

## GOD AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

by Norm R. Allen Jr.

It has always been absolutely clear to me that theodicy is a complete waste of time. The problem of evil simply cannot be solved. How could evil exist if a perfectly good, all-powerful, all-knowing God exists? Evil cannot come from that which is perfectly good. Therefore, God could not have created evil. (Moreover, evil could not have originated outside God, because God is everywhere. A perfectly good God would have recognized evil and destroyed it at its inception.)

Further complicating matters, evil could not exist unless God permits it to exist. However, a *perfectly* good God, by definition, could not permit evil to exist, even for some imagined “higher good.” Even if such a good exists, that would simply mean that God permits necessary evils, which means that he is not, after all, *perfectly* good. He could be incredibly good, unbelievably good, and so on. However, he could not be *perfectly* good, as most theists dogmatically contend. After all, a necessary evil is an evil still.

Theists have sadly tried to rationalize the existence of evil while embracing a belief in a perfect God ever since this God business began. Their favorite excuse is that God gave human beings free will. Rather than challenge theists’ conception of free will as I usually do, I will say, strictly for the sake of argument, that free will as conceived by theists exists. It is all part of God’s glorious yet bafflingly mysterious plan. Still, all this means is that evil – which inevitably flows from God’s “gift” of free will – is a part of God’s plan, which again, means that he is not *perfectly* good.

Furthermore, the existence of moral evil says nothing about the existence of natural evil (natural disasters or “acts of God.”) People are killed in earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and so forth. These occurrences have nothing whatsoever to do with free will, in the minds of many theists.

However, other theists insist that God punishes human beings with these acts. Yet innocent puppies, kittens, bunnies and other animals are also brutally killed by alleged acts of God. Where is the kindness and justice in all of this?

There is actually strong biblical evidence to back up the notion that the God of classical theism “punishes” human beings in this world. For example, Amos 3:6, Lamentations 3:38, and Isaiah 45:7 show that God is good *and* “evil.” (Problem of evil solved!)

Predictably, theists are ready with the excuses. They maintain that just as earthly fathers must discipline their children, so the Heavenly Father must discipline his earthly children. This idea has prompted a friend of mine, atheist activist Bobbie Kirkhart, to say that, just as abused children blame themselves for the abuse heaped upon them by their parents, pathetic theists blame themselves for the abuse heaped upon them by their abusive Heavenly Father. Just as children do not understand that nothing they could have done could possibly justify the abuse they suffer, theists do not understand that no matter what they have done, they do not deserve to be crushed to death in earthquakes, drowned in floods and tsunamis, and so on.

Of course, most theists are not having any of this. They use the analogy of the young child that must have an important vaccination, yet endure pain for the greater good. Similarly, human beings must endure their punishments from God for the greater good. This analogy fails especially because human beings do not have the power to administer

certain vaccinations without pain. Yet God, being all-powerful and all-knowing, could certainly come up with a plan that would not entail so much pain, suffering and evil.

Many theists think nothing of blaming the victims of God's fatherly abuse. For example, they will say that we have early warning systems that let us know when certain natural disasters are imminent, yet we ignore them. A similar claim was made after Hurricane Katrina hit the New Orleans area. However, what excuse could they have made for the earthquake in Lisbon and numerous other natural disasters that occurred long before we had such warning systems? Moreover, as I have already stated, innocent animals are brutally killed, and they do not have such warning systems.

Theists such as the Christian debater William Lane Craig claim that perhaps the universe could not have been created in a way in which natural disasters did not occur. However, that's just a sneaky way of trying to claim that perhaps the omnipotent, omniscient God could not have created a universe without natural disasters, which would be a ridiculous – even blasphemous – claim to make.

Many theists seem oblivious to the fact that "sacred" texts condone evil. The Bible has condoned genocide (Numbers 31:17-18), slavery (Luke 12:47-48) and many other evil practices. Evil exists largely because theistic religions condone it. The Bible even teaches that the omniscient God created the devil. Then why should theists try to blame human beings for the existence of evil?

The best resolution to theodicy that I have heard came from the *Onion* some years ago. It was put forth that God suffers from bipolar disorder. When he sends hurricanes and other natural disasters, it is because he has not taken his spiritual meds. Rather than saying, "forgive them

Father for they know not what they do,” we should be saying, “forgive *him* children for he knows not what *he* does.”

The bottom line is that if an omnibenevolent, omnipotent and omniscient God exists, evil could not come to be. The conclusion seems inescapable. The God of classical theism is history’s longest running hoax.