

buhogrunon:

I just finished reading your most recent response, and I must say that you've raised some interesting, and valid, observations. Before I respond to them though, I should probably point out two important things. First, I'm not a Christian, although I don't deny the existence of God, or even Jesus. Secondly, because of rules and regulations imposed upon me by the prison relating to how much personal property I'm permitted to have, I don't have access to a Bible that I can use to find book, chapter and verse of many of the things I discuss. As such, I have to rely on things I've read, heard or been taught when discussing things contained in the Bible. Because I'm relying on memory, my information may not always be complete, or may be slightly inaccurate. This is not intentional, and should that be the case, I wouldn't be upset if someone pointed me in the right direction for clarification. Having said that...

As I said, you made some compelling, and valid, observations. For example, in the Garden of Eden, it was only Adam and Eve, no one else had yet been created, and it was Eve who ate the forbidden fruit. When she discovered the error of her ways, rather than confessing her sin and begging for forgiveness, she chose instead to convince Adam to eat a piece of the fruit. To the best of my recollection, the Bible was pretty scant on details, so I have no way of knowing whether or not there were other trees with fruit similar in appearance to that of the forbidden tree, or what exactly, if anything, Eve told him about the fruit he was asked to eat. Because of this, I can't say whether or not he knowingly sinned, or if Eve tricked him into eating a piece of forbidden fruit. Either way, I suppose that it really doesn't matter all that much, at least, not as it pertains to this argument, although that does pose some interesting debates for another time. All that matters is that, as you pointed out, God chose to punish not only Adam and Eve for their sin, but all of their descendants for thousands of years.

I agree with you that his punishment was not only harsh, it was also unfair to those of us who had absolutely nothing to do with Adam and Eve's sin, not just because we'd never eaten of the forbidden tree, but also because we'd never even been thought of, let alone conceived.

For centuries, people punished not just the sinner, but also the descendants of the sinner, generations after the sin had been committed. After this went on for an untold amount of time (it would appear several thousand years, at least), God finally intervened and put a stop to this practice, telling one of the kings that children were no longer to be punished for the sins of their parents, particularly when those children, grandchildren, etc., hadn't even been conceived yet.

Ironic, isn't it? First, that God would tell someone else not to do the very thing he was guilty of doing, but his act also suggests something else, that perhaps He's capable of changing the rules. If so, why? Was this because He'd realized that he was somehow "wrong?" Or was this instead because He'd realized that times had changed, therefore necessitating a change in official policy? Either way, I can't help but notice that this is a classic example of "do what I say, not what I do."

As far as God "essentially" setting Adam and Eve up for failure is concerned, I'd be lying if I said that I hadn't given this some thought before reading your response. Unfortunately, I lack critical information needed to formulate an adequate response, not that this has ever stopped me before. For example, if God's truly omniscient and knows everything long before it happens, as many argue, then I agree that He was "essentially," and therefore intentionally, setting Adam and Eve up for failure.

In your response, you said that I "point[ed] out exceptions to [your] points as though they detract[ed] from the point [you were trying to make]." If you'll indulge me for a moment, go back and examine what we were discussing. You said "[b]oth of these examples [I] use[d] are within the realm of the physically possible." (Referring to a heroin addict kicking his habit cold turkey and a grandmother lifting the family car off her grandchild.) "But again, what about where people can't help themselves - such as if they jump out of a plane and their parachute won't open? [I] say angels don't have knowledge of everyone's problems - but surely they communicate with God on some level? Why does he not tell them of this person falling to their death? Or why do they not frequent areas where they know there will be problems, such as city alleys, where people often get assaulted or murdered, so as to help out as many people as possible?"

It was my understanding that you chose the example of people plummeting to their deaths with failed parachutes for a reason. You were trying to suggest something within the realm of a physical impossibility, something the person had no control over, arguing that, in these cases, God should intervene, either directly or indirectly. When I responded, I wasn't trying to point out exceptions in an attempt to show that your example **didn't** fall within the realm of a physical impossibility, I was merely trying to suggest the possibility that those whose parachutes failed and lived to tell the tale did so because an Angel intervened, either on their own, or because on orders from Above. Of course, I still take the position that if an Angel intervened, it wouldn't be an interference with man's free will, but if God intervened, it would be. Either way, my point wasn't to "detract" from your point, but was instead to illustrate that there are some exceptions to the rules of physics that simply can't be explained. This implies that there was intervention from someone, even if we don't know who or why they chose to intervene with them and not others.

I don't mean to imply that it was all right for 1 to be saved while 99 others died, but perhaps this suggests that God, and His Angels, aren't as omniscient as we originally thought, or that there was a particular reason this person was saved.

You imply, facetiously I hope, that you shouldn't intervene when a mugger's trying to rob someone because you don't want to interfere with their free will. While this is certainly within your power to do, what kind of person would sit there and do nothing while someone's being mugged? Which is the point I suspect you're trying to make, arguing that God is doing exactly that, over and over again. However, I think this is one of those situations which emphasizes the importance of accepting the good with the bad. Would you rather live with free will, able to like what you want to like, do what you want to do, etc.? Or would you rather live with as a robot? Liking what you're told to like, doing what you're told to do, etc.? Both of these decisions come with consequences, good and bad. Personally, I'd much rather have free will than live as a robot or a slave.

I don't think that taking the position that God has some higher plan we don't understand is a "total cop-out." The fact of the matter is that we're mere humans, not gods, and even then, we're only able to use a small fraction of our brains. As such, I don't think we're capable of understanding God's higher plan. At least, not at this time.

As far as God making people so we "WANTED to be good," I think this is exactly what He did. Take a look at small children, any small child, and you'll notice that they have a deep-seated need to do good, to please. It's only when that child begins to grow up that this desire begins to fade or change, affected no doubt by external stimuli.

Well, I kind of ran out of time, partly because I didn't get off work until 8:30 this evening, but I hope that I've managed to respond to your questions and comments satisfactorily. If not, or if there's something else you wish to share with me, please don't hesitate to do so, either by leaving a post here, or by sending me a snail mail to the address listed below. I've really enjoyed these exchanges, and I'm looking forward to more, on any of these topics, or any others that you may wish to bring up.

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