God have a beginning in time. Lastly, the limitations that come with living in time instead of adding value to our concept of God from the relational point of view and to feel His comforting presence at all times, dashed our hope in God instead. Such a view with all its limitations adds not relevance to the doctrine of eternity.

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