

Why Evil Is Permitted

“If there really is a God...WHY?

...Why are things as they are?

Why is there terror, sickness, hunger, death, cheating, war, poverty, fear, confusion, prejudice, unemployment, pain, inequality...?

Is there an answer?

Yes! There **is** an answer—a rational one. Here is the answer in an abbreviated form. It is offered as being satisfying, adequate, harmonious, comprehensive, and capable of being well-documented. It is an answer which, unlike most answers, includes **all** men as recipients of its ultimate benefits. It is **not** a selfish answer.

FACTS

Any valid answer must have legitimate support. Even in the realms of philosophy and religion, any conclusions not consistent with observable or recorded fact, any conclusions ignoring major related questions, are weak. Thoughtful minds refuse to take note of them, let alone embrace them. The answer presented here claims **total** harmony with observable and recorded facts.

AUTHORITIES

Any stable system of thought requires an authority. Available authorities fall into one of two general classifications: (1) men, and (2) superhuman sources.

(1) In the classification of men as authorities, people rely on:

- (a) their own preferences;
- (b) the ideas or preferences of another man;
- (c) traditions established by groups of men.

Each of these “authorities” presents problems of its own:

- (a) Relying on *our own preferences* and reasonings as the path to truth assumes that our personal thought processes are superior to all others.
- (b) Relying on the *ideas of another* man as the path to truth assumes that *his* thought processes are superior to all others.
- (c) Relying on *traditions* established by groups of men leaves us open to deception by human error.

(2) In the classification of *superhuman sources as authorities*, there two main categories:

- (a) personal revelation (visions, etc.), and
- (b) written revelation.

(a) *Personal revelation* is easily fraudulent. It is frequently inconsistent from one occurrence to another. It also tends to establish an “elite” class—those who have received such “revelation.” It leaves much room for misrepresentation and lying.

(b) *Written revelation* has some distinct advantages. It is recorded in black and white. It can, therefore, be compared carefully with fact and, thus, its reliability either established or discredited.

THE MALIGNED AUTHORITY

We hope here to answer a major question—to give an answer in harmony with reason. We will give an answer based on a reliable authority—an authority which has been greatly misrepresented and maligned, even by those who have claimed to be its supporters. That authority is the Bible—but its contents are better than most men could dream. It is imperative that no prior assumptions be made by the reader as to what this great authority actually teaches.

A CAUTION

Because the answer herein presented is merely an outline or a summary, it will not be well documented. If, however, the answer is appealing, **complete documentation and expansion of its many facts is easily available for those who desire it.** We feel that **no** question need go without a reasonable, consistent, and documented answer. The “take-it-on-faith” attitude of traditional religion is carefully avoided.

THE QUESTION RE-STATED

If God does, indeed, exist, why does He not do something? Why would an intelligent, powerful Being permit the atrocities, the accidents, the illnesses, the sufferings (physical and mental) to happen or to continue?

THE ANSWER OUTLINED

Understanding the answer to this question depends upon understanding both what God is like and what His purpose is. His character (a balance of Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power) is revealed in His plans and purposes. Consider a seven-point

paraphrase of His considerations and purposes in creation. (Each point will consist of a question, an answer, and a summary.)

1. Why did God create?

Answer: According to the Bible (which claims to be a written revelation of God), “God is love.” (1 John 4:8) If love, (and, therefore, God) has one pre-eminent need or quality, that need is GIVING. God created **so that He would have beings to whom He could GIVE** the kinds of delights that He could offer them.

Summary: God created because He wanted to share blessings with intelligent beings.

2. What qualities would He give His creation?

Answer: God could have made men like computers or robots—machines programmed so that they could not make mistakes. Had He done this, there would have been no problems: no wars, no illness, no mistakes, no fear, no pain, no emotions—yes, that’s a problem—no emotions! Without emotions there is no thankfulness, no joy, no love. If God had made men infallible, they would be incapable of receiving the LOVE that He wanted to extend to them. Therefore, it was a necessary part of creation that man be made free to choose and to think—not a cold, infallible machine.

Summary: God made man free in choice and thought so that man could receive and appreciate the good things God would give him.

3. How can individual freedoms be regulated?

Answer: The decision to create free beings did, indeed, pose a problem. Liberty is a peculiar thing. It implies restraint! If one individual carries his liberty too far, it robs another individual of **his** liberty—and liberty no longer exists. God, therefore, saw the necessity of imposing legitimate restraints on the free being He would create in order to guarantee the liberty and happiness of everyone. He is the author of liberty; it is only right that He also be its definer. God determined that man must learn the one simple but imperative lesson: **OBEDIENCE**. Without obedience there would be infringement of liberties. With infringement of liberties would come chaos. God did not want chaos in His universe.

Summary: God determined that His creation must learn the lesson of obedience to His perfect laws so that the universe would run smoothly for the ultimate **benefit of all** without infringement of the personal liberties of anyone.

4. How could the importance of this lesson be learned?

Answer: It was necessary that man learn obedience—not only to obey, but the **importance of obedience**. Man must obey not just because he is told to, but because

he **wants** to. This makes him free—the **desire to comply** rather than the constraints to comply.

God as Creator knew that the available means of learning were instruction, observation, and experience. Man could not learn at first by **observation**, because there was no disobedience to observe. God would have preferred if man could have learned without **experience**, although He knew that the tendency of a free mind would lead it toward experimentation. So God first taught man by **instruction**.

God warned man that disobedience would result in death. He wanted to impress upon man that disobedience, because it would result in chaos, was so serious that God's Justice felt compelled to demand death (extinction) for it.

God's instruction did not satisfy man. Man disobeyed. He was condemned to death, and he continues to die.

Summary: God foresaw that man would never learn the importance of obedience by instruction only. He knew (but did not force it) that man would ultimately have to learn not only by instruction, but also by observing and experiencing the results of disobedience.

5. Why die for eating an “apple”?

Answer: God made man on earth and told him he was free—except that he was not to eat the fruit of a certain tree. (We have no evidence that it was an apple.) Why was this seemingly peculiar test applied? Why, instead, wasn't man given some great moral law to obey? Why didn't God say, “You can be free except that you are not free to murder”? God chose the simple, not easily understood test, **because it was not easy to understand!** God was testing **OBEDIENCE**, not intelligence! God wants to be certain that man will obey even when man does not understand. God wants man to **want to obey** just because he values the arrangements God has provided. God wants man to know that disobedience will cause chaos and, therefore, is justly punishable by extinction. God wants man to learn to love righteousness for its inherent beauty. Lack of obedience will injure others and alter the balance of the universe. Considering these facts, the sentence of death was not too severe.

Summary: Obedience is so important that it must be carried out without question. Extinction will be eternally the result of disobedience.

6. How is man to profit from his plight?

Answer: Man disobeyed. Man was condemned to death. Man **now** is learning through experience and observation that the results of disobedience are ugly. **God has permitted evil so that we will appreciate our liberty to avoid it later.** God did

not design or cause evil. Man was warned against it. Man chose it. But God respects individual liberty; He does not interfere with the free choice of His beings—that, remember, would be contrary to His original purpose in creation.

God, in Justice, cannot excuse disobedience. The original man, and we in him, die because of one original act of disobedience. God's design **appears** faulty. It seems like everything is futile! Man is dying, and God's Justice is too exacting for us to expect a pardon. We could never trust a God who changed His mind!

God, however, was wise and economical in allowing **one act** to be the catalyst for teaching us all. Because of this, the love of God could easily provide a JUST remedy. God wants man to live; that is why He created man in the first place. So God has arranged a way to remove the sentence of death from Adam (and from us all who came from Adam). God sent His son, Jesus—not a son of Adam, but yet a man—a perfect man as was Adam—no more, no less. This man, Jesus, had a **right to life** because he was always perfectly obedient. But he voluntarily gave up his human life rights as an exchange or “ransom” for the life rights of Adam. (I Timothy 2:5, 6; I Corinthians 15:22) Justice is satisfied by this ransom or exchange (“a life for a life”—Deuteronomy 19:21). A human life still is claimed as the price for disobedience, but Adam now is legally free to live again—and so are **all of us!**

Summary:

Man now is learning the results of disobedience so that he can choose later to obey—a choice which will be an intelligent, experienced choice. The death of Jesus guarantees that man can live again—that God's creative efforts with man will not have been in vain. We now can expect an awakening of the whole human race.

7. Why is man still dying? Why the delay?

Answer:

There are two primary reasons why the permission of suffering and death continues. The first reason is population. God is allowing enough men to have lived (now and in the past), and enough to have experienced evil, to populate the earth comfortably (perhaps 20 billion). When the earth ultimately is perfected it will easily sustain this size population. At that time even the “desert...shall blossom as a rose.” (Isaiah 35)

The second reason for the delay is a noble mystery, hidden from the view of most men. God is in the process of making a “New Creation.” The same love that stimulated the creation of men and angels also determined the creation of a few beings in the very likeness of God Himself—an intimate family for God, so to speak. These being will be **death-proof**—meaning that they will be absolutely incapable of extinction under any circumstances. (While all other beings will actually live forever, they will be mortal—that is, they will live by God's permission rather than by being inherently death-proof. II Timothy 1:10)

It is manifest that God would not want to give death-proofness (immortality) without first certainly establishing the **obedience** of the creature, for if God created an immortal being which became disobedient, the universe would forever be plagued with the results of disobedience. Therefore, God determined that He would make His “New Creation” out of an **old creation** so that He could first test character.

What an opportunity for such testing exists on the earth! And God determined to utilize the earth to develop His “New Creation”—which He also calls His “church.” (Church is from the Greek word “EKKLESIA” which means “a calling out.” God will “call out” of the earth those characters He wishes for His “New Creation.”)

A period of about 2,000 years (between the two advents of Christ) was set aside for finding a small number of such people—people who under adverse conditions would be faithfully **obedient** to the instructions of God. It is God’s intention to “CHANGE” faithful Christians into spirit beings (like Himself) before the earth is restored and mankind is resurrected. It also is God’s intention that His “New Creation” will be the active agents in awakening man from the dead and bringing man to the point of perfect obedience. After all, this “church” **will have been men!** Imagine the sympathy they will be able to exercise toward mankind! (I Corinthians 6:2; Acts 15:14-17)

Summary:

Man has not yet been restored to life, and God has not yet stepped in to do away with all ills because (1) the earth’s population must first reach its proper size, and (2) the candidates from among men for God’s “New Creation” must all be selected.

SUMMARY & PROSPECTS

1. God permitted evil because it was the **only** method by which He could develop an informed and obedient creation which possess freedom of intelligent choice—a creation who ultimately will worship Him because they **want** to.
2. The seeming failure of God (to human eyes) is due to His **secretwork** of developing a “New Creation” which will be used to restore man to perfection. Meanwhile, the population of the earth has approached its desirable size.
3. The prospects for the near future are better than man’s fondest dreams. When the long-spoken, but rarely understood, prayer is answered, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done **in earth....**,” the earth will be an ecological and social paradise. We have hardly begun to live! We have hardly begun to dream!

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This topic is covered in detail in THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES. See **Available Literature** link.