

IF THERE IS A LOVING GOD, WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING?

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Introduction

Problem that has bothered many throughout history, both theoretically and practically, corporately and individually

Article on "atheism" in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* makes this chief argument against God's existence

But many object to quantum mechanics and general relativity because they go against deeply held standards, yet evidence indicates they are true anyway; may have to adjust standards to reality.

Here we propose to examine following Qs in this order:

- Is there a God?
- Is he the God of the Bible?
- Is he loving?
- Why, then, is there suffering?
- Why is there so much suffering?

Is There a God?

Evidence for a created universe

- Beginning
- Design

Evidence for created life

- Origins
- Organization

Conclusion: yes, there is a God, Creator and Designer

Is This the God of the Bible?

Evidence from fulfilled prophecy

Evidence from changed lives

Conclusion: yes, the God who exists is the God of the Bible

Is God Loving?

Definition of "love"

Obviously, if one defines "love" so that it will never, under any circumstances, allow suffering, then the God of the Bible is not "loving."

But this doesn't even work for human love, e.g., in parenting: recent emphasis on "tough love."

Biblical definition: 1 Cor 13:4-7 :

patient	not rude	rejoices w/ truth
kind	not self-seeking	always protects
not envious	not easily angered	always trusts
not boasting	keeps no record	always hopes
not proud	no delight in evil	always perseveres

Parental model helpful in understanding how God is loving; like parent, God concerned to produce right sort of person, must punish evil, encourage maturity.

Conclusion: yes, God is loving in the Biblical sense.

Why, Then, Is There Suffering?

Have begun to see some reasons why this might be in discussion of parental love, above:

(1) need to punish evil:

parents sometimes do this thru direct intervention
sometimes thru letting events take their course

(2) need to encourage maturity:

parents must gradually let up on control so that child begins to make own decisions
parents gradually let up on protection so that child learns consequences of actions
parents gradually let up on punishment so that child will learn to do right for right reasons

In addition, system of physical causality in world of sinners will produce suffering; without such system, no way to see how bad evil is.

Why Is There So Much Suffering

Mankind is very sinful, so producing much suffering.

Disaster is an advance warning of the wrath to come.

Luke 13:1-9

Biblical teaching regarding Satan (Job 1-2)

a superhuman evil in world

hates mankind, esp those doing good

this world is a war-zone

Babies? don't know all answers, cp John 21:21-23

A helpful picture: God is not to be pictured as a hotel keeper, but as a novelist.

If we will trust him with our lives, we can be heroes or heroines in His story

Conclusions

What are we doing to relieve suffering? (e.g., abortion?).

We should seek to avoid eternal suffering & help others do so too.

God has suffered more than anyone else to save us from such.