

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Arguments from Evil and the Parenting Style(s) of God

A Thesis Submitted to
The Faculty of the School of Divinity
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Christian Apologetics

School of Divinity

By

Kyle D. Gazlay

Lynchburg, Virginia

May 8, 2020

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Only through His guiding and comforting hands have I reached the point of completion on this Thesis. Without Him I would have never taken the step to pursue this degree in the first place. To Him my life is dedicated and I will follow His will no matter what. May He get the glory for the completion of this degree. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Father for leading me as the Good Father that you are.

Secondly, I would like to thank Abi Thomas. She has been my chief editor, my rock, my encourager and my support system throughout this entire process. She listened to and challenged my ideas, read through my work, told me when things did not make sense and overall made this thesis go from good to great. Thank you, Abi, for all the work, effort, support, and countless hours you put in on this thesis. I am forever grateful and eternally blessed by your contributions.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my thesis mentor, Dr. Edward Martin, and thesis reader, Dr. Fred Smith. Aside from his tremendously busy schedule, Dr. Martin put in many hours' worth of work into my thesis through emails, answering questions, challenging arguments, and leaving comments for me on the project. Additionally, Dr. Smith gave me a great amount of feedback on the thesis that contributed to the overall strength of the work. Thank you to both of you.

Lastly, I would like to thank my brother and sister-in-law, Kevin and Caitlin Schnaidt. Thank you two so much for giving me your time and listening ears so that I could practice my thesis oral defense presentation. The feedback you two gave and the support system you two have been in these final stages has been such a blessing. You two are truly a gift from God.

Abstract

In scholarly debates there are two primary positions on whether a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent can coexist with the presence of evil in the world. Atheists claim that God and evil do not coexist, while theists proclaim that God and evil can and do coexist. Atheists have used arguments from evil as a chief weapon against the existence of God and evil. Within arguments from evil, atheists create arguments that take an evidential or probabilistic stance on the matter. These arguments are called evidential arguments from evil. The evidential arguments from evil will use parent analogies to disprove God's existence by explaining how God does not act like a good parent; therefore, it's likely that He does not exist.

This thesis is purposed to show that when evidential arguments from evil claim that God must act like a parent, they expect things of, project things on to, and assume things about God that are taken out of context. Essentially, what is happening is the atheists are creating a straw man argument against God. They are creating a straw man version of God, knocking Him over, and then saying see He does not exist. Another way to put it is that they have taken God out of context to conclude that He does not exist. A God with the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence can be found in the Bible. So, in order to gain a full picture of God's interactions with humanity amid suffering, the Bible is a primary source that must be used to see how God interacts with humanity amid suffering. The conclusion of this thesis is that God acts in many different ways with humanity amid suffering; therefore, highlighting the fact that an in-context God stands in opposition to the out of context God used in evidential arguments from evil's use of parent analogies.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	1
What is the Problem of Evil.....	1
The Development of Arguments from Evil.....	4
Why it Matters: The Problem.....	8
Christian Responses.....	9
What Will be Accomplished.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: Parenting Styles	14
Stylistic Differences.....	15
An Omni Being’s Potential Style.....	28
CHAPTER THREE: Assessing Arguments from Evil against Parenting Styles	31
William Rowe.....	32
Other Atheistic Scholars.....	40
CHAPTER FOUR: The Biblical God	48
Biblical Interactions.....	49
The Biblical God’s Probable Parenting Style.....	69
CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion: The Biblical God vs. the God of the Atheists	71
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	75

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

What is the Problem of Evil?

Humanity has long been curious about their origin. Scholars have debated, people have questioned, yet a definite answer still remains universally unaccepted today. The question of origin has led some to believe humanity was put on this earth by chance. However, others have been led to believe that humanity's origin comes from a transcendent being, a God. This ideal has led some to believe in a creator of the universe, while leaving others skeptical and in disbelief. Those that disbelieve are referred to as atheists, while those who believe in a being that created the universe are called theists.¹ One religion that believes in a creator God and are theists is called Christianity. Christians, among other Abrahamic religions, believe that God exists and is the creator of everything, including humanity (see Genesis 1 and 2). The God that the Christians believe in is known to have many different attributes.

Among the attributes of this God are omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence. Omnipotence, better understood as being all-powerful, has been defined in many different ways. The purpose is not to show each definition and debate which one is correct, but only to express that some define omnipotence differently.² "One definition of omnipotence is that of having the power to bring about any state of affairs whatsoever, including necessary and impossible states

¹ In the bibliography see Bruce Milem's contribution, "Defining Atheism, Theism, and God," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 85, no. 3 (2019): 335-346, for further comments on defining atheism and theism.

² In bibliography see George I. Mavrodes' contribution, "Defining Omnipotence." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 32, no. 2 (1977): 191-202. Or, Kenneth L. Pearce and Alexander R. Pruss' contribution, "Understanding Omnipotence," *Religious Studies* 48, no. 3 (09, 2012): 403-14. Or, Edward R. Wierenga's contribution, *The Nature of God: An Inquiry Into Divine Attributes* (Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 25, for different perspectives on omnipotence.

of affairs.”³ This definition is good. However, this work aligns with Thomas Aquinas’ definition in *Summa Theologica*. As Aquinas stated in article 4 of question XXV: The Power of God: “there does not fall under the scope of God’s omnipotence anything that implies a contradiction. Now that the past should not have been implies a contradiction.”⁴ In a basic sense, omnipotence is the characteristic of being all-powerful without the ability to bring about contradictions, e.g. a square circle, or, a change in history. Additionally, Aquinas would agree that God cannot and does not contradict His own nature. With that, the definition of omnipotence that this work rests with is William Rowe’s definition which states: “God can do anything that is absolutely possible and not inconsistent with any of His basic attributes”⁵ (also see; Psalm 147:5; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37).

The second attribute, omniscience, is a term that many writers agree on, while also being regularly debated in philosophical journals. The definition that will be used moving forward is this: Omniscience or the attribute of being all-knowing “is knowledge of every truth.”⁶ In other words, a God who is omniscience knows everything there is to know (also see; Psalm 139; Hebrews 4:13). The final attribute, omnibenevolence, is that of being wholly-good or morally perfect. “That is to say that God has no moral defect whatsoever.”⁷ No moral defect means that this God embodies so much goodness and moral perfection that nothing that is constituted as the

³ Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn, *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Second ed. Vol. 9. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 243.

⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *The “Summa Theologica” of St. Thomas Aquinas* (London: Burns, Oates & Washburne, 1920), 354.

⁵ William L. Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education, 2007), 7-8.

⁶ Gary Rosenkrantz and Joshua Hoffman, *Historical Dictionary of Metaphysics* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Scarecrow Press, 2010).

⁷ Peter Van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil the Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St. Andrews in 2003* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), Ch.2, 8.

opposite of good is in the nature of this being. Another way to put it is that omnibenevolence is “goodness than which none greater is possible”⁸ (also see; Psalm 119:68; Matthew 19:17). In sum, the attributes of this God are omnipotence (all-powerfulness), omniscience (all-knowingness), and omnibenevolence (whole-goodness).⁹

When these attributes are faced with the presence of evil in the world, there seems to be a contradiction between the existence of a God of this nature and the existence of evil. In fact, scholars have debated for centuries whether a God of this nature could exist while there is the presence of so much evil in the world. Atheists have argued that a God of this nature and evil cannot coexist. This is due in part to the seeming contradiction: “If God is perfectly good, He must want to abolish all evil; if He is ultimately powerful, He must be able to abolish all evil: but evil exists; therefore, either God is not perfectly good or He is not ultimately powerful.”¹⁰ This contradiction is commonly understood as the problem of evil (POE).¹¹

Arguably the first documented writing of the problem of evil is found in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* written by David Hume between 1750 and 1776. As Hume stated: “Epicurus’s old questions are yet unanswered: Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?”¹² In the presence of this problem, the Christians seem to be at an impasse.

⁸ Rosenkrantz, et al, *Dictionary of Metaphysics*, 189.

⁹ In bibliography see Gary Rosenkrantz and Joshua Hoffman’s contributions, *Historical Dictionary of Metaphysics* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 189, for more on each attribute of God mentioned here.

¹⁰ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2010), Part 1, 5.

¹¹ In bibliography see Michael L. Peterson’s contribution, *The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings* (Second Edition, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), for further reading on the history of the POE, its types and Christian responses.

¹² David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Raleigh, NC: Generic NL Freebook Publisher, n.d.), 68.

Either God is not omnipotent, not omniscience, not omnibenevolent, or simply does not exist at all. This shows the problem of evil in full force. But as time has gone on, the arguments for the non-existence of God have developed to a more complex state than what David Hume wrote in centuries past.

The Development to Arguments from Evil

As noted above, atheists argue for the nonexistence of God, while theists argue for the opposite. The problem of evil has “been a chief weapon in the arsenal of those who reject belief in God and represents the main counterpoint to the traditional arguments for God’s existence, especially a God who is perfectly good.”¹³ Due to the problem of evil being a weapon that the atheists find strong against the existence of God, the arguments have taken many different forms. The problem of evil has developed from Hume’s contradiction to what is called arguments from evil (AFE). Arguments from evil are older than the problem of evil. However, the AFE did not become a problem until after the development of and recognition of the forcefulness found in the POE. Once the POE was recognized for its strength against the theistic God, AFE became a force to be reckoned with as well.

One way to describe an AFE is through the words of Thomas Aquinas found in his same work that defines omnipotence, *Summa Theologica*. As Aquinas stated in article 3 of question II: The Existence of God, as objection 1: “It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word ‘God’ means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore, God does not exist.”¹⁴ In other terms, it is either the case that God

¹³ David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 143.

¹⁴ Aquinas, *The “Summa Theologica,”* 24.

exists or evil exists, there is no possibility of coexistence. This is to show that arguments from evil do just as their name states, they use evidence of evil as the starting point to work from towards a conclusion that disproves the existence of God. “Evil exists, therefore, God must not” is a common assertion in arguments from evil.

Arguments from Evil Types: Logical and Evidential

The two most common ways arguments from evil have developed are in logical and evidential forms. The logical form of arguments from evil essentially states that “God and some known fact about evil are incompatible.”¹⁵ Basically, it is logically inconsistent or contradictory to state that God and evil both may exist simultaneously. This goes back to the basic POE as arguments from evil in “logical form is the traditional way the problem of evil has been posed for centuries.”¹⁶ Arguments from evil in their logical form will not be developed further as the focus of this work is AFE’s in evidential form.

The evidential form of arguments from evil developed in part due to Christian scholars being able to produce logically consistent arguments for the existence of God which disproved the problem of evil in its traditional form.¹⁷ With the presence of arguments that showed the logical consistency of the existence of both God and evil, atheists began to take a different route in their arguments. They began arguing “that even if it is possible for theists to tell a logically consistent story about God and evil, evil in the world still offers strong evidence against the probability that there is a God.”¹⁸ Probabilities of God’s nonexistence are foundational to

¹⁵ Justin P. McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder, *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil* (Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013;2014), 19.

¹⁶ John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil* (Rev. ed. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 24.

¹⁷ One scholar who was able to do this is Alvin C. Plantinga in *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989). An example from this work will be used in the coming section “Christian Responses.”

¹⁸ Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 24.

evidential arguments from evil. Essentially, the evidential arguments state that due to the presence of evil in the world, also known as sufferings, there is “sufficiently strong evidence that makes it more likely than not that such a deity as God does not exist. The probability thereby renders belief in the existence of such a deity irrational in the absence of sufficiently strong countervailing considerations supporting the existence of such a deity.”¹⁹ Basically, it is more probable that the suffering in the world has no reasoning whatsoever than it is probable that a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent exists and allows the suffering to take place. If this God were to allow the suffering, there would be reasons and sufficient evidence. Since there is not, it is more likely that God does not exist.²⁰

Evidential Arguments from Evil use of Analogy

The evidential arguments from evil use evidence of humanity’s sufferings as probable reasons that God does not exist. To do this, the arguments will typically start by forming a series of premises that conclude God’s nonexistence, then spend a large amount of time unpacking the statements to show why the made conclusion is true. William Rowe, a well-known atheistic scholar, provides an argument of this nature in his work named “The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look.” In this work Rowe states the premises are follows:

P: No good we know of justifies an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being in permitting E1 and E2;
 therefore,
 Q: no good at all justifies an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being in permitting E1 and E2;
 therefore,
 not-G: there is no omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being.²¹

¹⁹ Michael Tooley, *The Problem of Evil* (Elements in the Philosophy of Religion, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 3.

²⁰ This ideal is important as the paper moves forward because by assuming humanity to know God’s reasoning is an a priori expectation placed upon God that He will reveal or do things in a way that humanity will understand. This ideal will be formulated later on.

In order to explain these premises in full, Rowe, like many other atheists, creates analogies to show why the claims should be accepted as conclusive in terms of God's nonexistence. One of the most common types of analogies used are parent analogies. What typically happens in these analogies is that the parent is put in relation to God and the child is put in relation to humanity. Due to the parent's interactions with the child, it seems that God would interact with humanity in similar ways to the parent if He existed. But since God does not act in these similar ways, He does not exist.

After stating his premises, William Rowe draws a comparison between a parent and God to disprove God's existence. Rowe asks the question: "What happens when a loving parent intentionally permits her child to suffer intensely for dire sake of a distant good that cannot otherwise be realized?"²² His conclusion being that "during these periods of intentionally permitted intense suffering, the child is consciously aware of the direct presence, love, and concern of the parent, and receives special assurances from the parent that, if not why, the suffering (or the parent's permission of it) is necessary for some distant good."²³ After explaining how the parent would respond in detail, Rowe connects the parent to God. He proclaims that God would do the same for humanity by communicating why the suffering is happening, giving special assurance of love and compassion, and making sure His presence is known during the suffering. However, God does not do these things; therefore, He does not exist.²⁴ Rowe makes the connection that since God does not act like the loving parent that he knows God would amid

²¹ William L. Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look," In *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 263.

²² Rowe, "The Evidential Argument," 276.

²³ *Ibid.*, 276.

²⁴ Again, per Rowe, "The Evidential Argument," 276, it becomes evident that God is being expected to act a certain way amid suffering with humanity.

suffering, He must not exist.

Rowe, however, is not the only one to make God-parent connections through the use of analogy in arguments from evil. Another example of this is found in the works of atheistic scholar Paul Draper. Draper states that “A good parent gradually increases a child’s responsibility. Children who are unworthy of a certain responsibility are not benefited by parents who give them that responsibility. On the assumption that this is true, one would expect that God would behave like a good parent, giving humans great responsibility only when we are worthy of it.”²⁵ Draper goes on to conclude that since this omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God gives people responsibility when they are unworthy, it is more likely the case that this God does not exist. These examples are only two of many parent analogies used in evidential arguments from evil.

Why it Matters: The Problem

So, why does all this matter? This matters because evidential arguments from evil make claims that present unchecked connections between a transcendent being, known as the God of Abraham, and a human parent that are expressed in the form of parent analogies. The question at hand is this: can a God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent be connected to a parent in the same ways atheists claim in order to conclude that God does not exist? It seems unlikely that through the use of human faculties as finite beings, a transcendent, infinite being can be fully understood unless God were to somehow reveal these truths. However, according to the Bible, there are only two places that God has made himself known, through natural revelation (cf. Rom. 1:18-26), and through various acts of special revelation, e.g. through the prophets, through Jesus Christ (God incarnated, John 1:1, 14, 18) and through the Bible itself. The Bible is

²⁵ Paul Draper, “Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists,” In *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 23.

one of the locations where the God with the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence is found and shows how He interacts with humanity amid suffering. This work will take focus on God with the attributes at hand as found in the Bible rather than focusing on natural revelation or other types of special revelation. With focus on the Bible, it can be stated that the atheists make claims about the God found in the Bible without use of the Bible, therefore, their claims can be concluded to be subjective and a limited view.²⁶

The claims being made in evidential arguments from evil are not objective because they are made by taking God out of context and making assumptions about Him that expect things of Him or project attributes on to Him that are not always of His nature. What should be done instead to create a higher sense of objectivity is the use of the in-context God. For objectivity to occur, the claims and analogies made about God's interactions with humanity amid suffering must use the biblical examples of who God is to show how He does interact with humanity amid suffering. Otherwise, there is a gap left between what is being claimed in the form of expectations, projections, and assumptions about God and the whole truth about God's interactions with humanity amid suffering. So, the question at hand is this: how does God interact with humanity amid suffering? This question will be the primary focus.

Christian Responses

The case to be made will be presented to show that the atheist's claims made through the use of parent analogies in evidential arguments from evil are false based on the inadequacies

²⁶ See Rowe's work found in Marilyn M. Adams and Robert M. Adams, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 161-167, where Rowe mentions restricted standard theism (RST). Here, Rowe makes the claim that religions that believe in an omnipotent, omniscience and omnibenevolent being are invalid when RST is assumed in the presence of suffering. RST is simply the view that God exists without any other theological views about God. However, to make this claim about a God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent, these attributes have to come from somewhere and one place where they are found for the Christian Theist is the Bible. This point will be developed moving forward. This note is only meant to show that RST is a prime example of what this thesis is arguing against because God is being taken out of the Bible and then portrayed in the arguments from evil by Rowe and Draper in what arguably is a non-biblically consistent way. Therefore, an out of context God cannot be used to conclude that God does not exist. Keep of this point as the thesis progresses.

resulting from a merely subjective and rather arbitrary notion of God's parental role and parenting model. This work will not follow the normal Christian responses to arguments from evil, that of theodicies or defenses. A theodicy typically provides "an answer to the problem of evil that attempts to 'justify the ways of God to man' by explaining God's reasons for allowing such evils."²⁷ On the other hand, a defense is usually more modest in their attempts as they only "aim to offer a possible reason why God allows evil,"²⁸ not a definite reasoning like a theodicy.

A defense often provides an argument that states it is unlikely that humanity would have access to all, or possibly any, of the reasonings why God would allow suffering. An example is Stephen Wykstra's defense in response to William Rowe. As Wykstra states, "if outweighing goods of this sort at issue exist in connection with instances of suffering, that we should discern most of them seems about as likely as that a one-month old should discern most of his parents purposes for those pains they allow him to suffer--which is to say, it is not likely at all."²⁹

Another example comes from Christian scholar Alvin Plantinga. Plantinga states that "a world containing creatures who are significantly free is more valuable, all else being equal than a world containing no free creatures."³⁰ As noted here, both of these examples give possible reasons for why God has allowed suffering to take place.

The primary difference between a defense and theodicy is the use of likely reasons verses definite reasons for God's allowing of suffering. However, both theodicies and defenses are

²⁷ Stephen C. Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion: 300 Terms and Thinkers Clearly and Concisely Defined* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 114.

²⁸ Baggett, et al, *Good God*, 139.

²⁹ Stephen J. Wykstra, "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of 'Appearance'," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 16, no. 2 (1984): 73-93, accessed March 15, 2020, 88.

³⁰ Alvin C. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 30.

used in scholarly attempts to prove God's coexistence with evil. A common type of theodicy is called a free will theodicy. A famous theistic scholar who presents a free will theodicy is C.S. Lewis. Lewis states that "free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. Thus, humanity must be voluntarily united to God, not forced. And for that they must be free."³¹ In other words, God is justified in allowing evil because it came along with free will, and free will is the only way to bring about a true loving relationship between humanity and God.

As noted above, this work will follow neither a theodicy nor a defense, although it lands more on the side of a defense. In order to be a defense, however, there must be reasons provided for why God possibly allowed suffering and acted the ways He has with humanity amid suffering. That will be done in part when God's actions amid suffering as found in the Bible are explored, but that is not the primary purpose of this work. The primary purpose is to show the inadequacies found in the atheist's parent analogies and arguments that have often been left unchecked and unchallenged.³² The claims being made by atheists about how God would interact with humanity amid suffering if He exists are made out of subjectivity. The aspect of a defense that will be presented does provide reasons that God may have allowed suffering, but that is not the primary concern of this work. The claims made through the use of parent analogies in evidential arguments from evil are only partial to the truth and that is what this work will bring to the forefront of readers minds.

³¹ C. S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity," In *The C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: Harper One, 2017), 47-48.

³² The inadequacies and unchallenged ideals are found when the realization is made that the God they are arguing against is found in the Bible, yet they make claims without use of the Bible. This ideal will be shown through chapters three and four when the claims made are assessed against the in-context God to check for validity.

What Will be Accomplished

The atheist's claims are only partial to the truth and subjective due to taking God out of context to create their arguments. The primary way this claim will be shown is by examining the uses of parent analogies found in William Rowe's works. Alongside the examination of Rowe's works will be the examination of a few other atheistic scholar's uses of parent analogies. The other scholars of mention are Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Paul Draper, and Bruce Russell. The examination of these parent analogies will be used to highlight the fact that there are things being assumed about, expected of, and projected on to God due to viewing God in an out of context way. In order to come to this conclusion, the question to be answered first is what parenting styles are underlying the parent analogies used in evidential arguments from evil? With that, the first thing to be done is to explain what a parenting style is and then show which parenting style a God who is omnipotent, omniscience, and omnibenevolent would likely embody.³³

After parenting styles are understood, the works of William Rowe will be examined to see what parenting style he is stating God must embody to exist. Then, the works of Sinnott-Armstrong, Draper, and Russell will be exampled to show that they claim similar things about God. Once these scholar's uses of parent analogies are examined and the underlying parenting styles they are assuming about God are drawn out, an exploration of God's interactions with humanity will be examined per biblical accounts. The biblical accounts will be used to highlight the fact that while in context God acts in many different ways with humanity amid suffering. The biblical examples of God's interactions with humanity amid suffering to be analyzed are the story of Adam and Eve, the exodus and exile of the Israelites, the book of Job, the life of Jesus Christ, and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus commonly known as the Apostle Paul.

³³ This is not to say that parenting styles will be addressed in full. To fully assess and understand each parenting styles that exists would be an endeavor that is too extensive for this work. However, this work will use a few of the most popular and commonly accepted parenting styles to highlight the primary purpose of this work.

The biblical examples will draw an objective, although not full, conclusion as to how God interacts with humanity amid suffering and which parenting style He would likely embody if He were to embody one. The conclusion to be drawn will be that the mentioned atheistic scholars have taken the biblical God, who embodies omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, out of the context of the Bible in order to conclude that He does not exist. With the presence of evidence on the matter through the means of looking at this God in context, it will be concluded that the atheists' parent analogies and claims about God are false. Thus, the evidential arguments from evil fail when they take the God of the Bible out of the Bible, keep His attributes that are found in the Bible, and then state ways they believe that He must interact in order to exist. To start, what is a parenting style and what parenting style would an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent being embody?³⁴

³⁴ Again, this is not to say that the answer to what parenting style a being of this nature would embody is a definite answer. Rather, it is to say that in the presence of the parenting styles at hand, the conclusions are a very likely choice.

CHAPTER TWO

Parenting Styles

The first question to be answered is what is a parenting style? There are many ways to define parenting styles. One definition states that “a parenting style is a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent’s behaviors are expressed.”³⁵ This definition expresses that a parenting style is the leadership style of the parent within their parent-child relationship. The parent sets the culture and communicates through their use of attitudes and behaviors. The definition that will be of use in this work is this: “a parenting style can be described as all behaviors, attitudes, and values parents use to interact with their child that influences their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development.”³⁶ For this definition, a parenting style is the tools used by the parent through cognitive, emotional and ethical faculties to lead their child in ways that influence every part of the child’s life and development into an adult.

The faculties are used differently dependent on the parent, which creates different styles of parenting. Typically, one parenting style over another will be the primary style that a parent embodies. Some parents have healthy primary parenting styles, while others embody more destructive styles. One of the most influential figures who studied parenting styles was Diana Baumrind (1927-2018). She continues to be influential because she broke down parenting styles

³⁵ Nancy Darling and Laurence Steinberg, “Parenting Style as Context: An Integrative Model,” *Psychological Bulletin* 113, no. 3 (1993): 487–96, accessed January 20, 2020, 488.

³⁶ Tolulope A. Aremu, Yetunde O. John-Akinola, and Adeyimika T. Desmennu, “Relationship between Parenting Styles and Adolescents’ Self-Esteem,” *International Quarterly of Community Health Education* 39, no. 2 (2019): 91-99, accessed January 21, 2020, 91.

by differentiating between different types of styles. To do this, she put names and definitions to the different types of parenting styles, which are still accepted and used in research today.

Through the use of “four dimensions of parent-child interaction, namely disciplinary strategies; warmth and nurturance; communication styles; and expectation of maturity and ability to self-control, Baumrind identified three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive.”³⁷ These three commonly accepted parenting styles from Baumrind: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive, are where this work will take focus.³⁸ Each of these styles will be explained in detail in order to create a better understanding of the different parenting styles from Baumrind. This way, the atheist’s works and the Bible may be assessed with a well-rounded understanding of the stylistic differences between the different parenting styles that are presented. The goal is to provide explanations for each style to show that parents often act in many different ways with their children in general, but especially amid suffering.

Stylistic Differences

Permissive Parenting Style

As noted above, the first thing to be done is to bring an understanding of the commonly used and widely accepted parenting styles per Diana Baumrind. The three styles she identifies are authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive.³⁹ The permissive style will be the first one to be examined, followed by the authoritarian style, then the authoritative style. These styles will be

³⁷ M.F. Tunde-Ayinmode and O.A. Adegunloye, “Parenting Style and Conduct Problems in Children: A Report of Deliberate Self-poisoning in a Nigerian Child,” *The Journal of the Society of Psychiatrists of South Africa* 17, no. 2 (2011): 60–63, accessed February 15, 2020, 60.

³⁸ In bibliography see Margaret K. Nelson’s contribution, *Parenting Out of Control: Anxious Parents in Uncertain Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), for a look at a different type of parenting not mentioned in this work. Or, see Wendy S. Grolnick contribution, *The Psychology of Parental Control: How Well-Meant Parenting Backfire* (Mahwah: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002) for more information on parenting styles history.

³⁹ Tunde-Ayinmode, et al, “Parenting Style and Conduct,” 60.

defined before ending the chapter on an evaluation of all three styles against the backdrop of the attributes of God used to disprove His existence in arguments from evil. For now, on to the permissive parenting style.

In order to understand what a permissive parenting style is, one must first understand what permissive means. The word permissive can be defined as “habitually or characteristically accepting or tolerant of something, as social behavior or linguistic usage, that others might disapprove or forbid.”⁴⁰ Another way to put it is that someone who is permissive is often passive, allowing things to happen as they happen. The person may be present, but they are likely not in control of the situation at hand. The permissive parenting style falls into this realm of passivity because “permissive parents are often highly responsive (present), but not demanding (in control).”⁴¹ The non-controlling, yet present parent takes on the characteristics of a permissive parenting style. This type of parent is not likely to discipline their child for inappropriate actions, rather, they will tolerate the actions done. In Baumrind’s work she puts it this way:

The permissive parent attempts to behave in a nonpunitive, acceptant, and affirmative manner toward the child’s impulses, desires, and actions. She consults with him about policy decisions and gives explanations for family rules. She makes few demands for household responsibility and orderly behavior. She presents herself to the child as a resource for him to use as he wishes, not as an ideal for him to emulate, nor as an active agent responsible for shaping or altering his ongoing or future behavior. She allows the child to regulate his own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage him to obey externally defined standards. She attempts to use reason and manipulation, but not overt power, to accomplish her end.⁴²

According to the explanation given here, the permissive parent is passive, often giving the

⁴⁰ “Dictionary,” Dictionary, accessed February 21, 2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/>.

⁴¹ Diana Baumrind, Robert E. Larzelere, and Elizabeth B. Owens, “Effects of Preschool Parents’ Power Assertive Patterns and Practices on Adolescent Development,” *Parenting* 10, no. 3 (2010): 157-201, accessed January 16, 2020, 162.

⁴² Diana Baumrind, “Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on Child Behavior,” *Child Development* 37, no. 4 (1966): 887-907, accessed January 15, 2020, 889.

child more control than they typically should hold. The permissive parent will be involved and around but only as the child wishes and typically not assertive in terms of punishment or duty. Unfortunately for the permissive parent, their lack of action tells their child that they, as the parent, approve of the child's inappropriate behavior.⁴³ Essentially, they are telling their child that he or she may do whatever they want and it is acceptable. This can lead to drastic temperament issues within the child and a rebellious attitude towards superiors in any context. If the rebellious attitude is not addressed and the parent continues in the ways of passivity, then the child will not only become reaffirmed in their negative attitude but also fall further into an unhealthy view of authority.

To help create a further understanding of the permissive style and how the role of authority may be affected, here is an example. Imagine that a father and his son have just sat down at the dinner table on a Thursday night. The child's mother has been out of town on a business trip and the father was left to do all of the household duties that he and his spouse often share. He is usually the parent who allows his son to do as he pleases. Typically, when the son's mother says no, he knows that if he goes and asks his father, he will usually get what he wants. It has never been directly stated, but the father gives the son more authority than the child should have. The child's mother will usually not have any of the manipulation that her son attempts and will have the conversation with her husband that he must also be more assertive and supportive of her decisions. This conversation is not new for the two; they have had this problem since their child was born, now ten years ago. As a ten-year-old, the boy knows that although his parents work together to not be permissive in the way that his father naturally is, when mom's out of town all bets are off.

⁴³ Per, Baumrind, "Effects of Authoritative," 900, this child is accidentally affirmed for the wrong things by the parents neglect and the child's assuming of parent approval.

His mother has now been out of town for a week and the child has slowly but surely convinced his father to allow him to do as he pleases. Right before dinner on this Thursday night, unbeknownst to the son, the father had just gotten off the phone with his wife who again had to have the conversation of being more assertive and parental rather than passive. As the child sat down for dinner he noticed that there were only two things to eat on the table, smoked salmon and broccoli, neither of which he likes. This same scenario happened earlier in the week with a different meal and the son told his father he wanted something else to eat and the father turned quickly at the child's bidding. From learned experience, the child spoke up on the matter: "Daddy, I do not like salmon or broccoli. Can I have cereal for dinner again like on Tuesday?" Anticipating a 'yes,' the son got up to go get cereal out of the cabinet. To his surprise, the father promptly said "No. Son, you must eat what I have put on the table. It is healthy and we want you to grow big and strong." In astonishment, the son pushed further but the father would not budge. Finally, the child exploded with rage exclaiming how he hated his father and how his father never really cared about him. In an effort to keep the peace and without a word, his father quickly gave in, giving the child exactly what he wanted, a sugar loaded, nutrition deficient dinner.

The father never addressed this issue with his son, nor did he fill his wife in on the matter. What this scenario did for the child is express that he can get what he wants if he is aggressive or assertive enough with the male figures in his life. It showed the child that the word 'no' is only an obstacle to climb over, not a demand to be respected. In this scenario, the father, in his permissiveness, allowed the child to do as he pleased, reaffirming the child's unhealthy views while hurting his ability to play a positive role in his child's life.⁴⁴ The permissive parent

⁴⁴ Note here that this example, plus the examples to come, are not meant to explain each parenting style mentioned in full. The purpose is only to bring a better understanding of how each parenting style may interact with their children to better understand each style in a general sense.

is hands-off and passive when they should embody authority and strength. The permissive style is often concluded to not be ideal, nor is it healthy to embody as a primary parenting style.⁴⁵

Authoritarian Parenting Style

The next style to be addressed, the authoritarian parenting style, falls on the opposite end of the spectrum from the permissive style. The permissive style is hands-off and passive, while the authoritarian style is excessively hands-on and overly demanding. The word authoritarian can be defined as “favoring complete obedience through the act of exercising complete or almost complete control over the will of another or of others.”⁴⁶ This is what one would call a domineering or power-hungry parenting style. In fact, anyone, but more specifically any parent who is known to have “an authoritarian personality would be expected to be restrictive, punitive, repressive and embodying coercive power.”⁴⁷ The parent is often looking for complete control and pushing an attitude that embodies the phrase ‘my way or the highway.’ This mindset comes from the authoritarian parents’ push for coercive power. “Coercive power is usually defined as the parent being arbitrary, peremptory, and concerned with retaining hierarchical status distinctions in family relationships.”⁴⁸ The authoritarian parent is more concerned with power than with unity and “gives the child no choice but to comply”⁴⁹ with what the parent wants or decides. This parent strives to get exactly what they want and hungers for a submissive following by their children.

⁴⁵ For more on how this plays out see Baumrind, et al, “Effects of Preschool,” 900.

⁴⁶ Dictionary, “Dictionary.”

⁴⁷ Diana Baumrind, “Differentiating between Confrontive and Coercive Kinds of Parental Power-Assertive Disciplinary Practices,” *Human Development* 55, no. 2 (05, 2012): 35-51, accessed January 14, 2020, 37.

⁴⁸ Baumrind, “Differentiating between,” 36.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

There is no room in this child's life for rebellion or personal opinion, only what the parent says goes because what they say is the law. The parent is always "attempting to shape, control, and evaluate their children's behaviors"⁵⁰ in order to assert their power over the children. This leaves the child or children with a very unhealthy worldview and mindset. Without much room to communicate, the child will often live with resentment towards their parents which may cause conflict.⁵¹ Whether living in resentment or not, there are two common attributes that a child with an authoritarian parent will typically enact towards their parents and others, the attributes of withdrawal or submissiveness and excessive assertiveness or dominance.⁵² These attributes often contrast one another, but they also play off of each other when stemming from unhealthy relationships. In sum, the domineering leadership of the authoritarian parent is overly restrictive, not providing a healthy environment for growth.

To understand the authoritarian style a bit further, let's look back at the example of the father and his son having dinner on a Thursday night. The father-son example will be similar but the attributes and parenting styles involved will be altered. The child's mother is still out of town on a business trip. She has still been gone for a week, but in this scenario she is the one who is the permissive parent. All week long the father and son have been at a battle of wits. The son has learned much from his father, and, at ten-years-old, is starting to show signs of an authoritarian personality himself. This is due to his mother typically giving him whatever he desires. He has learned that when daddy says no, he can always convince his mom to give him what he wants or do as he pleases. This, "I can have whatever I want" mindset, accompanied by the son's primary

⁵⁰ Nilgün Cevher-Kalburan and Asiye Ivrendi, "Risky Play and Parenting Styles," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 25, no. 2 (2016): 355-366, accessed January 20, 2020, 357.

⁵¹ Baumrind, "Differentiating between," 42.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 42.

male role model embodying an authoritarian parenting style, has been the perfect environment for the child to embody an authoritarian personality himself.

With mother out of town, the environment is tense. The son is always attempting to get what he wants, while the father is always shutting down what the son has to say or asks for. Now, while sitting at the dinner table on Thursday night once again, the salmon and broccoli are on the table and ready to be eaten. The father calls out to his son, "Dinner is ready." Hearing a call back from his son, the father gets flustered. The son called back, "Thanks dad, but I am not hungry." With his authority being threatened, the father lashed out and told his son in a raised voice that he must come in for dinner and there are no exceptions. The son promptly responded with the start of a sentence: "But...", before the child could finish his father told him "No buts, get in here for dinner. Now!" The son came in with his head down and quietly sat at the dinner table. His father dished him some salmon and broccoli and set it in front of him. The son spoke up, "Dad...I do not like salmon or broccoli." His father responded quickly in a frustrated voice, "Too bad, salmon and broccoli are good for you. You are going to eat everything on your plate, and if you don't, you're going to sit here until you do. I do not care if you are up all night and miss the bus for school, you will finish this meal." His son looked down at his food with a sad daze, moving the food around his plate before finally doing as his father demanded.

In this scenario, the father and son had some conflict. The son attempted to do as he pleased but the father did not give in. In this scenario the father embodied the authoritarian parenting style which is "highly demanding but not responsive."⁵³ The father's responses were based on personal opinion and desire, not on hearing the heart of his child. This is directly in line with coercive power, which again "can be defined by the factors of verbal hostility, arbitrary

⁵³ Baumrind, et al, "Effects of Preschool," 162.

discipline, psychological control, and severe physical punishment.”⁵⁴ This caused the child to be submissive and do as his father asked. The child inevitably did exactly as studies have shown of children with authoritarian parents: internalize problems, embody low self-esteem and agency, and emulate the parents’ coercive behavior.⁵⁵ The authoritarian style may seek dominance, but what typically surfaces is a household with many authoritarian personalities. They seem to be in constant conflict and never talk about the issues at hand. Each person often has low self-esteem which causes them to play it off as though they are confident and secure. The authoritarian style, like the permissive style, is not an ideal parenting style for a parent to embody as their primary parenting style.

Authoritative Parenting Style

Neither the authoritarian nor permissive parenting styles are ideal for a parent to embody as their primary parenting style. The conclusion, then, can be expressed that the most ideal of the three parenting styles is the authoritative style.⁵⁶ In fact, Baumrind “considers the authoritative parenting style the optimal parenting style, and refers to this style as conveying clear boundaries and expectations to the child within a warm and involved context.”⁵⁷ This is very unlike the other two styles because one tends to be passive and undemanding (permissive), while the other tends to be domineering and overly demanding (authoritarian). To this end, the authoritative style, unlike the others, can be associated with the word democratic because parents who embody this

⁵⁴ Baumrind, “Differentiating between,” 38.

⁵⁵ Baumrind, et al, “Effects of Preschool,” 158-159.

⁵⁶ This conclusion can be drawn in part due to process of elimination. If the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles are not ideal, then it may be assumed that the authoritative is more ideal than the others. However, only with what is to come in this section will that be shown.

⁵⁷ Abigail Millings, Judi Walsh, Erica Hepper, and Margaret O’Brien, “Good Partner, Good Parent: Responsiveness Mediates the Link between Romantic Attachment and Parenting Style,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 39, no. 2 (2013): 170-180, accessed February 25, 2020, 39.

style “are responsive to children’s needs, typically encouraging verbal communication, and providing a balance between disciplining and nurturing approaches towards children’s behaviors.”⁵⁸ This provides an environment for the child where they can freely respond and, although they may not get the response they desire, they feel safe because they are heard and have a solid explanation of reasoning behind why they did not get their desired outcome.

The safe space provided by the authoritative parent brings up an important point about the authoritative parenting style. The authoritative style “is no less power-assertive than the disciplinary style, i.e. the authoritarian parenting style. The difference between the two styles is not in the amount of power they embody but the type of power they assert.”⁵⁹ It is important to note that the two styles both assert the same amount of power. The difference comes in the way each style asserts their power. The authoritarian style asserts coercive power which has more to do with dominance than it does with unity or understanding. While the authoritative style uses what is called confrontive power which is “reasoned, negotiable, outcome-oriented and concerned with regulating their child’s behavior.”⁶⁰ This provides a child with a safe environment where they do not feel overwhelmed by their parents’ sense of dominance and have the ability to choose for themselves, although their choice may be denied.⁶¹

For the purposes of this thesis, the most important aspect of the authoritative parenting style is that although they are understanding, communicative, negotiable, and explanatory, they are also dominant in their assertions and passive in decisions as necessary. In other words, the

⁵⁸ Cevher-Kalburan, et al, “Risky Play and Parenting Styles,” 362.

⁵⁹ Baumrind, “Differentiating between,” 41.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁶¹ In bibliography see Wendy S. Grolnick contribution, *The Psychology of Parental Control: How Well-Meant Parenting Backfire* (Mahwah: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), for more on power in connection to child relationships.

authoritative parent knows that they may use the tools of democracy, dominance, and passivity as needed. These parents understand that they can use their primary parenting style (authoritative), or the authoritarian style, or the permissive style as they see fit for each situation.⁶² The authoritative parent is not confined to always embodying the attributes of an authoritative style. They may find that a situation is best handled with a more domineering stance, thus embodying the authoritarian parenting style. Or, they may decide that they will allow their child to do as they please and be passive to the situation enacting a permissive parenting style. In essence, the use of “both autonomous self-will (permissive) and disciplined conformity (authoritarian) parenting styles are valued by the authoritative parent.”⁶³ Not only valued, but used as tools per the situations at hand. To reiterate, the fact that the authoritative parenting style uses both the authoritarian and permissive styles as they see fit per each situation is a crucial point to be remembered moving forward.

To keep this ideal at the forefront, let's turn back to the example of the father and his son having dinner on a Thursday night. Again, the situation will be the same but the attributes of the characters involved will be altered to include the authoritative parenting style. Like the other scenarios, the mother is out of town but this time, both herself and her husband embody authoritative parenting styles. This has caused their son to be well behaved, a good listener and respectful of what his parents ask of him. However, like most ten-year-old boys, he is not always a seemingly well-behaved child. Every child has their bad days and this, for the ten-year-old boy, was one of them. Earlier in the day the son's father got an unexpected call from his son's school. The father picked up the phone to hear his son's vice principal on the other end, the boy had been

⁶² This point needs to be taken special note of as this ideal opens the door for a less restrictive view of God's interactions with humanity amid suffering. This will be shown to be counter to the views of Rowe and his cohorts as the paper moves forward in terms of how they restrict how God can interact with humanity amid suffering.

⁶³ Baumrind, “Effects of Authoritative,” 891.

bullied and punched in the face, or so it seemed. Upon picking up his son, the father quickly found out that his son was actually the one bullying another boy, who was well on his way to becoming well versed in karate. The boy being bullied rebelled and punched the bullying son square in the nose. The father knew his son deserved it. However, his son complained the entire way home about how it was not his fault, seeking reassurance from his father. In this moment, his father provided no such reassurance. In fact, the father decided that he would not say much aside from a subtle nod of the head to reassure his son that he was not being ignored and a few comments to challenge what his son was saying.

Once home, the son quickly ran upstairs to play with his toys. His father promptly followed and addressed his son's disregard for what he had done. The father told his son that he cannot play with his toys because he had gotten in trouble at school. For the afternoon, he had to sit at the dining room table and do homework after writing an apology letter to the karate kid. The father explained that he would be able to play with his toys tomorrow after making things right by apologizing and giving the other kid the letter. The son understood and followed his father back down stairs.

After writing the letter and finishing homework, the son was starving and anxiously awaiting dinner. After a few minutes his father brought out the meal, a plate full of salmon and broccoli. The son promptly exclaimed that he did not like salmon or broccoli. His father told him in a calm voice that there was no other option and it would make him grow big and strong. The son pushed back, starting to throw a tantrum and claiming that his mother would never make him eat something he did not like. The father, knowing that this was untrue, firmly told his son that he had to eat what is on his plate, otherwise he will be grounded and unable to play with any toys for a week. His son started to cry loudly. The father decided to let his son sit there and cry, so he

left the room. About ten minutes later he returned to the son still sitting at the table playing with his food. His father sat down and told his son that if he is hungry, he will eat what is in front of him because there is no other option. His son tried to respond, but the father quickly spoke up again saying he did not want to hear any excuses and told him to eat the food on the table.

There is a primary difference between this scenario and the others provided, in this one the father enacted all three parenting styles. At first, the father listened and faintly spoke, giving his son room to speak freely and safely. Then he explained why his son cannot play with his toys and had him come down stairs to write an apology letter. In these situations, the father was enacting an authoritative parenting style. Following this style came the use of the permissive style. The father knew that he must just let his child be, allowing him to suffer through his tantrum on his own. Finally, the father enacted an authoritarian parenting style when he gave his son no choice but to eat the food in front of him.

The father's primary style was authoritative, but he used the others as needed to lead his child well. This will lead the child to a higher sense of morals and values, setting him up well later in life. This is because the authoritative style provides a balance between all three parenting styles which creates a healthy environment for the child to "acquire the habits, values, and knowledge needed to function effectively in a social community."⁶⁴ This draws the previously mentioned conclusion that the authoritative style is the best style out of the three for a parent to embody as their primary parenting style. This style is optimal due in part to the authoritative styles' high sense of democracy, but even more so due to the fact that it embodies the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles as needed.

To conclude, there are three primary parenting styles per Diana Baumrind: authoritative,

⁶⁴ Baumrind, "Differentiating between," 49.

authoritarian, and permissive.⁶⁵ The permissive style is passive, hands off, and overly lenient. The authoritarian style is domineering, overly hands on, and obsessed with hierarchical status. While the authoritative style is democratic, attentive, and fair. Not only that, but the authoritative style enacts both the authoritarian and permissive styles as this parent sees fit for a situation. This unique attribute makes the authoritative parenting style stand out from the rest since it embodies all three and is known to be the optimal style out of the three for a parent to have.

With a well-rounded understanding of parenting styles, the attributes of God found in the problem of evil can be evaluated with these three styles. The goal is to assess whether there is one style over the others that an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent being would perhaps embody.⁶⁶ However, before moving forward, here is a quick look at what is to follow. The conclusions found in this chapter will be used to see if the arguments from evil are drawing similar conclusions as to which parenting style a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent would embody, especially in connection to instances of human suffering.⁶⁷ Then, the conclusions of arguments from evil will be compared with how God interacts with humanity amid suffering in the Bible. This comparison will be used to show that the atheists, although providing one-way God would act amid human suffering, are missing the whole picture of how God will interact thus making their conclusions based on the limited presentation about God false.

⁶⁵ Tunde-Ayinmode, et al, "Parenting Style and Conduct," 60.

⁶⁶ The word "perhaps" is of special note here because the purpose of this upcoming section is not to give a conclusive answer on what parenting style a God of this nature would have, but to give a likely answer.

⁶⁷ As the arguments of Rowe and his cohorts are shown, it must be understood that none of these atheist's blatantly state what is being drawn out of their arguments in terms of the parenting styles of God. Rather, the purpose is to show that there is an aspect of parenting styles that is underlying what they are saying and to show that God has been taken out of context to bring about their conclusions.

An Omni Being's Potential Parenting Style

To start this section, a premise must be restated. It would be an over exaggeration to state that a being, who is assumed to be creator of the universe and embodying the attributes at hand, could ever be connected to the parenting styles of humans without limitations. It is likely that such a being is outside of humanity's conception of reality.⁶⁸ Therefore, this being's actions amid suffering in a parent-like manner are likely to never be understood in full by any person who is not omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. This thesis only hopes to show that with the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, a creator God of this nature would likely embody one parenting style over the others. But again, this is not to say that any of these deductions are fully conclusive on the matter since no human being will ever have a fully conclusive answer to the question: what parenting style does God truly embody?

To back track once more, a parenting style is "all behaviors, attitudes, and values parents use to interact with their children that influences their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development."⁶⁹ There are three parenting styles used in this work and parents typically lean towards one as their primary style. The styles are permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative which uses both permissive and authoritarian as needed. So, the question at hand is this: which of these parenting styles would a God who is all-power, all-knowing, and wholly-good embody? Well, in order to answer this question, another question must be answered: which of these parenting styles would this being not embody?

In short, it is unlikely that a God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and wholly-good would embody either of the suboptimal styles, permissive or authoritarian, as a primary

⁶⁸ In bibliography see Stephen J. Wykstra's contribution, "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of 'Appearance'," 88, for a fuller understanding of this ideal.

⁶⁹ Aremu, et al, "Relationship between Parenting Styles," 91.

parenting style. This is because a God who is omnipotent and omniscient would not be overly permissive and allow other beings to have a hierarchical status over Himself. If this God were to allow such a thing to happen, it would be in part due to His allowing it to be so, therefore, enacting power over the others. This is a permissive act but not out of passivity, rather out of allowance. Additionally, with the use of this being's omniscience and omnibenevolence, it is highly unlikely that He would be authoritarian. This God would understand that acting overly domineering will only create resentment and hostility which is not what a being of this nature would be after. Taking this to an earthly ideal, it is unlikely that a person will ever say that the presence of resentment and hostility in another person are good things. What is likely is that resentment and hostility are viewed as things to be dealt with to become good once more, not attributes that make someone good. Therefore, a God who is omnibenevolent would likely not embody an authoritarian parenting style as a primary style since this style will cause things that are not good to be the outcome of His actions.

The point here is that a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent would likely embody an authoritative parenting style as a primary parenting style. This would be so because God would likely be kind, patient, loving, caring, protective, affirming, supportive, dominant, and passive. This God would know when it must enact dominance or passivity in order to have the best outcome. In the presence of suffering, this being would know that it can enact power if needed, but will not if the outcome is best without the action being taken. This being would use the tools necessary to create the best outcome, including the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. The being does not live in one or the other, but uses them as He sees fit. This God, notably the God of the Bible, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent

would embody an authoritative parenting style.⁷⁰

So, with the attributes of God being omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, the most likely conclusion is that God would embody an authoritative parenting style as the primary style out of the three presented. This style is the healthiest of the three and the optimal style for a parent to embody. In the midst of suffering, this style will take on any of the other styles as needed. In one instance, a child may need loving care and support. While in another, the child may need to be left to walk through the suffering in order to create a greater good. Other times, the child may need a push towards something that seems as though it will bring about suffering. The important point to note here is that a God with these three attributes will not always attend to humanity's needs amid suffering in all the same ways. This God will put to use whichever parenting style is best for each individual situation. Again, the parenting style which puts to use each style as necessary is the authoritative parenting style. In conclusion, this God would likely embody the authoritative parenting style since He may be passive, domineering, democratic, or any combination of the three as necessary.

⁷⁰ The expression “notably the God of the Bible” is of importance again. Take special note of the fact that a God with the attributes at hand comes from the Bible. Therefore, this God can be expressed as the God of the Bible.

CHAPTER THREE

Assessing the Arguments from Evil against Parenting Styles

Out of the three parenting styles presented, if God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent He would likely embody an authoritative parenting style. This is not to say that God can be understood within the confines of human characteristics since He is a transcendent being.⁷¹ However, this is to say that with the attributes that atheists use to argue against God's existence, the authoritative parenting style is the one God would embody out of the three. In the introduction it was stated that the atheists use parenting analogies in their attempts to disprove God's existence. When they do this, they often expect things of, project things on to, or assume things about God. All of these expectations, projections, and assumptions have a common underlying theme when connected to parenting styles. Although it is not blatantly stated, the atheists are proclaiming that God is an authoritative parent, but not of the kind evaluated above. The authoritative parent that atheists are proclaiming this God to be is one does not use the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles as necessary.⁷²

If God does not embody the whole of the authoritative parenting style, it becomes easy for atheists to draw the conclusion that God does not exist or that God must not exist with the three attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence. This will become evident as

⁷¹ See note 68 where Wykstra's work is referenced. In this work, Wykstra makes the point that human wisdom may be connected to an infant and God's wisdom to a parent. In this way, humanity may know some of reasons for suffering and some of the outweighing goods that justify God just as an infant may discern some of the reasons for suffering. But that does not mean that the infant or humanity will know all the reasons that justify the suffering at hand.

⁷² This is not to say that God may not embody a parenting style not mentioned in this work. However, it is to say that of the ones in this work, God would embody the authoritative parenting style in the common sense of the style. Even if there is another parenting style that aligns better with the views of Rowe and his cohorts, the point still stands to be developed that a God with the attributes at hand is found in the Bible and is therefore being taken out of context to create a view of how He must interact amid suffering.

the chapter moves forward through the examination of the works of William Rowe and a few other atheistic scholars. Before moving forward, it is important to note that the analogies used by atheists can be related to parenting styles since they connect God to a parent, but the atheists do not state themselves that God has a certain parenting style. The time spent on William Rowe will show that through many of his works he concludes that God does not exist by proclaiming that an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God would embody an authoritative parenting style that does not embody all the attributes of the authoritative style.⁷³ These conclusions are to draw out the point that God is being presented in a way that is both out of context and expecting things of Him that limit Him to acting in certain ways that He may not act when taken in context.

William Rowe

Through the examination of William Rowe's works it will become evident that Rowe's arguments conclude that if God were to embody omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, He would be an authoritative parent apart from the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles in order to exist. The outcome of viewing God in this way are arguments concerning God's actions that are only a partial view of how this God would interact. This first becomes evident in Rowe's work named *The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look*. Rowe uses a parent analogy in response to Stephen Wykstra, a Christian theologian who rebutted Rowe with a parent analogy prior to Rowe's response. In Rowe's own words, he states:

What happens when a loving parent intentionally permits her child to suffer intensely for the sake of a distant good that cannot otherwise be realized? In such instances the parent attends directly to the child throughout its period of suffering, comforts the child to the best of her ability, expresses her concern and love for the child in ways that are unmistakably clear to the child, assures the child that the suffering will end, and tries to explain, as best she can, why it is necessary for her to permit the suffering even though it is in her power to prevent it. In short, during these periods of intentionally permitted

⁷³ What is meant by this is that God is expected to be authoritative in part, but not fully. God is expected to have the authoritative parenting style, but not expected to use the permissive and authoritarian styles as needed. This point will be developed as the paper moves forward.

intense suffering, the child is consciously aware of the direct presence, love, and concern of the parent, and receives special assurances from the parent that, if not why, the suffering (or the parent's permission of it) is necessary for some distant good.⁷⁴

Already, Rowe has explained attributes that would be embodied by an authoritative parent. The parent is cool, calm, and collected. The parent is expressive, explanative, and experienced. The parent is loving and understanding in a way that the permissive and authoritarian styles are unlikely to be. As Rowe moves on, He explains this analogy in connection to God.

If we do apply the parent analogy, the conclusion about God that we should draw is something like the following: When God permits horrendous suffering for the sake of some good, if that good is beyond our ken, God will make every effort to be consciously present to us during our period of suffering, will do his best to explain to us why he is permitting us to suffer, and will give us special assurances of his love and concern during the period of the suffering. Since enormous numbers of human beings undergo prolonged, horrendous suffering without being consciously aware of any such divine presence, concern, and explanations, we may conclude that if there is a God, the goods for the sake of which he permits horrendous human suffering are more often than not goods we know of. In any case, I think we are justified in concluding that we've been given no good reason to think that if God exists the goods that justify him in permitting much human and animal suffering are quite likely to be beyond our ken.⁷⁵

What Rowe has done here is used the parent analogy to show that God would explain His reasonings for allowing suffering to humanity, or at least attempt to. Rowe does two things with this information. First, he states that it is likely that the goods that justify God would be within humanity's ability to know. Secondly, Rowe uses the fact that humanity does not know to conclude that God does not exist since He would explain Himself if He could. Essentially, since it is the case that God does not always explain reasons for suffering, it can be concluded He does not exist because if He did exist, He would explain.⁷⁶ This conclusion is conjoined with facts that

⁷⁴ Rowe, "The Evidential Argument," 276.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁷⁶ This point is expressed to show that there is an expectation placed upon God that He must explain. However, the real question at hand is why must this God explain? If God has to explain then how could He ever be connected to a parenting analogy as no parenting style has an a priori expectation that they must explain everything they know, or, at the least, make sure there is somehow an ability to know the facts. Expecting that a God of this nature must explain in order to be justified is an expectation placed upon a God of this nature, not a fact about this God.

God would be all-powerful, all-knowing, and wholly-good because why would a God with these attributes not explain Himself just as the authoritative parent does? The authoritative God would explain Himself to humanity amid suffering and make sure that humanity knows that they are loved by God and of His utmost concern.⁷⁷ However, Rowe concludes that since God does not always do this, He must not exist.

Rowe's ideals that God would be authoritative and would justify Himself by giving reasons for the allowed sufferings is a theme throughout many of His works. In another work Rowe states that "an omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse."⁷⁸ Rowe uses this claim to conclude that God does not exist. At first glance, this may not seem like it proves the view of God as authoritative without the permissive and authoritarian styles, but a deeper look shows that it does. The statement above says that God would prevent the occurrences of intense suffering if possible. Then, later in the work, Rowe concludes that a God who is "omnipotent and omniscient could have prevented some of the intense sufferings in the world without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some equally bad or worse evil."⁷⁹ Thus, since there are instances of suffering that God could have prevented but did not, God either does not exist at all, or, at the least, does not have all three of the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence.

The only way the above argument works is if God were obligated to prevent all of humanity's suffering, or He was obligated to explain His reasons for allowing suffering when He

⁷⁷ Rowe, "The Evidential Argument," 276.

⁷⁸ Marilyn M. Adams and Robert M. Adams, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 127.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

does not prevent it. If God does embody the authoritative parenting style without the permissive and authoritarian styles, then it would make sense that God would justify Himself by explaining to humanity.⁸⁰ But, if God embodies the authoritative style as it truly exists, then God would not need to prevent the occurrences of these evils, or, at the least, would have no reason to explain His reasoning for allowing them. Additionally, since humanity is not omniscient, it is likely that they may never understand God's ways. If humanity does not understand, then how can Rowe objectively say that God has not prevented what is assumed to be necessarily preventable by God? The only way that humanity would know God's reasons for allowing suffering is if God were to explain Himself or somehow revealed the reasons to humanity.

Rowe expresses the ideal that humanity may not understand God's reasons for allowing suffering in his work *Evil and Theodicy*. Rowe states: "humanity has no similar reason to think that if some good is such that obtaining it would justify an omnipotent, omniscient being in permitting evil, it would likely be one humanity knows of."⁸¹ In other words, humanity has no reason to think that they may know God's reasons for allowing suffering since humans are not all-knowing as this God would be. Therefore, the only way to conclude that humanity knows the justifying reasons is if God is expected to explain Himself for the allowed sufferings. This shows the expectation placed upon God that He will explain because, as Rowe states, there is a case where humanity has no ability to understand the reasons that justify God in permitting evil. If there is a case where humanity does not understand, then the only way for them to understand

⁸⁰ This is due in part to how the authoritative style responds to their children and the type of power they assert (confrontive power). If the parts of the authoritative style are taken out that come from the use of the permissive and authoritarian styles, then this conclusion becomes the case. The parent would not be dominant in their assertions, nor passive in decisions as necessary. Rather, the parent would likely be caused to explain since the authoritative parenting style is verbally communicative by nature. See pages 22-24 and the continuation of this chapter.

⁸¹ William L. Rowe, "Evil and Theodicy," *Philosophical Topics* 16, no. 2 (1988): 119-32, accessed March 1, 2020, 125.

would be if God were obligated to justify Himself through explaining the reasons for suffering to humanity.

Without the permissive and authoritarian counterparts, the authoritative parent would be explanatory, reasonable, and not overly demanding or passive. The style would not push too hard or too little, and would never choose passivity or dominance even if either one seemed like the best choice. The style different from its counterparts would cause God to always be obligated to explain Himself since He would have an obligation to be verbally communicative as the authoritative parenting style is.⁸² In contrast, when the authoritative style has the counterparts of the permissive and authoritarian styles, the circumstance where this God would be obligated to explain Himself would not exist since both passivity and dominance can be in opposition to explanation. Again, the only way to conclude there are instances of suffering that God could have prevented but did not is if God were expected to explain every instance of suffering or reveal the reasons through some other means. If God were expected to explain the suffering as the parent is expected to, then He would likely embody the authoritative parenting style without the use of the other styles. The authoritative parenting style that Rowe is assuming God to have is one that does not embody the permissive and authoritarian styles. Therefore, God would be explanative and present in such ways that the true authoritative parenting style may not be.

Per Rowe's ideal that there are goods God could have prevented, there are also evils that need explanation. For, if there are evils within the world that could not have been prevented, then there are reasons that those evils were not prevented. In other words, there are justifying reasons that these evils have been allowed to occur, perhaps for a greater, outweighing, unknown good.

⁸² Note here that the authoritative parent is only verbally communicative as necessary due to the use of the permissive and authoritarian styles. But when the parent does not enact use of the permissive and authoritarian styles, there is an expectation that this parenting style will explain because there is less of an ability to choose not to explain.

The expectation placed upon God with the existence of evils that need justification is, yet again, that God must explain Himself. To put this in Rowe's terms from his premises found in another work: "(1) There exist horrendous evils that an all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly good being would have no justifying reason to permit. (2) An all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly good being would not permit an evil unless he had a justifying reason to permit it. therefore, (3) God does not exist."⁸³ Rowe's point here is that since God does not explain or seem not to have justifying reasons, He does not exist. Shown here is the ideal again that God must explain His reasons for allowing suffering to humanity in order to exist because the only way that justification is truly satisfied is when the onlooker understands the reason behind the decision. Rowe is saying that humanity must know of God's reasons for allowing suffering for Him to be justified because there is no other way to truly understand. This ideal is an expectation placed upon God and when connected to parenting styles it shows that the style God would embody out of the three presented is the authoritative style, but without its counterparts.

Through many of his works, Rowe uses the ideal that God must justify Himself by explaining His reasons for suffering to conclude that since God does not justify Himself, He does not exist. He makes this same point again in another work. Rowe states that "a good, omnipotent deity has a prima facie reason to prevent evil and the power to do so. In addition, we may reason that if God exists there must be goods that justify him in permitting all this evil."⁸⁴ There must be justifying reasons for God's permission of evils. Now again, the only way to know God's justifying reasons for allowing suffering is if God were to explain to humanity, whether through communication or leaving some evidence behind. Likewise, the parenting style that God would

⁸³ William L. Rowe and Nick Trakakis, *William L. Rowe on Philosophy of Religion: Selected Writings* (New York, NY: Routledge Publishing, 2016), 195.

⁸⁴ William L. Rowe, "Evil and God's Freedom in Creation," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1999): 101-13, accessed March 1, 2020, 103.

likely have to have in order to be obligated to explain Himself in this way is the authoritative style without its counterparts.

Now a question may be forming, why does it matter what parenting style a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent would embody? It matters because there is a direct correlation between how atheists like Rowe view a God with these attributes and their arguments. Rowe draws conclusions with expectations he places upon God that can be directly connected to parenting styles. These expectations are expressed when Rowe uses parent analogies to disprove God's existence. The parent analogies show that in connection to the parenting styles found in chapter two, Rowe expects God to be an authoritative parent, but without the permissive and authoritarian aspects of the authoritative style. The parent analogies also highlight the fact that the premises made about this God are made through an out of context view of this God, which will be shown in full in the next chapter.

Another example of this, aside from what has already been stated, is when Rowe states in another parent analogy that God "will almost always be consciously present to humans when he permits them to suffer for goods they cannot comprehend, giving special assurances of his love for them. But since countless numbers of human beings undergo prolonged, horrendous suffering without being consciously aware of God's presence or any special assurances of his love and comfort, we can reasonably infer that God does not exist."⁸⁵ The love and assurance that Rowe would expect of God can be related to the authoritative parenting style, but only as long as the style does not embody the permissive and authoritarian counterparts. If this style does embody the counterparts then yes, God would explain Himself and give assurance, love, and comfort, but

⁸⁵ Rowe, et al, *William L. Rowe on Philosophy*, 200.

only as He sees fit and may not always do so. With that knowledge, the use of parent analogies to conclude that God does not exist are contingent on God being an authoritative parent who does not embody all the parts of the authoritative parenting style. Additionally, the expectation that God must justify Himself is present because of viewing God with the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, which are the attributes of God that are found in the Bible.⁸⁶

The view of God at hand would cause Him to always explain, showing His love and compassion through communication that is neither passive nor dominant. It can be stated now that to draw the conclusions of Rowe's analogies, he is viewing God in a way that is only a partial view of God. If God has the presented attributes and is to be an authoritative parent, then God would also embody attributes of the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles as shown in the prior chapter. Perhaps at times God would decide not to share with humanity about the allowance of their sufferings, or maybe He would even pull some people out of suffering. Either way, if God is to embody the authoritative parenting style, He would not be loving, comforting, and explanatory at all times. Sometimes God would not explain, nor would He always need to explain since the authoritative style embodies both the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles as well. The only way Rowe's conclusions work is if things are expected of God that are not even expected of human parents. God must be authoritative, but only authoritative with part of the attributes of the authoritative style. If Rowe's conclusions are correct, then there would be no instances of God embodying the other styles as well. Although this section has shown Rowe's view of God to be an incomplete view, the only way to truly know if God embodies more than

⁸⁶ Note here that despite the fact that these attributes are found in the Bible, there has been no use of the Bible to show how God would interact with humanity amid suffering.

what Rowe states is to move to the where these attributes of God are found, the Bible. But before moving on to the Bible, a few other arguments from evil from other atheistic scholars will be examined in short to show that their views of God in their arguments are extraordinarily similar to Rowe's.

Other Atheistic Scholars

This section is not meant to be an extensive evaluation of other atheists' works, but merely a short excerpt to show that other atheists have similar views to William Rowe. The atheists that will be mentioned are Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Paul Draper, and Bruce Russell. To start, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong offers an argument for the non-existence of God against Christian William Lane Craig that has similarities to Rowe's arguments. As Sinnott-Armstrong states: "If God did have some reason to let a baby suffer and die, He could tell us His reason, and He would have no adequate reason not to tell us. Thus, since we see no adequate reason for it, a baby's suffering is evidence that there is no God who has all of the features in the traditional conception."⁸⁷ This claim from Sinnott-Armstrong bears similarity to Rowe's 1979 argument and its claims. The primary way these two scholars' arguments are similar is their claims which express that God must tell humanity His reasons for allowing suffering, otherwise, He does not exist.

However, if humanity sees no adequate reason for a baby's suffering, that does not mean that the reasons do not exist. The stipulation placed upon God here is that He, with the traditional attributes, would have a prima facie reason to communicate His reasons why the baby had to suffer, or, why the baby suffered on this occasion. Without taking this further than necessary, there is one thing to be said in connection to parenting styles. If God, with the three attributes at

⁸⁷ William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, *God?: A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist* (Point/Counterpoint Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85.

hand, is a traditional authoritative parent, then He need not explain Himself in this way. God only needs to explain Himself when He, like expressed in the previous section, embodies an authoritative parenting style that is separated from its counterparts of the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles.

The next work to be examined is written by Paul Draper. In this work Draper provides another parent analogy that also bares similarity to Rowe's works. Draper's conclusions will not be extrapolated here, only his analogy will be looked at in short. Draper starts his analogy with this premise: "Suppose T2: God exists, and one of His final ends is for humans to have the freedom to make very important decisions."⁸⁸ Draper then moves on from T2 to his analogy which connects God to a good parent. He states: "A good parent gradually increases a child's responsibility. Children who are unworthy of a certain responsibility are not benefited by parents who give them that responsibility. On the assumption that T2 is true, one would expect that God would behave like a good parent, giving humans great responsibility only when we are worthy of it."⁸⁹ The question at hand is why must the good parent or God only give responsibility to those that seem worthy? What happens when a parent gives responsibility to their child when the child may not be ready for it in order to grow them or teach them something?

If Draper's analogy is right, then no good parent gives their children more responsibility than they can handle, even if it were to be a growing experience for the child.⁹⁰ Perhaps the parents giving of responsibility only when the child is worthy is due to the excessive responsibility leading to some suffering that the parent wants to stop. The problem with only giving

⁸⁸ Draper, "Pain and Pleasure," 22.

⁸⁹ Draper, "Pain and Pleasure," 23.

⁹⁰ Note here that this is an assumption that no good parent will give more responsibility than what the child can handle, not a fact based on objective truth.

responsibility to children when they are worthy is that suffering in conjunction to excessive responsibility may lead to growth in a child's understanding. The growth could cause the child to be able to make very important decisions, thus creating in the child the attributes needed to retain that amount of responsibility. In turn, the child may now be seen as worthy on Drapers scale, but only after living with the excess of responsibility.

In the instance where the parent may choose to give too much or too little responsibility to a child, they would embody the authoritative style in the normal sense of the style.⁹¹ But when the parent is limited to the child being worthy of responsibility, the style changes. If the good parent can only give and take responsibility when the child is worthy, then they cannot impart excessive responsibility or retract responsibility for the purposes of teaching and growth. If worthiness is the standard, then the parent cannot passively allow excessive responsibility, nor could the parent forcibly give or take the responsibility for unhealthy reasons. If the parent cannot do these things, then the parent does not embody any of the commonly known parenting styles. Rather, the parent embodies the authoritative style without its counterparts when connecting this parent to the parenting styles at hand. Without the ability to be passive or domineering, the authoritative style is all that is left, but left without the ability to use the other styles as necessary. Thus, if God is expected to do the same as this seemingly 'good parent,' then He too would be expected to embody the authoritative style apart from what the true style entails. In conclusion, the parenting style that Draper is assuming God to embody is one that is only partial to the way God would be since God could very well give and take responsibility without someone being worthy.⁹² This, again, is extraordinarily similar to Rowe's arguments.

⁹¹ This is due to the authoritative parent acting in ways that are meant for the benefit of the child. The freedom to give or take responsibility for healthy and good reasons would not be of the permissive or authoritarian styles because they typically do things out of insecurity and unhealth. See chapter two per each parenting style.

⁹² See the section on God's parenting style from Chapter Two.

The final scholar, Bruce Russell, has two instances that will be looked at in his work. The first instance that can be connected to Rowe's ideals is when Russell poses the question of "why a wholly good God would leave humanity totally in the dark amid seemingly pointless and preventable suffering?"⁹³ This question is followed by stating that a good parent would intervene or explain why she did not. Likewise, God would do the same and either intervene or explain Himself.⁹⁴ These ideals do not need much addressing except to state that they are similar to Rowe's when it comes to God's connection to the good parent. It seems that God must either do something about suffering, explain why He did not, or He does not exist.

If God must act or explain Himself then He, as shown in Rowe's works, can only be like a parent that is authoritative without the other attributes. Again, this is due in part to the fact that both permissive and authoritarian parents may not intervene or explain themselves. The only parenting style out of the ones found in chapter two that would do as Russell states is the authoritative parenting style, but only if it does not include the use of the other two styles. If the authoritative style does include the permissive and authoritarian styles, then this parent could easily not intervene or explain herself because she is passive; or, because in order to keep the sensation of dominance, she feels she need not explain herself.

The second claim of Russell's that is similar to Rowe's is when he explains a father being justified in not allowing his child to have a lifesaving surgery. The father is justified because "no one in the tribe has ever seen anyone with a gash in the abdomen survive."⁹⁵ Because of the father's experience, he is justified in believing that his son would probably die, thus not allowing

⁹³ Bruce Russell, "The Persistent Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (1989): 121-139, accessed March 5, 2020, 134.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁹⁵ Russell, "The Persistent Problem of Evil," 134.

the surgery to happen. Then Russell explains that “in this example the proposed operation appears pointless to the father since it does not appear to him to be a way, and so not the only way, of saving his son. And because the operation appears pointless, the father is justified in believing that the doctor who proposes to perform the operation suffers from some sort of defect, either of character or of knowledge.”⁹⁶ This is used to show that a person is justified to believe that if God exists, He would have prevented sufferings that seem likely pointless or without an outweighing good. But, since God seems to not do this, God does not exist.⁹⁷ This can be connected to Rowe in the sense of expecting God to justify why He allowed humanity to suffer. Russell’s point is that humanity may believe that God does not exist because of the seemingly pointless suffering that He could have prevented.

To Russell’s point, the only way to know if the suffering was pointless is if God were to explain to humanity. If humans deduced on their own that the suffering was not pointless, there would always be people who disagree, just as it is today. Christians and atheists disagree on the matter and never come to a conclusive answer. Either the Christian is right, the atheist is right, both are right, or neither are right. The only way to address the ambiguity for seemingly pointless suffering is through the source in need of justification (God) communicating His reasons to humanity. The only way to show that the suffering is not pointless would be for God to intervene and tell humanity His reasons for allowing it. Then, as with Russell’s justified belief, perhaps he would decide to believe that God does indeed exist. But, expecting God to tell humanity His reasons for suffering is expecting something of God that He need not do. When connected to

⁹⁶ Russell, “The Persistent Problem of Evil,” 134.

⁹⁷ See Bruce Russell’s “The Persistent Problem of Evil” for a full understand of just how Russell comes to this conclusion.

parenting styles, the one out of the three presented this God would embody is the authoritative style without its counterparts. This can be concluded since Russell is shown at an earlier point in his work to use a parent analogy to express that God would explain Himself. Again, the expectation that God must explain himself for allowed sufferings is in direct connection to Rowe. With that, there is a problem with making an argument on justifications, a person holding a justified belief may be justified but that does not mean the belief is true.

In fact, justified belief and truth are two very different things. A person may be justified to believe what they believe, that does not mean it is the truth on the matter. Finding the truth is what is important. A justified belief is good for potentials, but that is exactly what it is, a potential. Truth will always stand firm and if someone cannot know the truth then they may very well hold their justified belief, but that does not mean they are right. If someone holds a justified belief, they must continue to investigate until they find the truth.⁹⁸ An argument made on a justified belief is subjective in nature and often skewed. The skewed argument leads to other skewed beliefs and in order to be objective, the arguer must be open to finding the objective truth, or at the least find a source other than self. The atheists have justified beliefs which does not make their statements right. Seeking until truth is found is the only way to have an objective argument.

Truth, in terms of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God, can from a few sources, but the one of use in this work is the Bible. This is because the attributes at hand can be

⁹⁸ The word “must” is used here to emphasize the importance of seeking truth for argumentations sake. A justified belief is fine to be held, but should be recognized for the fact that it is a not a truth statement. There may be instances that justified beliefs and truths are the same thing, but without the objective facts a justified belief cannot be stated as an objective truth statement. Therefore, when creating an argument for or against something and in order to be objective, rather than stating things contingent solely justified beliefs, the argument must be stated by seeking the objective facts on the matter, i.e. evidence aside from opinion. If this is not the case, the simple question is why must things be the way the arguer is saying? When that question is asked it becomes evident that the arguer’s answer is just because they have said so, think so, or it makes some sort of logical sense. None of which are objective truths, they are potentials. But, when arguments are not presented as potentials and presented as facts, the arguer “must” make sure that the facts are not simply their facts but objective facts, objective truths.

found in the Bible. If the attributes are found in the Bible, then the Bible is where a person should look to see how this God does interact amid suffering while obtaining the attributes at hand. The attributes cannot be taken out of the Bible and then decidedly put to the test and expected to be a certain way. If a person has certain attributes, those attributes may be used to assume that the person will act a certain way, but until that person is seen in action, the exact nature of the person is still an unproven assumption.

In light of all this, an atheist may ask the question, “how does one believe in the existence of God? Experiences? Trust? Both seem subjective.” Yes, but the answer is much more complex than that. The truth of God is found in the source that says who He is, the Bible. If a true way to know God through the Bible, then the Bible plus experience is objective. The experience alone may be subjective but not when it is backed up by the objective truth and evidence of the Bible. The Bible can be called objective truth when referring to these attributes because it is where God can be found with these attributes. When someone separates the attributes from the source, they are extrapolating to create an answer of their choosing.⁹⁹ Likewise, when the atheists assume things about God, their source is typically self. Self is not objective but subjective. If self is subjective, so are the things assumed about God. If the things assumed about God are only subjective, then the conclusions made by atheists about God and His character while embodying the three attributes at hand are likely wrong.¹⁰⁰ This work will not use subjectivity, but attempt to use objectivity by using the Bible to show that the God found in the Bible with the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence would embody the authoritative parenting

⁹⁹ This is an important point. If someone were to claim that another person would do x, y and z because they think so, that does not make their answer right. They could have very good reasons for thinking this is the case and use some of that person’s characteristics to create their answer. But, without knowing more about that person’s background, life, and how he or she interacts, there is no objective way to know that this person will act in x, y, or z ways. It is an assumption, not a fact.

style in its common sense as seen in the previous chapter. If this work was left to justified belief alone, then all would be lost.

¹⁰⁰ See note 99. God is like the person who is taken in part to say he or she would do x, y and z when doing those things may not be of that person all. The conclusions are simply potentials that are based on opinion and not facts. For this reason, it can be stated that the atheist's conclusions that God does not exist because He does not act in the ways they want Him to are likely wrong. The atheists are justified to hold the beliefs (see note 97), but that does not mean the beliefs are the truth.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Biblical God

The God of the Bible, namely YHWH, the Abrahamic God, the God of the Israelites, has many attributes which are seen throughout the Bible.¹⁰¹ The biblical texts are where the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence can be found. These attributes show in part who the God of the Bible is. But the attributes bring opposition from atheists who think that either God does not exist or does not exist with the attributes at hand. They claim that this God, often like a good parent, would act in certain ways with humanity amid suffering, but He always fails to meet their standards.¹⁰² As stated in chapter three, if atheists are to make these claims, they must not take the attributes of God out of context and place them into their own context. What should be done is an analysis of biblical examples to see how a God with these attributes does interact with humanity amid suffering. The specific biblical examples to be looked at will examine the relationship between God and a parent in terms of how God acts towards humanity throughout suffering and how a parent acts towards their child in similar instances.

This chapter will conclude that out of three presented parenting styles God would embody an authoritative parenting style in the basic sense of the style. These findings will be based on how God interacts with humanity amid suffering in the Bible.¹⁰³ The biblical examples of God's interactions with humanity amid suffering that will be analyzed are the story of Adam and Eve, the exodus and exile of the Israelites, the book of Job, the life of Jesus Christ, and the

¹⁰¹ For more on the names of God see Elmer L. Towns contribution, *The Ultimate Guide to the Names of God: Three Bestsellers in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 2014) found in bibliography.

¹⁰² See Chapter Three.

¹⁰³ See notes 32 and 33.

conversion of Saul of Tarsus commonly known as Apostle Paul. These examples are proposed to show that God enacts different parenting styles when interacting with humanity in different instances of suffering. With the presence of different styles, the conclusion of God's likely embodiment of the authoritative parenting style will become evident. Additionally, this conclusion will show that God has been taken out of context in order for the atheistic scholars to make their arguments found in the last chapter.

All this, however, is only to bring about a human understanding of God's connection to the human characteristics of parenting styles. Without omniscience, humanity is limited to what they can understand. This is a moment where creating understanding can only come from the source of who God is. Additionally, as finite creatures, humanity is unlikely to understand a transcendent and infinite being fully.¹⁰⁴ With this limitation, the parenting styles of God will be drawn out, knowing full well that fair treatment would take much more than the human mind is capable of. To begin, on to the first humans found in the Bible, Adam and Eve.

Biblical Interactions

Adam and Eve: First Interactions

The first example of human suffering found in the Bible comes from the book of Genesis. Per the biblical account, Adam and Eve were the first two humans to be created by God (Genesis 1:27; 2:7). God, after placing them in what is called the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15), gave them dominion over the earth so that they could take care of the land and the creatures of the earth (Gen. 1:27-28). But God gave Adam and Eve a single command of what they shall not do and ultimately, they broke that command. God told them they "are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it

¹⁰⁴ See note 68.

you will certainly die” (Gen. 3:16-17).¹⁰⁵ Following the command was the temptation to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Eve was tempted by another creature in the garden, a serpent, who explained that eating of the tree would make her like God (Gen. 3:1-5). Ultimately, Eve gave into the temptation of eating of the forbidden tree and then she gave some to Adam as well (Gen. 3:6).

As this story moves forward, it is good to express that the intention here is not to prove or disprove the existence of a literal Adam and Eve. Nor is the purpose to argue the theological ideals of how or why this sin caused separation between man and God. The purpose is to show how God reacts when sin, which can arguably be translated as suffering, takes place in human’s lives. The bottom line is Adam and Eve sinned against God. This sin can be viewed as the “crossing of boundaries that God set for them. They essentially attempted to go beyond the limits of humanity and usurp power that belongs to God.”¹⁰⁶ Sadly, they wanted the power for themselves. However, what they got instead was a heart of shame and a fear of punishment as they realized they were naked and hid from God (Gen. 3:7-8). After hiding, God called to them asking where they were, continuing with a series of questions about what had happened which gave Adam and Eve the chance to explain themselves (Gen. 3:9-13). Upon hearing of what they did and seeing how they blamed each other, God banned them from the Garden of Eden but only after giving them a series of life long punishments (Gen. 3:14-23). God did not ban them without first clothing them with the skin of animals so they no longer had to feel shame for being naked (Gen. 3:21). Finally, “in Genesis 3:24 God took elaborate precautions to ensure that the man and

¹⁰⁵ All biblical passages referenced are in *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Daniel Durken, ed., *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 77.

woman would not re-enter the garden”¹⁰⁷ by placing guards at the entrance.

God interacts with humanity in the story of Adam and Eve in a multitude of ways which can connect to parenting styles. In the first instance, God created Adam and Eve and gave them purpose, instructions and rules to follow (Gen. 1:27-28; 3:16-17). God communicated clearly the boundaries He wanted them to follow and the things He expected of them. This is in direct connection to the authoritative parenting style as the authoritative style “conveys clear boundaries and expectations to a child within a warm and involved context.”¹⁰⁸ Through communicating His desires with Adam and Eve, God did just as an authoritative parent would.

Moving forward, God allowed Adam and Eve to make their own choices. As an omnipotent and omniscient being, God could have stopped Adam and Eve from eating of the forbidden tree, but He did not.¹⁰⁹ Through the act of allowing humanity to choose, God enacted passivity. God did not stop Adam and Eve’s actions, nor did He communicate more in the moment. However, God let Adam and Eve do as they wished which led to their own suffering. Only after the fruit of the tree was eaten did God come and talk with Adam and Eve about what they had done. “And when He came to talk with them, he did not accuse Adam and Eve and state, ‘I know what you’ve done, so there’s no use hiding.’ No, he came *inquiring*: ‘Where are you?’ (Gen. 3:9). This is not a question about their physical location as much as it is a question about the states of their minds. He comes seeking to know them. He comes longing to provide

¹⁰⁷ John Barton and John Muddiman, eds, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA-OSO, 2013), 44.

¹⁰⁸ Millings, et al, “Good Partner, Good Parent,” 39.

¹⁰⁹ By being all-knowing God likely knew what Adam and Eve would do. Additionally, by being all-powerful, God could have stopped their actions. However, as stated here, God chose not to intercede. This is not to claim that the reasons God did this are fully understood, but only to say that through the context of what happened it can be postulated that God did these things with healthy reasons. See explanation that comes past this note.

them with the opportunity to reveal themselves and in the process feel God feeling them.”¹¹⁰ The opportunity God provided was out of love and concern. God comes with a calming voice asking ‘Where are you?’ (Gen. 3:9). God gave the two who were hiding the opportunity to come forward and speak. By coming like this and listening to what Adam and Eve had to say, he was again enacting an authoritative parenting style through a soft and inviting communicative tone.

Once God heard enough, He did one more caring act by clothing the couple before promptly kicking them out of the Garden of Eden for good (Gen. 3:21). God cared and acted out of love to tend to His children’s needs before enacting a punishment. In this way, God again was likely portraying the authoritative parenting style. He understood what Adam and Eve were saying. It is likely that God was upset with them, but He decidedly chose to care for them before punishing them just as a good parent likely would. The punishment had already been expressed, but the sentence was given after the caring act.

Once God banned Adam and Eve, He took the precautionary means as stated above to make sure they did not return to the Garden of Eden. In doing this, He put His foot down and promptly made the couple do as He said. In acting this way, God was using either the authoritative or authoritarian parenting styles. This act could be considered either style because both utilize punishment. It is more likely that this act was of the authoritative parenting style since God explained His reasoning and gave the couple clear boundaries before promptly forcing them out of the now forbidden garden.¹¹¹ To summarize, God’s actions in the story of Adam and Eve show a God who acts in many different ways amid suffering. From the very beginning God took on different roles as needed. He was communicative, loving, caring, expressive, passive, democratic, and domineering throughout the story. It may be concluded that in this biblical

¹¹⁰ Curt Thompson, *Anatomy of the Soul* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2010), 217.

¹¹¹ This is using confrontive power (see notes 59 and 60) rather than coercive power (see notes 47, 48 and 49).

example God would embody the authoritative parenting style with the use of both the permissive and authoritarian styles when needed. From here, it will be shown that God acts in different ways amid different suffering situations throughout the Bible, thus showing that God's actions are not one size fits all.

The Exodus and Exile of the Israelites: God saves and rebukes

Before starting this section, it should be noted that the entire lifespan of the main character, Moses, will not be looked at in detail. The early part of his life will be shown in short with focus on the Israelite's exodus from Egypt and their wandering in the desert for 40 years. It is important to understand who Moses is in order to examine the exodus and exile well. Moses' origin story begins in Exodus 2 of the Bible. Moses was born as an Israelite and, due to the Egyptian persecution of Israelites, he was put in a basket in the Nile river and sent away to hopefully survive (Exodus 2:1-4). Then, after being found by the Pharaoh's daughter, she decided to rescue Moses and raise him up in her own house as her son (Ex. 2:5-9). After he had grown, Moses felt compassion for the Israelites who were still being persecuted by the Egyptians. This led him to kill one of the Egyptian guards who was not treating Israelites well. After killing the guard, Moses fled to Midian and created a new life for himself (Ex. 2:10-22). After fleeing, God brought a prompting upon Moses to go and bring the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, thus beginning the exodus (Ex. 2:23-3:22).

God's prompting of Moses in Exodus 3 was the beginning of the process that led to the Israelites exile from Egypt. In chapter 3, God came before Moses as a burning bush "outlining how he intended to act on behalf of the oppressed Israelites. At which point God commissioned Moses to be the one who would lead the people out of Egypt."¹¹² Through this commissioning,

¹¹² Desmond T. Alexander, *Exodus* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2017), 80.

God expressed who He was to Moses and explained His reason for instructing Moses to go. All the while not taking Moses' expressing that he did not want to go as a reason for him not to be sent (Ex. 3:5-22). After this experience, Moses decided he would go but does this only after questioning whether he will be believed or not by the Pharaoh. Because of Moses' questioning, God "gives Moses three signs that involve miraculous transformations: Moses' staff becomes a snake (Ex. 4:2-4); his hand is covered with flaky scales (Ex. 4:6-7); Nile water will become blood (Ex. 4:9). Although Moses experiences for himself two of the signs at this point in time, the third must be accepted on trust as it involves the waters of the Nile."¹¹³ This was the first of many times that God gave miraculous signs in the book of Exodus through Moses.

God gave a number of signs to the Egyptians that were used to evoke Pharaoh's release of the Israelites. Each of these signs were given through Moses as he came before the Pharaoh. The signs are often called "called the 'ten plagues' in Christian tradition, or the 'ten strikes' (Hebr. 'eser hammakkôt) in Jewish tradition."¹¹⁴ The reason these plagues are referred to as the 'ten plagues' is because there are ten of them. Through these plagues God does a number of things. First, God turns the water of the Nile river into blood (Ex. 7:14-25). In doing this, "God is aiming His first blow at the very life-support system of Egypt."¹¹⁵ This was done to show Egypt God's power over any other god the Egyptians may be worshiping, and to highlight the fact that Egypt should let the Israelites go.¹¹⁶ In fact, each of the following plagues were for similar purposes. Except for the final plague, the plagues need not be noted in detail, rather only mentioned. The plagues leading up to the final plague go in order as follows from Exodus

¹¹³ Alexander, *Exodus*, 95.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹¹⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 139.

¹¹⁶ See Exodus 12:12.

chapters 7-10: an infestation of frogs, gnats and flies, then the death of livestock, followed by extreme boils on humans and animals, a horrible hail storm, and an excessive amount of locust that covered the entire ground. Then, finally, a darkness fell over Egypt that lasted for three days.

The final plague was arguably the most detrimental. In this plague, every firstborn child in Egypt was to be killed (Ex. 11:4-5). In order for this not to happen to the Israelites living in Egypt, they were instructed to put lambs' blood above their doors (Ex. 12:1-13). The event came and passed. The Israelite children were saved while the firstborn of all the Egyptians were killed, including Pharaoh's first-born son. These are the plagues that God enacted through Moses' interactions with the Pharaoh of Egypt to free His people from slavery, thus evoking the exodus.

From this point on, God provided for the Israelites while leading them towards the promised land. He guided their steps, provided food in the form of manna and water (Ex. 16-17), and gave instruction in the form of commandments (Ex. 19-20). But, as the book of Exodus finishes, moves through the book of Leviticus and to the book of Numbers, there is a shift in course for the Israelites. Moses had been told that through him God would lead His people to their promised land, the land of Canaan (Ex. 3:8). But the Israelites keep turning away from God, worshiping idols and acting against Moses, God's appointed leader (Ex. 32; Numbers 11-14). The Israelites were starting to have a change of heart and "the theme of the right ordering of life as God's people shifted to that of rebellions in the wilderness."¹¹⁷ This ultimately led God to decide to exile the Israelites and punish them by not allowing them to reach the promised land, but rather wander in the desert for 40 years (Num. 14:34-35). The wandering was due to the Israelites own actions of disobedience and rebellion over and over again. By Numbers 14, the Israelites complained and "sought to die in the wilderness (Num. 14:2) and so they did

¹¹⁷ William H. Bellinger Jr., *Leviticus Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 173.

(Num. 14:29). They complained and sought not to enter the promise land (Num. 14:3) and so God made sure they would not (Num. 14:30).”¹¹⁸ The Israelites lost their faith in the God who brought about their exodus and they suffered the punishment of exile for it.

Moving back to the Israelite’s Exodus, God took great measures to make sure His people were freed from Egyptian slavery. God, in connection to a good parent, took the steps to protect, free and show love to His children. In addition, God communicated His plans in great detail with Moses. God took the time to tell Moses who He was, show him the way, and guide his paths. God, just like a good parent, took every measure possible to make sure that Moses knew what was going to happen and why it must happen.¹¹⁹ The steps God took can be connected to the authoritative parenting style when the styles presented in chapter two are assessed with God’s interactions. As stated previously, the authoritative style will be democratic, reasonable and expressive of expectations the child must meet.¹²⁰ God expressed these types of expectations with Moses while providing him with the tools needed to complete what was to come.

The authoritative style, however, is not the only style that is shown by God through His interactions with humanity. Yes, God saved the Israelites, but He also allowed the suffering of slavery to take place prior to the exile, which was enacting passivity. Then, when faced with Moses not wanting to go back to Egypt as God commanded, He made sure it would happen, which was asserting dominance. The use of passivity and dominance continues as God did not interfere for a time with the Israelites rebellions (see Ex. 32 and Num. 11-13). However, after some time, God decided to punish the Israelites for their rebellion by sending them to wander in

¹¹⁸ Bellinger, *Leviticus Numbers*, 182.

¹¹⁹ The phrase “good parent” is used here to denote characteristics of a parent that acts in accordance with the authoritative parenting style (see chapter two’s section on authoritative parenting for reference).

¹²⁰ See notes 58 and 60.

the desert for 40 years, exiling them from the promised land. With this action, God asserted His dominance. In other instances of rebellion, Moses was able to persuade God not to enact His wrath upon the Israelites, but not any longer.¹²¹ In this instance “Moses persuasive powers were useless and God maintained that the punishment would fit the crime.”¹²² In keeping the punishment in place and enforcing His will, God thus expressed His authoritarian side to the Israelite’s. No amount of convincing or conversation would change God’s mind, He was stern on the matter. God, through the exodus and exile of the Israelites, in connection to parenting styles, would likely have enacted attributes from each style. Since “both autonomous self-will (permissive) and disciplined conformity (authoritarian) parenting styles are valued and used by the authoritative parent,”¹²³ and God used each style in these instances of human suffering, it is likely that God embodied the authoritative parenting style through the exodus and exile of the Israelites.

The book of Job: Suffering in abundance

The next biblical narrative provides an example of abundant suffering. It is worth noting again that this work is not intended to defend a certain viewpoint or ideal on the matter of theological accuracy, but only to show how God interacts amid suffering. At the start of the book of Job, God is having a conversation with Satan (Job 1:6-12). Satan convinced God to allow him to put Job under trial. Job was a man who was blessed by God. Job was righteous, a servant of the Lord, faithful, and God blessed him with a life of abundance which included monetary wealth and many children. Satan saw this abundance and believed that “Job’s godliness was

¹²¹ See Exodus 32.

¹²² Bellinger, *Leviticus Numbers*, 182.

¹²³ Baumrind, “Effects of Authoritative,” 891.

artificial, especially since it had never been proved by testing it. (Job 1:10-11).”¹²⁴ So, Satan concludes that Job must be tested (Job 1:11). Satan put out a challenge to test Job and God accepted. “The Satan is given permission to do what he liked with all Job’s property, but was instructed that he must not touch Job’s person.”¹²⁵ At that point, Satan went from God and brought suffering upon Job’s life (Job 1:12-13). Job continued to suffer, over and over again. Satan’s attempt with this was to get Job to curse the name of God, but instead Job cursed the day of his birth, not God (Job 3).

Satan caused torment upon Job's life. In the very first chapter of the book of Job he suffers through the loss of oxen, donkeys, and servants (Job 1:13-15), then through the loss of sheep and more servants (Job 1:16), then through the loss of camels and even more servants (Job 1:17), then finally he suffered through the loss of his children from the collapse of a house (1:18-19). After all that, in chapter two, Satan returns to God with a request to allow him to inflict suffering on Job himself (Job 2:4-6). Before allowing Satan to return to inflicting suffering, God asked that although “Job’s body is put in Satan’s power, he respected the limitation imposed that Job must not be killed outright.”¹²⁶ As Satan returned to earth Job continued to suffer, only now through physical affliction. Job suffered painful sores all over his body (Job 2:7), followed by his own wife’s attempt to tell him to curse God and die, but Job refused (Job 2:9-10). To gain a fuller understanding of how bad Job’s physical suffering was, it is stated in Job chapter two that “when they (*Job’s friends*) saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him” (Job 2:12; *emphasis mine*). After this, and for the majority of the rest of the book of Job, there is a

¹²⁴ Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 89.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹²⁶ Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, “Part I: Translation and Commentary,” In *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job: Together with a New Translation* (London: T&T Clark, 1986), 23.

conversation between Job and his friends who have skewed views of Job and sometimes of God (Job 3-42). By the end of the book, God restored Job's fortunes with twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10). God blessed Job with an abundance more including sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys, children (seven of them), and with a long life (Job 42:12-17).

From the loss of all his assets to the loss of his own children, Job went through horrendous sufferings. Job went through many trials and painful experiences. Through all the suffering, a few things were at play. First, Satan was given the ability to bring suffering upon Job's life. Second, God allowed these things to happen. Third, Job miraculously stayed faithful to God and fourth, God blessed the rest of Job's life after staying faithful. God did not bring about the suffering Himself, but allowed Job to go through it just as a parent may allow their child to endure pain on their own.¹²⁷ The allowance of suffering does not mean the parent is the source of the evil, nor does it make the parent evil. In allowing the suffering both the parent and God are typically acting passively. The passivity enacted by God is in correlation to the permissive parenting style as these parents will often stand by and watch as their children suffer. Additionally, it is unlikely that these parents will explain to their child the reason why the suffering is happening since they just stood by and watched. This is because "these parents tend to be lenient or mild in their behavior and avoid confronting their children."¹²⁸ In this biblical example, God enacted ambiguity and did not explain why He allowed Job to suffer. Instead, He just let Job go through the suffering. Out of the three parenting styles, the one that God embodied

¹²⁷ This is an important point. God did not enact the suffering, but rather God allowed it to happen. That does not make God the inflictor of the suffering because He may be allowing it for a greater good as a parent may do the same. Perhaps a parent allows suffering to teach a lesson or for the sake of gaining strength. Whatever the reasoning for allowing the suffering is, it does not change the fact that neither the parent nor God is the cause of the suffering.

¹²⁸ Fariba Shahhraki Sanavi, Abdolvahab Baghbanian, Mehdi Faraji Shovey and Alireza Ansari-Moghaddam, "A Study on Family Communication Pattern and Parenting Styles with Quality of Life in Adolescent," *The Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association* 63, no. 11 (2013): 1393, accessed February 22, 2020, 2.

in the book of Job was the permissive parenting style. God stood by and allowed the suffering to happen, not stopping the process or communicating the why, but allowing it and staying silent in the process. For these reasons, God was enacting the permissive parenting style in the Book of Job. This is not to say that God embodies the permissive parenting style fully, but only shows that God used this style in this instance of suffering. God chose to enact passivity and allow the suffering to take its toll.

At this point, through Adam and Eve, the exodus and exile of the Israelites and the book of Job, God has been shown to act in many different ways with humanity amid suffering. The ways God has interacted with humanity amid suffering from these biblical examples so far can be related to the permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles. From here, the biblical examples will continue to show the God of the Bible uses all three parenting styles. This will draw the conclusion that He embodies the one style that uses all of them, the authoritative parenting style.¹²⁹

Jesus Christ: God's taking on of suffering

Jesus Christ, the next biblical figure to be examined, is a bit more complex. The complexity arises by the fact that in the Christian view, Jesus is God. Time will not be spent defending the belief that Jesus is God. However, it will be assumed as a fact while moving forward. The belief that Jesus is God will have little to no effect on the argument at hand, but is a good thing to take note of as one of the events in Jesus' life to be examined is his resurrection.¹³⁰ With that, Jesus' life will not be examined in full. Rather, only three parts in the latter years of

¹²⁹ This is only to connect God to this parenting style in this work. This is not to say that out of every parenting style that exists, the one God would have is the authoritative parenting style.

¹³⁰ Jesus as God has little to no effect on the argument because the purpose is to show how God interacts with humanity amid suffering. But expressing the ideal that Jesus is God of importance because it plays a big role in the events to be analyzed from the four New Testament Gospels.

his life will be used to show more of God's interactions with humanity amid suffering in connection to parenting styles. The three events to be examined from Jesus' life are his prayer and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, his crucifixion, and his resurrection.

Leading up to his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had just finished the Last Supper and his betrayal by Judas was underway (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22). Now, "for Jesus, prayer was a way of life. He had a special place in the Mount of Olives where he habitually went for prayer."¹³¹ Jesus had the utmost reliance on God and this moment, accompanied by those that follow, is a testament to Jesus' faith. In this faith, Jesus went to pray. Where he went to pray was found "on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives"¹³² and was called the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32). When Jesus prayed, he made it very evident that he "knew what lay ahead. The cup of the blood of the new covenant must be spilled. Yet he, as a human being, did not want to suffer. He did not want to die. He would have liked to have found another way to follow God's plan."¹³³ So, "Jesus fell to the ground and prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him. 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will'" (Luke 22:35-36). Jesus prayed, asking God to take the coming suffering from him if God was willing. But if not, he would submit to the will of God. Jesus' arrest followed soon after his prayer. His disciple Judas betrayed him and brought guards to arrest him (see Matt. 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:43-52; John 18:1-14). The arrest is what led to Jesus' next life event, his crucifixion.

¹³¹ Trent C. Butler and Max Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2005), Ch.22.

¹³² Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds., *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 89.

¹³³ Butler, et al, *Holman New Testament Commentary*, Ch.22.

Jesus' crucifixion, like any crucifixion by the Romans, was brutal and extremely gruesome. The crucifixion event will not be analyzed in full, but only the final moments of Jesus' death will be examined.¹³⁴ It is worth noting, however, that Jesus went through a tremendous amount of suffering leading to the final stages of his crucifixion. Because, for the Romans, "crucifixion was a common form of execution employed to punish members of the lower class, slaves, soldiers, the violently rebellious, and those accused of treason."¹³⁵ Through the crucifixion process Jesus was tormented, flogged, and beaten to the brink of death before finally being hung on a wooden cross. The final moments of the cross are where this work picks up the story. While on the cross, Jesus, like others who were crucified, would attempt to breathe but would have trouble. He was suspended by his upper limbs on the cross, a nail through each wrist. This would make it extremely hard to breathe or talk causing "asphyxiation which was due to the suspension of the upper limbs in a way that would make it basically impossible to exhale."¹³⁶ Jesus was suffocating.

As Jesus hung on the cross suffocating, his earthly life coming to an end, he managed to utter just a few words. The first words in his final moments were to the two criminals hanging besides him. One of them asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus reached his kingdom (Luke 23:42). Jesus responded by saying: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). After this moment, Jesus spoke out to God: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). In this moment Jesus felt as if God had left him to die alone.

¹³⁴ The crucifixion will not be detailed in full because a fully detail explanation of what happens in a Roman crucifixion is outside the purpose of this work. For more on crucifixion see the works found in notes 134 and 135.

¹³⁵ Gary R. Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004, ISBN: 9780825427886), 49.

¹³⁶ B. Lussiez, "Anatomy of Crucifixion," *Chirurgie De La Main* 24, no. 3-4 (2005): 132-147, accessed March 15, 2020.

Then, with his final breath, Jesus murmured “‘It is finished’ and with that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:30). Jesus died on the cross, but to ensure his death the Roman guards pierced Jesus’ side with a spear (John 19:35). With the piercing of Jesus’ side, the crucifixion was finished. Jesus was taken down from the cross and then buried by Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42; Luke 23:50-54).

With the crucifixion over, the final event of Jesus’ story to be analyzed is his resurrection. The account of the resurrection is found in all four Gospels and in extra-biblical texts. One example is written by Josephus who was “a pro-Roman Jewish general and historian, alive from A.D. 37–c. 100.”¹³⁷ It is important to note that Josephus’ writing on the resurrection of Jesus would be considered heresy since Josephus was Jewish. Here is what Josephus stated about Jesus’ resurrection directly after mentioning that Jesus had been crucified: “For he appeared to them on the third day, living again, just as the divine prophets had spoken of these and countless other wondrous things about him.”¹³⁸ According to Josephus, Jesus not only died on the cross but also rose from the dead. Turning to Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20, on the third day Jesus rose from the dead by the hand of God. When morning came, Jesus’ tomb was found empty by Mary Magdalene. Jesus rose, he was alive. The power of death did not have a hold on Jesus in this biblical narrative.¹³⁹ In the Christian point of view, the resurrection is an account of true events and Jesus still lives today. Jesus not only rose, but showed himself as a

¹³⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), Introduction.

¹³⁸ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010, ISBN: 0830827196), 238.

¹³⁹ This ideal is of importance when connecting Jesus to God. The power of death did not have a hold on Jesus because Jesus Himself was divine. Jesus was God in the flesh. This ideal is not meant to be explained further, but only to point out that the belief that Jesus is God leans on Jesus’ resurrection as primary evidence. For more on this see in bibliography Leon Morris’ contribution, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989).

sign to many that he was alive and well. In fact, Jesus appeared to many including: Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-16), the disciples (John 20:26-28), hundreds of others (1 Cor. 5:16), and finally to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3-5), whose conversion experience will be analyzed next.

With that, Jesus prayed, was arrested, crucified, then finally resurrected by God the Father. Throughout the narrative, God's interactions with Jesus are very enlightening. First, in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed, asking God to take away the pending suffering if possible. While also submitting to God's will if Jesus' death was what God desired. However, directly after, Jesus was arrested. God heard Jesus' prayers, but decidedly went about what He had planned. This sounds similar to when a child asks their parents for a change of plans and the parent decides otherwise. While deciding, the parent and God are both expressing authority over the situations at hand. Now turning this to parenting styles, the styles that take use of authority in this manner are both the authoritarian and authoritative styles. Each style may enact situational authority and guidance, although they do so for very different reasons. The authoritative style uses authority for reasons other than selfish gain, while the authoritarian style will enact their authority so that they may keep their sense of hierarchical status.¹⁴⁰ For this reason, it is more likely that God was enacting the authoritative parenting style since He allowed these things to happen for the sake of human redemption and not selfish gain.

As the events moved forward, Jesus was crucified by the hands of the Romans. By allowing Jesus to be crucified, God was enacting both His will and the will of human beings. God enacted His will by going through with His plan and He allowed human will by allowing the Romans to crucify Jesus. In doing these things, God was showing His authority while acting in accordance with the authoritative parenting style. Additionally, God allowed the suffering to

¹⁴⁰ Baumrind, "Differentiating between," 36.

take place. God allowed the Romans to brutally crucify Jesus. In this sense, God was using a passive role to the situation. He allowed the events to take place as they did, not putting forth too much involvement of His own. This, accompanied by Jesus' words claiming God's forsaking of him in Matthew 27:46, can bring about the conclusion that God was enacting both the authoritative and permissive parenting styles. Both styles were used by God because He passively allowed the Romans to crucify Jesus, while also setting His plan of Jesus' death and resurrection in motion. Since these events were of His own planning, God acted passively through both guidance and authority over the situation at hand. Then, through Jesus' words, it is shown that there is a potential that God abandoned or left Jesus to His final moments. God allowed the death to take place. God had to enact a permissive parenting style so that His plan would come to fulfillment while using the authoritative style as well.¹⁴¹

The fulfillment of God's plan is seen in the resurrection of Jesus. God may have had to act passively through Jesus' death, but passivity was no longer needed. God took control of the situation and brought about Jesus' resurrection. With Jesus risen from the dead, God took on a dominant role over the situation. This is not dominance for the sake of selfish gain, but dominance for the sake of humanity. This is just like a parent who takes control of a situation for the benefit of their child. The child may not understand, but can trust that the parent is taking control for their benefit. This is again in connection to the authoritative parenting style since the authority and power used is of a confrontive origin. As noted in chapter two, confrontive power is "reasoned, negotiable, and outcome-oriented."¹⁴² God's actions were reasoned and outcome-

¹⁴¹ The prior paragraph that explained Jesus' arrest falls into the parental styles expressed in this paragraph as well. The reason it was not mentioned prior is to show the type of power assertion that God was enacting throughout the events.

¹⁴² Baumrind, "Differentiating between," 36.

oriented for the sake of saving humanity.

Redemption will not be explained in full, but only used to say that God, through Jesus' resurrection, saved humanity from sin and His judgement.¹⁴³ In doing this, God was acting out of love and care for humanity, bringing about the best outcome possible. Therefore, God enacted the authoritative parenting style in terms of Jesus' resurrection. With the events assessed here, it is found that God likely enacted the permissive and authoritative parenting styles through the events in Jesus' life and resurrection. As this chapter moves to the final biblical example, it must be remembered that the conclusions found here are not meant to be definite on how God interacts with humanity amid suffering. The conclusions here are only to show a few out of the abundance of God's actions in conjunction with the presented parenting styles amid suffering.

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus: From Saul to Paul

The final biblical example of suffering is the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. To give some context, Saul, who was born in Tarsus, was raised Jewish and "educated from boyhood in Jerusalem."¹⁴⁴ As Saul grew in age, so did his influence. In fact, Saul joined one of the groups of Jewish leadership in Jerusalem called the Pharisees. As a "Pharisee Saul was wholeheartedly devoted to serving the God of Israel"¹⁴⁵ and God's Jewish following. As a servant to the Abrahamic God of the Jewish nation, Saul, like the other Jewish leaders of his time, saw Jesus as a threat and blasphemer. In all of Saul's passion, he led the way "in the persecution of the Christian church (Acts 8:3; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13)"¹⁴⁶ in order to eradicate the seemingly dead

¹⁴³ In bibliography see Leon Morris's contribution, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989).

¹⁴⁴ Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 237.

¹⁴⁵ Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook: Completely Revised and Expanded Edition* (25th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 735.

blasphemer's following. The conversion of Saul takes place during his efforts to eradicate Christianity from existence.

Saul's conversion is found in the book of Acts within chapters 9, 22, and 26. As noted in the section on Jesus Christ, according to Christianity, Jesus is God.¹⁴⁷ This section moves forward with the same belief as the last section, that Jesus is God. Saul of Tarsus was leading the Jewish persecution of Christians. His efforts sent him on a journey to a town called Damascus (Acts 9:3). On this journey, Saul "suddenly saw a light from heaven flash around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'" (Acts 9:3-4). Saul promptly asked who was talking to him. As a Jewish leader, the response had to be one that astonished him. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:5-6). After Jesus had finished speaking with Saul, Saul got up and could not see anything, but he was led by his acquaintances to Damascus (Acts 9:8). Once reaching Damascus, Saul realized that God had set up a plan for his arrival. God sent a follower of his named Ananias to meet Saul in the house of a man named Judas (Acts 9:10-14). In God's instructing of Ananias, He told Ananias that He was going to use Saul to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' resurrection to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16). Once Ananias reached Saul, he explained to Saul that he had been sent by the Lord to meet him and restore Saul's vision. In that moment, "something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He then got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength" (Acts 9:18-19).

This was a significant time for Saul and Christianity alike. After this moment, Saul believed in the resurrected Jesus who had revealed his resurrected self. This led Saul to become

¹⁴⁶ Elmer L. Towns and Ben Gutierrez, *The Essence of the New Testament: A Survey* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 147.

¹⁴⁷ See notes 130, 139 and 143.

one of, if not the most influential evangelist found in the Bible. After his conversion, Saul's name, which was his Hebrew name, was changed to his Roman/Greek name Paul.¹⁴⁸

Additionally, to have a Pharisee turn from Judaism to Christianity was a significant change that could not be taken lightly. Prior to his conversion, Saul would likely have thought "it was ridiculous to maintain that God had intervened to raise from the dead a false teacher whose blasphemous claim to be the Messiah went hand in hand with deliberate subversion of the authority of the Law."¹⁴⁹ This idealism made it all the less likely for Saul to convert to Christianity, yet, his conversion took place. God intervened in Saul's life and bore a new convert who helped lead the way for Christianity's radical expansion.

Saul's conversion to Christianity is a time where God, as Jesus, intervened to bring forth His desired purpose. God took measures into His own hands, doing as He desired to reach His outcome. This can be connected to the authoritarian parenting style as this style "would be restrictive, punitive, repressive and embody coercive power."¹⁵⁰ During Saul's conversion, God hindered what Saul desired and pushed to change Saul's direction to be in line with God's own will. In Acts 9:9, God imparted blindness on Saul because He knew it would be best for the desired outcome. God gave Saul no choice but to comply, just like the authoritarian parent who uses coercive power to give the child no choice but to obey.¹⁵¹ By asserting His will, giving no room for communication on the matter, God expressed His dominance. By using dominance over those involved, God embodied the authoritarian parenting style since He decidedly enforced a conversion upon Saul from radical Jewish leader to devout Christian evangelist.

¹⁴⁸ Edward E. Hindson and Elmer L. Towns, *Illustrated Bible Survey: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), Ch.32.

¹⁴⁹ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul a Critical Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Ch.4, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Baumrind, "Differentiating between," 37.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

The Biblical God's Probable Parenting Style

As this section comes to a close, a few things must be stated before concluding statements. Biblical narratives have been assessed to show how the God of the Bible interacts with humanity amid suffering. God's actions from the Bible are important because the arguments from evil that atheists make while attempting to explain how God would interact with humanity amid suffering take God out of context. By doing this, the arguments typically take the attributes of God found within the biblical texts, put them into their own context, and then express why God must act in that specific way in order to exist. By taking focus away from the God of the Bible and to personal opinion, the arguments from evil are being made with the use of subjectivity and not objectivity.¹⁵² This section has brought a sense of objectivity back into the limelight in order to show the ways that God interacts with humanity amid suffering while having the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence. The conclusion is God interacts with humanity in many different ways amid different instances of suffering.

Before moving forward, all of the examples assessed here must be mentioned in order to maintain objectivity in the attempt to connect an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God's interactions with humanity amid suffering to parenting styles. In both the first and second biblical narratives provided, that of Adam and Eve and the exodus and exile, it was shown that a God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and wholly-good would likely embody an authoritative parenting style. This is due to how He interacted with humanity amid their suffering. He communicated His desires and reasoning for the way things were, let humanity do as they wished, and enacted His authority when it was needed. God used passivity and dominance when necessary, but overall used a democratic parenting style, i.e. the authoritative parenting style.

¹⁵² See notes 26 and 32.

The third instance of suffering shown from the Bible was the biblical account of Job's life. From this story, it was concluded that the primary style God enacted was the permissive parenting style. God allowed the suffering to take its toll without communicating the reasons.

The second to last biblical account of suffering was Jesus Christ's prayer, arrest, crucifixion and resurrection. In this narrative, God was shown to be both authoritative and permissive. God allowed the suffering to take place, but not without explaining what was coming to Jesus and His reasoning why. God allowed the Romans to go through with the crucifixion, but it was still within God's plan. For this reason, God would likely have enacted both the permissive and authoritative parenting styles through Jesus' crucifixion.¹⁵³ Additionally, God enacted His will by resurrecting Jesus from the dead. Through the resurrection, God brought His plan into full fruition. By bringing about His plan and communicating it with Jesus, God enacted the authoritative parenting style in connection to the resurrection.

The final instance of suffering proves God uses different means when needed. God was still enacting His plan, but in order to bring about His plan, He used His authority. God blinded Saul of Tarsus which led to Saul's conversion to Christianity. In doing this, God used the authoritarian parenting style since there was never a choice given, it was God's way or no way.¹⁵⁴ With the five instances of suffering shown, it can be postulated that the God of the Bible, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, uses each parenting style as needed. When the parenting styles at hand are understood, it can be concluded that the God of the Bible would likely be an authoritative parent in the basic sense of the style because it uses both the permissive and authoritarian styles.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Note the word "likely" is used here to keep at the forefront of mind that this is not a definite answer, but one come to through the use of the information and parenting styles presented in this work.

¹⁵⁴ See notes 49 and 50.

¹⁵⁵ See note 63.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: The Biblical God vs. the God of Atheists

With everything at hand, how does the God found in arguments from evil compare to the God of the Bible? This work has concluded that the God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent as found in the Bible would likely embody the authoritative parenting style in the basic sense of the style when assessed against the parenting styles at hand. However, the God that Rowe and his cohorts talk about does not embody the style in this same sense.¹⁵⁶ There can only be one conclusion drawn from this: Rowe and others are taking the biblical God out of context to conclude their arguments.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, the arguments made that state God does not exist can be concluded to be false, even if the biblical God would act in some of the ways these arguments from evil state He should. By taking God out of His context and expressing how they think God should interact with humanity amid suffering, the atheists' conclusions become opinion and not fact.¹⁵⁸

To understand this a bit more, imagine hearing a story from a friend about their argument with another person. Their story made them out to be this great, upright and righteous person while making the other person out to be wicked, evil, manipulative and in the wrong. After hearing the story, it can be concluded that the friend is a good person and the other person was in the wrong. A few unbiased bystanders who were present during the argument overheard the story and came over to disagree. They each told a completely different story from the friend's story.

¹⁵⁶ The way they express God to interact is counter the ways a God of this nature is shown to interact amid suffering per the biblical examples found in chapter four.

¹⁵⁷ See note 26 on Rowe's use of RST.

¹⁵⁸ Again, see notes 26 and 32 where it is explained that opinion on the matter does not make the presented premises true.

Their stories concluded the friend to be the wicked one and in the wrong. It seems as though the friend took the argument out of context to present his own truth and make his conclusion right. With the presence of the right evidence and objectivity, the friend's version was shown to be false. Some of what the friend said may have been true, but it was not the whole truth and the conclusion was obviously false. This would make the friend's version of the argument subjective and not objective.

In the same way, when taking God out of context, the atheists arguments presented in this work are presenting arguments about God that are partial, subjective and not the whole truth. With the presence of this subjectivity, the atheist's arguments can be disproven by providing one instance of suffering from the source of these attributes of God, the Bible. In the Bible, this same God acts in different ways than Rowe and his cohorts state He should amid suffering and, as I have argued, God's parenting styles in the Bible run afoul to the parenting style that these atheists assume God to embody.¹⁵⁹ By taking any one of the five examples of suffering found in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God would act in many different ways and enacting different parenting styles amid suffering. This is in contrast to how the atheists say God must act, making their conclusions that God does not exist false. There is a possibility that the way they say God must act amid suffering is partially true, just as the storyteller's story has some truth in it. But the atheist's statements are not the only way God would interact with humanity amid suffering. Therefore, just because God does not act in the ways atheists desire amid suffering, does not mean that this God does not exist. It only means that God does not always act in the ways that atheists believe He should be.

¹⁵⁹ That is, the parenting style that God would embody out of the presenting parenting styles.

The biblical God has been shown to enact the authoritative parenting style in the basic sense of the style. The biblical God would be loving, caring, authoritative, dominant, passive, commutative, lax, hands on and hands off as needed amid suffering. The biblical God would likely embody all three parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. Therefore, His overarching style would be the authoritative parenting style out of the three styles presented. In order to make the claims Rowe and his cohorts do, they must use the biblical God because the Bible is where the attributes of this God are found apart from personal opinion. They must take God in context and not out of context. Otherwise, when they take God out of context, the made claims are subjective and likely not talking about the biblical God at all. In order to use the attributes the atheists do in their parent analogies, they must use the source of where these attributes come from to show how God interacts amid suffering. The God that the atheists mention in the arguments found in chapter three is one who is limited to the authoritative style without the use of the other styles.¹⁶⁰ It seems then, that if the God mentioned in the arguments from evil is not the God of the Bible, then all the atheists have done is made opinionated claims that a God with the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence does not exist because he does not act the way they think he should. They have not concluded that the God of the Bible does not exist, rather, they have concluded that a God of human imagination does not.

In conclusion, when connecting the God of the Bible to the parenting styles in use, God is seen to embody an authoritative parenting style in the basic sense of the style. This is in opposition to the atheists who have been concluded to be assuming that the God of the Bible must be an authoritative parent without the use of the other styles. Without the use of the other

¹⁶⁰ This is only to mention the limitations based on parenting styles. Aside from parenting styles, the atheists have limited God to acting in only the specific ways that they believe He should act amid suffering. If God acts outside of these assumptions then He, according to the atheist's arguments presented, does not exist. See the arguments of William Rowe, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Paul Draper and Bruce Russell found in chapter three.

styles, the atheists are limiting the biblical God to the way they think He should be interacting and limiting Him in a way that not even humans are limited.¹⁶¹ Additionally, they are taking the attributes of God found in the Bible out of the context of the where they come from in order to conclude their own truths. Therefore, the atheists are being subjective and not presenting the whole truth. This makes their arguments invalid since the atheists are presenting things in a way that is structured to conclude their a priori beliefs that the God of the Bible does not exist. With that, the atheists have either begged an untruthful answer by taking the God of the Bible out of context, or they are talking about a completely different, non-biblical, human-created God. Either way, the God of the Bible still stands. When God is assessed in context, it is found that He acts in many different ways and with use of each parenting style amid suffering, which is in contrast to the God found in arguments from evil. If arguments from evil want to present a fuller case for God's nonexistence with the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence, then they must take the God of the Bible in context and not out of context.

¹⁶¹ The limitations found are ones that humans are not expected to obtain. An argument could be made for the fact that since God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent He can be held to expectations that humanity is not. But to say this shows that there is still the presence of assuming things about how this God will interact and the placing expectation upon this God that may be counter to what He would do.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Marilyn M., and Robert M. Adams. *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Alexander, T. Desmond. *Exodus*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2017. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1688554&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Andersen, Francis I. *Job*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=2089248>.
- Aremu, Tolulope A., Yetunde O. John-Akinola, and Adeyimika T. Desmennu. “Relationship between Parenting Styles and Adolescents’ Self-Esteem.” *International Quarterly of Community Health Education* 39, no. 2 (2019): 91-99. Accessed January 21, 2020. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177%2F0272684X18811023>.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *The “Summa Theologica” of St. Thomas Aquinas*. London: Burns, Oates & Washburne, 1920. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/aquinas-the-summa-theologica-of-st-thomas-aquinas-part-i-qq-i-xxvi-vol-1>.
- Baggett, David, and Jerry L. Walls. *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Barton, John, and John Muddiman, eds. *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2013. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=3052723&ppg=1>.
- Baumrind, Diana. “Differentiating between Confrontive and Coercive Kinds of Parental Power-Assertive Disciplinary Practices.” *Human Development* 55, no. 2 (05, 2012): 35-51. Accessed January 14, 2020. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1023944456?accountid=12085>.
- . “Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on Child Behavior.” *Child Development* 37, no. 4 (1966): 887-907. Accessed January 15, 2020. doi:10.2307/1126611.

- , Robert E. Larzelere, and Elizabeth B. Owens. “Effects of Preschool Parents' Power Assertive Patterns and Practices on Adolescent Development.” *Parenting* 10, no. 3 (2010): 157-201. Accessed January 16, 2020. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1080/15295190903290790>.
- Bellinger, William H. Jr. *Leviticus Numbers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=5249945>.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Butler, Trent C., Max Anders. *Holman New Testament Commentary: Luke*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2005.
- Cevher-Kalburan, Nilgün and Asiye Ivrendi. “Risky Play and Parenting Styles.” *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 25, no. 2 (2016): 355-366. Accessed January 20, 2020. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1758608986?accountid=12085>.
- Craig, William Lane, and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong. *God?: A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*. Point/Counterpoint Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. <https://search-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=129266&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Darling, Nancy, and Laurence Steinberg. “Parenting Style as Context: An Integrative Model.” *Psychological Bulletin* 113, no. 3 (1993): 487–96. Accessed January 20, 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232493813_Parenting_Style_as_Context_An_Integrative_Model.
- Dictionary. “Dictionary.” Accessed February 21, 2020. <https://www.dictionary.com/>.
- Draper, Paul. “Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists.” In *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 12-29. Edited by Daniel Howard-Snyder. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=4014315>.

- Driver, Samuel Rolles, and George Buchanan Gray. "Part I: Translation and Commentary." In *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job: Together with a New Translation*, 1–376. London: T&T Clark, 1986.
<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.5040/9781472556196.0006>.
- Durken, Daniel, ed. *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: Old Testament*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4658991&ppg=1>.
- Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Evans, C. Stephen. *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion: 300 Terms and Thinkers Clearly and Concisely Defined*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=2033917#>.
- Feinberg, John S. *The Many Faces of Evil*. Rev. ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004.
- Grolnick, Wendy S. *The Psychology of Parental Control: How Well-Meant Parenting Backfires*. Mahwah: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=237081>.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=913831>.
- Habermas, Gary R. and Michael Licona. *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004. ISBN: 9780825427886.
- Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook: Completely Revised and Expanded Edition*. 25th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.
- Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2010.
<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=614405#>.
- Hindson, Edward E., and Elmer L. Towns. *Illustrated Bible Survey: An Introduction*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.

- Howard-Snyder, Daniel. *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. <https://search-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=11055&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Hume, David. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. Raleigh, NC: Generic NL Freebook Publisher, n.d. <https://search-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1085903&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Lewis, C. S. "Mere Christianity." In *The C. S. Lewis Signature Classics*, 1-177. New York: Harper One, 2017.
- Licona, Michael R. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010. ISBN: 0830827196.
- Lussiez, B. "Anatomy of Crucifixion." *Chirurgie De La Main* 24, no. 3-4 (2005): 132-147. Accessed March 15, 2020. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1016/j.main.2005.06.002>.
- Mavrodes, George I. "Defining Omnipotence." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 32, no. 2 (1977): 191-202. Accessed April 29, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/4319166.
- McBrayer, Justin P. and Daniel Howard-Snyder. *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*. Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013;2014. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/book/10.1002/9781118608005>.
- Metzger, Bruce M., and Coogan, Michael D., eds. *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4703326>.

- Millings, Abigail, Judi Walsh, Erica Hepper, and Margaret O'Brien. "Good Partner, Good Parent: Responsiveness Mediates the Link between Romantic Attachment and Parenting Style." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 39, no. 2 (2013): 170-180. Accessed February 25, 2020. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177%2F0146167212468333>.
- Milem, Bruce. "Defining Atheism, Theism, and God." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 85, no. 3 (2019): 335-346. Accessed April 29, 2020. <https://link-springer-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/content/pdf/10.1007/s11153-019-09702-5.pdf>.
- Morris, Leon. *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.
- Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. *Paul a Critical Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. <https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780192853424.001.0001/acprof-9780192853424-chapter-4>.
- Nelson, Margaret K. *Parenting Out of Control: Anxious Parents in Uncertain Times*. New York: New York University Press, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=865681&query=>.
- Pearce, Kenneth L. and Alexander R. Pruss. "Understanding Omnipotence." *Religious Studies* 48, no. 3 (09, 2012): 403-14. Accessed April, 29, 2020. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1030138930?accountid=12085>.
- Peterson, Michael L., ed. *The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings*, Second Edition. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=4525790#>.
- Plantinga, Alvin C. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989.
- Rosenkrantz, Gary, and Hoffman, Joshua. *Historical Dictionary of Metaphysics*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Scarecrow Press, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=1022069>.
- Rowe, William L. "Evil and God's Freedom in Creation." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1999): 101-13. Accessed March 1, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/20009957.

- . “Evil and Theodicy.” *Philosophical Topics* 16, no. 2 (1988): 119-32. Accessed March 1, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/43154030.
- . *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education, 2007.
- . “The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look.” In *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 262-285. Edited by Daniel Howard-Snyder. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=4014315>.
- and Nick Trakakis. *William L. Rowe on Philosophy of Religion: Selected Writings*. New York, NY: Routledge Publishing, 2016.
- Russell, Bruce. “The Persistent Problem of Evil.” *Faith and Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (1989): 121-139. Accessed March 5, 2020. https://www-pdcnet-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/collection/authorizedshow?id=faithphil_1989_0006_0002_0121_0139&file_type=pdf.
- Sanavi, Fariba Shahhraki, Abdolvahab Baghbanian, Mehdi Faraji Shovey, and Alireza Ansari-Moghaddam. “A Study on Family Communication Pattern and Parenting Styles with Quality of Life in Adolescent.” *The Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association* 63, no. 11 (2013): 1393. Accessed February 22, 2020. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A350117628/HRCA?u=vic_liberty&sid=HRCA&xid=dc6eaa29.
- Taliaferro, Charles, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn. *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Second ed. Vol. 9. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1002/9781444320152>.
- Thompson, Curt. *Anatomy of the Soul*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2010.
- Towns, Elmer L. *The Ultimate Guide to the Names of God: Three Bestsellers in One Volume*. Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4446984>.
- and Ben Gutierrez. *The Essence of the New Testament: A Survey*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016.

- Tooley, Michael. *The Problem of Evil*. Elements in the Philosophy of Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. doi:10.1017/9781108782029.
- Tunde-Ayinmode, M.F, and Adegunloye, O.A. “Parenting Style and Conduct Problems in Children: A Report of Deliberate Self-poisoning in a Nigerian Child.” *The journal of the Society of Psychiatrists of South Africa* 17, no. 2 (2011): 60–63. Accessed February 15, 2020. <https://sajp.org.za/index.php/sajp/article/view/256/255>.
- Van Inwagen, Peter. *The Problem of Evil the Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St. Andrews in 2003*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. <https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199245604.001.0001/acprof-9780199245604-chapter-1>.
- Wierenga, Edward R. *The Nature of God: An Inquiry Into Divine Attributes*. Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1814692&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Wykstra, Stephen J. “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of ‘Appearance’.” *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 16, no. 2 (1984): 73-93. Accessed March 15, 2020. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1297952575?accountid=12085>.