

A WHOLLY GOOD GOD AND “MORAL ATROCITIES” 1

by Ted J. Clarke

Thomas Paine was an 18th century French deist who could not accept the God of the Bible because he could not reconcile a good God with the supposed moral atrocities attributed to Him. Paine's book, **The Age of Reason**, exclaimed that the Bible was “more than half filled [with] obscene stories, voluptuous debaucheries. . . cruel and torturous executions [and] unrelenting vindictiveness.”² Strangely enough, Paine, when he was writing against the Bible,³ admitted he had “neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both. . . .”⁴ So much for Paine's objectivity, or lack of it, in his tirades against the Scriptures. However, in Part Two of his **The Age of Reason**, he claimed to have obtained both a Bible and Testament and said, “I have found them to be much worse books than I had conceived.”⁵ The following charges from Paine were not original with him and have been frequently repeated by those who claim that a good God could not engage in such evil or command others to do so.

There are matters in that book, said to be done by the **express command** of God, that are just as shocking to humanity and to every idea we have of moral justice as anything. . . done in modern times. When we read in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, etc., that they (the Israelites) came by stealth upon whole nations of people, who, as history itself shows, had given them no offense; **that they put all those nations to the sword; that they spared neither age nor infancy; that they utterly destroyed men, women and children; that they left not a soul to breathe--** expressions that are repeated over and over again in those books, and that, too, with exulting ferocity--are we to be sure these things are facts? Are we sure that the Creator of man commissioned these things to be done? And are we sure that the books which tell us so were written by His authority?. . . To charge the commission of acts upon the Almighty, which, in their own nature and by every rule of moral justice, are crimes, as all assassination is, and more especially the assassination of infants, is a matter of serious concern. The Bible tells us, that those assassinations were done by the **express command of God.**⁶ [emphasis is Paine's]

A more modern and popular treatment of the same sort of charges against God and the Bible are found in two volumes by writer, song writer, playwright, and comedian

Steve Allen. However, Allen is not joking about his view of Scripture. The cover jacket says, "Like Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, this book highlights the errors, inconsistencies, self-contradictions, and morally repugnant episodes and characters of the Bible."⁷ Martin Gardner quotes Allen in the Foreword of the book.

The fundamentalists, of course, are caught in a trap from which there is no escape, except that of abandoning at least the more absurd of their arguments. If we start with the unquestioned assumption that there is a God and that he is, by definition, good, then it inescapably follows that the countless atrocities attributed to him in the Old Testament are not only lies, but insulting lies at that. Since this is something that the fundamentalist cannot even consider, much less concede, they are, as I say, trapped in an intellectual prison from which there is not the slightest possibility of escape. Their greatest anger, alas, is reserved for those who would do them the great service of freeing them from their prison. ⁸

These quotations could be multiplied from Allen's two volumes, which total over 900 pages, but the problem is stated clearly in the quotes from Paine and Allen. How can a **good** God do what the Old Testament attributes to Him? Paine was a deist who denied that God involved Himself in the affairs of man following the creation. His god is much like that of Epicurus, mentioned earlier, a "God [who] takes no interest in anything." Allen cautiously accepts the idea of a god, but must admit he can know nothing about him. "As I have observed elsewhere, both the existence and nonexistence of God seem in some respects preposterous. I accept the probability that there is some kind of divine force, however, because that appears to me the least preposterous assumption of the two."⁹

Judging God By Human Standards

If we are to condemn God, by what standard do we hold Him to account? Paine said that God's actions were "shocking to humanity and to every idea we have of moral justice." Who are "we"? From where do Paine or Allen derive their concepts of what is shocking or moral justice? Since neither Paine nor Allen believe in the Bible, how does

either know what their God may be like or do? Both men have the same problem as atheists when it comes to dealing with moral law and God. They both claim to have a God, but no way of determining His standard of morality. James D. Bales wrote:

Those who believe in God and in the existence of moral law must grapple with the problem of moral difficulties in the Bible, but those who reject God and the reality of moral law are either using an **argumentum ad hominem** or argue from principles which destroy their atheism and moral relativism. The **argumentum ad hominem** is where you take the position another person occupies, although you do not accept that position, and turn it against him. It is an effort to blow up the opponent's position from within by utilizing self-contradictions in his system. The **consistent** atheist repudiates God and moral law. Therefore, he cannot say anything is really morally wrong since the moral realm does not exist. One cannot say something is an injustice unless there is a standard of justice, nothing is bad if there is no good, nothing is immoral unless there is moral law. When one makes value judgments he makes judgments in the light of a standard of right and wrong. However, if right and wrong do not exist one cannot be consistent and condemn anything as wrong. It may be pleasant or unpleasant but it cannot be good or evil. The atheist cannot be consistent and say that something in the Bible is a moral difficulty, for if matter in motion [organic evolution] is the sole reality one cannot pass from the description of an event to an evaluation of an event. To say that something in the Bible is morally wrong is to say there is a standard of morality in the light of which one judges the event to be immoral. If man is just an animal and morality is in a state of flux and flow, how can one say anything is morally wrong? One person likes strawberries and another person likes to inflict pain on other animals (including human animals), but who can say the latter is immoral? ⁰₁

What makes one person's individual moral code superior to another person's moral values? Can Paine or Allen prove their moral codes to be superior to the Bible? Should we take a poll? What makes any man's moral philosophy authoritative over another? Humanists say, "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is **autonomous** and **situational**, needing no theological or ideological sanction."¹¹ The absurdity of such a claim is obvious. If each man can frame his own moral code there would be as many moral codes as people. Such a condition is called anarchy, where every man does what is right in his own eyes (cf. Judg. 21:25). While such may sound good, to have that freedom, no society can exist in such a state of lawlessness and disorder and thankfully most societies formulate moral codes and laws for their own well-being. Who would doubt that a Creator would provide the same for His creatures made in His image? He has, in the Bible, and it is superior to all others.

Wayne Jackson shows the contradiction of ethics (morals) being autonomous and situational.

When one argues that morals are **situational**, he is suggesting that an act cannot be judged by an absolute standard; that its rightness or wrongness is dependent upon the situation. For example, it would be wrong to lie if that falsehood was hurtful to another; however, if that lie could be helpful, it is said, then it could be right. Further, as previously indicated, morality is alleged to be **autonomous**. That word means "self law." Every man is his **own law**! Well, if that be the case, how could there ever be a situation in which a person could do wrong?! **Human ethical autonomy and situational morality are mutually exclusive propositions!** ^{2,1}

When one claims (or implies) that there is no absolute standard by which to judge morality, one cannot logically contend that anything is immoral. Therefore, as Bales has said, if one contends that the Bible is morally wrong (in the acts it attributes to God), that person is contending that a standard exists by which to judge the Bible's morality. How can a person show that standard to be **the standard** by which to judge all others?

If God does not exist, no human standard can rightly be considered superior to another. If God does exist, it is not illogical to believe that He has communicated a moral standard for His creation, and that His character and acts consistent with that character will be clearly taught. It is not within the scope of this paper to give proof for the existence of God. However, assuming that He does exist, we will attempt to discuss if His being a wholly good God is inconsistent with His acts and commands, which some believe to be moral atrocities.

The Sovereignty of God

The charges made against the moral character of God and His commands to others can be answered by accepting the fact of God's sovereign Being. To say that God is sovereign is to say that He is supreme over all beings and things. "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Psm. 103:19). "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matt.6:13b).

There are divine names which express His sovereignty. He is called “most high God” (Gen. 14:19, 22); “Almighty God” (17:1); and “Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 4:8; 21:22).

God is He “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph. 1:11). Nothing is too hard for God; He knows all that men do and will reward or punish according to their obedience or disobedience (cf. Jer. 32:17-19). God causes nations to rise and fall and governs the destiny of men and nations (Jer. 18:7-10; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-31).³¹

If one truly believes Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” then nothing else the Bible says about the sovereignty of God should be difficult to accept!

If God is the Creator of mankind, He has the right to command and do with men any and all things which are consistent with His total character. The Bible depicts God as good (Psm. 25:8); merciful (Psm 130:7); righteous (Gen. 18:25; Psm. 116:5); loving (Deut. 7:13; 1 John 4:8); a God of justice (Psm. 89:14; Isa. 45:21); and He is a holy God (Lev. 11:44-45). God cannot act contrary to His character. The Bible teaches that God wants all men to be saved (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9). Consistent with that will or desire, **God does not show partiality with men as it relates to their salvation or condemnation** (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 10:34-35; Ezek. 33:11; Rev. 22:17). Although God may display great wrath upon nations and individuals at times, He does not assign damnation to those who have not sinned, nor does He cause or force men to sin and be lost. The “whosoever” of John 3:16 and Revelation 22:17, along with the “any” and “all” of Second Peter 3:9 clearly show that God’s sovereign power does not intrude on man’s free will to obey or disobey God, leading to their eternal destiny.

Romans, chapter nine, shows that God does choose from among men to use certain ones to bring about His will for redeeming mankind. He chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (over Easu), and later Moses to fulfill His will. These men were basically good men, obedient to God’s will. In the same chapter, Paul showed how God could also use

wicked men of a character like Pharaoh to accomplish certain parts of His will. In using men to bring about His will, God does not violate the freewill with which He originally endowed man (cf. Gen. 2:15-17; 3:11-13). God does not make men be good or bad, but He does use the characters of both classes to do His will.

God's sovereign power acquits Him of being morally atrocious in bringing the Flood upon the world to destroy those who were wicked continually (Gen. 6:5-7). His sovereign power also permits Him to decree the destruction of the wicked Canaanite nations whose iniquity had become full (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 7:1-6). These two cases will be the basis of our remaining study. If we can see God's acts or commands here were justified, because He is the sovereign Lord, nothing else which can be presented for criticism by those such as Paine or Allen will present any unique problems.

God's Goodness and the Flood

In Genesis 6:3-5 the Scripture demonstrates the patience of God as He dealt with the corrupt and wicked lives of the ante-deluvian race. These people were not just sinners, they were sinful (full of sin) to the point of that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). Comparing these verses with Second Peter 2:5, it seems that God worked with mankind over a century to turn them from their constant sin to righteousness through Noah, "a preacher of righteousness." When they did not respond God brought the Flood and destroyed all the world, except for Noah, his family of seven, and the animals aboard the ark (Gen. 6-9). This is no fairy tale of the Old Testament. Christ makes reference to this event as historical, comparing it to the certainty of His second coming, saying that His return would come as unexpectedly as the Flood of Noah's day (Matt. 24:38-39; Luke 17:26-27). Unexpectedly does not mean without warning, as we mentioned above. Preachers today frequently mention the return

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of Christ, but consider how many in the world turn a deaf ear, as they did to Noah's preaching. Did Jesus compare His second coming to a myth or fable? No! If He had, we could not be sure that His return will be a real historical event.

Notice that sin had filled the hearts of every human family except one. What would a good God do? Was there no need for God to move against such evil before it captured the minds of the last righteous family? What of His plan for redeeming mankind? Through whom would this salvation come if there were no holy seed? J. H. Titcomb, in a work long out of print, makes some excellent comments on this vital point. Speaking to critics of God's action in bringing the Flood, he says:

Am I to understand you, however, as saying that a God of love and mercy had absolutely no moral right thus to destroy His own creation on account of its prolonged and inveterate self-corruption, after He had warned it, and had been patient with it through centuries of protracted long-suffering? Are there not stages of moral evil, even in the present day which show themselves absolutely irreclaimable by any remedies known to man; crimes so deep and inveterate that neither mercy nor remedial treatment will stop them? Now you will observe from the narrative [Gen. 6-9] that this was just the case here. Long-suffering had reached its utmost limit; corruption and rebellion had left only one righteous family. Hence, if permitted longer, the very last remnant of goodness would have perished out of the earth. What! Do you mean to tell me that it would have been consistent with perfect love to allow the last spark of moral goodness to become extinguished? **Are all the resources of love and mercy to be spent upon the wicked and none to be exhibited for the protection of the righteous?** Are there not some periods and cases, even within our own experience, when severe judgments on hardened criminals become conservative of benevolence and kindness toward the innocent? Would any just government allow assassins to go through a country committing murder and rapine upon the population, and corrupting the vitals of society, without feeling a need to interfere on behalf of the virtuous? The cases are exactly analogous. Only, in this instance, the government was God's, and the corruption, instead of being partial, was all but universal. Look at the case fairly in this light gentlemen, and your impeachment of the Divine goodness hopelessly falls to the ground.¹⁴ [emphasis mine,TJC]

Most people who do not believe in God or the Bible would allow from a nation to exercise judgment against its citizens, or even against another nation which continued to be harmful to all others, but these same people say that they do not believe in God or the Scriptures, partially because a sovereign God took such action against horribly wicked people. Bales points out the inconsistency of such people

There are those who look for any stick with which they can beat the Bible and faith in God. On the one hand, I have debated atheists who criticized God for the judgment which He brought on the world in the flood, and the punishment of the inhabitants of Canaan. On the other hand, they have criticized God for not destroying evil like Hitler and thereby preventing them from doing evil to other human beings. If God brings judgment upon a people because they have become evil, they do not like it. If God does not bring judgment on evil people who are giving them trouble, as well as giving others trouble, they do not like it either. They should make up their minds whether they believe there should be any judgment on evil, but let them not arbitrarily switch from Yes to No and back again. Why criticize turning the other cheek and at the same time criticize the principle of strict justice. i.e., an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? ⁵

A good God would do precisely what the God of Scripture did! We shall discuss the problem of the children in such so-called atrocities later.

Destruction of the Canaanites by Israel

Basically, the same sort of situation prevailed in the land of Canaan, with the seven pagan nations (Deut. 7:1-7), as prevailed worldwide in Genesis 6-9. Approximately 400 years before Israel went into Canaan by the command of God, the Lord told Abraham, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). The word Amorites sometimes refers to all the inhabitants of Canaan. If these nations had turned to God, their destruction could have been avoided. The book of Jonah is testimony to that fact, since God withheld the promised destruction of Nineveh when they repented (Jonah 3:5-10; Matt. 12:41). All of these facts harmonize to show that God is longsuffering with sinners, but there is an end to His patience (2 Pet. 3:9-10).

The seven nations of Canaan were vile and base in ways that even the Bible's critics would normally condemn. Their religions involved cultic prostitutes and sacrificing babies in the burning arms of their stone or metal idols of Baal, Chemosh and Molech (Jer. 19:5; Lev. 18:21, 24-30; 1 Kings 11:7-8, 33; Jer. 32:35; 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6). It was for this wickedness that the Lord drove out or destroyed those nations (Deut. 9:4-6). Israel

was severely warned that she would suffer the same fate if she followed the practices of these pagans (Deut. 8:19-20). The same type of principle stated previously by Titcomb is applied by another author to the nations of Canaan.

It is better that the wicked should be destroyed a hundred times over than that they should tempt those who are as yet innocent to join their company. Let us but think what might have been our fate, and the fate of every other nation under heaven, had the sword of the Israelites done its work more sparingly. Even as it was, the small portions of the Canaanites who were left, and the nations around them, so tempted the Israelites by their idolatrous practices that we read of the whole people of God turning away from His service. But, had the heathen lived in the land in equal numbers, and still more had they intermarried largely with the Israelites, how was it possible, humanly speaking, that any sparks of the light of God's truth should have survived to the coming of Christ? . . . The Israelite's sword, in its bloodiest executions, wrought a work of mercy for all the countries of the earth to the very end of the world. They seem of very small importance to us now, those perpetual contests with the Canaanites and the Midianites, and the Ammonites, with which the Books of Joshua and Judges and Samuel are almost filled. . . . But in these contests, on the fate of one of these nations [Israel] the happiness of the human race depended. The Israelites fought not for themselves only, but for us. It might follow that they should thus be accounted the enemies of mankind--it might be that they were tempted by their very distinctiveness to despise other nations; still they did God's work,--still they preserved unhurt the seed of eternal life, and were the ministers of blessing to all other nations, even though they themselves failed to enjoy it ⁶,

One will note from the history of Israel as related in Scripture that they did not convert the pagan nations about them to God's way, but they were influenced to leave a strict allegiance to God and mix the wicked ways of paganism with the pure truth God had revealed to them.

One may ask why God used the Israelites to destroy the seven nations, instead of destroying them, for example, as God did the Assyrian army in Second Kings 19 or by some type of natural calamity. H. L. Hastings suggests, "Had the destruction of these nations resulted wholly from natural causes, by slow decay or from sudden calamities, the hand of God would not have been recognized in the punishment, and men would not have learned his hatred of sin and impurity. Hence, that the moral lesson might not be lost upon both Israel and the surrounding nations, such measures were taken as would leave no uncertainty concerning the matter."¹⁷ After noting that God used some natural

means such as hornets (Exod. 23:28; Deut. 7:20; Josh. 24:12), plus the miracles of the Exodus (Exod. 7-12), Hastings says:

[F]inally the work of destruction was completed by the Israelites themselves. . .that they might teach the nations how God abhorred impurity, and also thus learn for themselves a lesson of obedience to the divine counsels, and of abstinence from the sins which they were bidden to punish in others. ⁸₁

Should God have prolonged the mercy He showed to these seven nations for over 400 years, when “with this prolongation of mercy they would soon corrupt all other less degenerate than themselves, until the earth became, as it had become previously before the flood, one seething mass of moral impurity, threatening the final and complete distinction of all goodness. . . . Here I ask again, as I did before, Are all the resources of love and mercy to be spent upon the abandoned, and none to be exhibited for the protection of the virtuous?”¹⁹

This is the other side which critics of God and Scripture do not consider, until they wish to make a point of law to punish those who trouble them with immoral practices. For God to carry on His plan for the redemption of mankind, Israel was preserved until the “fulness of time had come” (Gal. 4:4), when Christ came.

One other matter which critics of the Bible do not often talk about is the fact that God also punished Israel, as He stated He would when she apostatized. Assyria took the northern kingdom of Israel captive in 722 B. C. (2 Kings 17), but He did not allow Assyria to take Jerusalem at that time (cf. 2 Kings 19). However, because Judah did not learn her lesson from the fate of the northern kingdom. God brought Babylon against Judah and Jerusalem (606-587 B. C.) and carried her captive for seventy years (2 Kings 24-25). The Jews were restored to Jerusalem (cf. books of Nehemiah and Ezra), but later, when the Jews crucified Christ and rejected His work, God destroyed Jerusalem again in A. D. 70 (Matt. 24:1-34). One who does not obey God loses His favor, Jew or Gentile. That lesson is written boldly in Scripture.

Critics of the Bible like Steve Allen and Thomas Paine claim that the Old Testament has set the stage for claims of Holy Wars in the name of Christ (or Allah of the Muslims) throughout history. However, since the beginning of Christ's kingdom there have been no nations who have been given divine revelation from God to carry out carnal warfare. Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world and it not to be established nor expanded by physical force (John 18:36; cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 6:10-18). This is a favorite ploy of unbelievers to list all the atrocities of so-called Christian groups or religious warring nations and blame God and Christianity for such inhumanities.⁰² Doing so ignores the total context of the Scriptures and falsely discredits God.

Does a Good God Destroy Innocent Children?

The problem of children suffering in normal life through sins against them, natural calamities, and things such as war must be discussed. This is perhaps the most emotional charge made against God's creation and the accounts in the Bible where children were slain with adults. Children suffer partly because we live in a world cursed by sin, in which the environment can bring suffering, and because we are subject to death (Gen. 3:16-19). Children also suffer at the hands of their parents, others, and war.

If we are asked why God did not spare the children of the world's population from the Flood and the destruction of the Canaanite nations, the following points can be made. First, the degree of depravity afflicting the world at that time was so complete that it would have unquestionably affected the children at an early age. It is not uncommon for child psychologists to note that a child's basic character for life is well established by the time the child is three to five years old.

According to Theodore Lidz of the department of psychiatry of Yale University School of Medicine, "[D]uring no other period of life is the person so transformed both physically and developmentally" as during infancy. Further, "[N]o part of his life experience will be as solidly incorporated in the individual, become so irrevocably a part of him as his infancy." Just as a lack of physical care can lead to ill health or even death, lack of social nurturing produces distortions of emotional development and stunting of intellectual growth.²¹

Dr. James Dobson claims even earlier influences, "It is increasingly clear that the origins of human competence are to be found in a critical period of development between eight and eighteen months of age. The child's experiences during these brief months do more to influence future intellectual competence than any time before or after."²² These quotations do not mean that a child is accountable for sin at such a young age, nor that he/she knows how to engage in the wide variety of sinful activities in the world, but that temperament and the ability to learn are being structured for the child to build upon. In addition, children do learn to imitate at a very early age. It is possible even for small children to learn habits and attitudes which incline toward wickedness. Second, the human child is unique in God's creation. Possibly no other life forms require so much constant attention for so long a time of development. There was no way that four women on the ark could have cared for the world's population of children for the year of the Flood, supposing that the men cared for all the less dependent animals on board. Even if the full crew of eight persons had given constant attention to the hundreds or thousands of babies and small children, it would have been an impossible task and caused great suffering on the part of the children. Third, and a point especially missed by the Bible's critics, the death of these children was not the worst thing that could happen to them. Since the doctrine of inherited sin is false, as sad as it is, these children died in their innocence and went to heaven before the throne of God. Jesus seems to make that point clearly in Matthew 19:13-15; 18:3-4. While their sinful parents became the objects of God's wrath, the innocent children became recipients of God's eternal mercy. Only the materialist, who believes that physical death ends one's existence, could really complain. One should not try to convict the Bible of bad morals because of the children in these events, since Scripture teaches that children are innocent of sin

and spared the eternal death that comes to unrepentant persons who are accountable for their sins.

The same principles hold true regarding the death of the Canaanite children (Deut. 7:1-6; 20:16-18). Although the Hebrew tribes were more numerous than the eight on the ark, they also had their own children to attend to and taking on large numbers of the pagans' children would have been an impossible task. It would also have detracted from Israel's purpose of being a special people, forbidden to mix with those nations in marriage. Israel's bloodlines were to be preserved so that one from Judah, of the family of David, would become the long awaited Messiah, through whom "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3; 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:11-17; Acts 3:22-26).

In some cases of Israelite conquest against a nation the children were not destroyed, but those of the seven nations of Deuteronomy 7 were not saved. One may choose to question God regarding His reasons for this, but, as seen above, the physical deaths of these little ones was not as tragic as the unbeliever contends. It was, in a real sense, a salvation from a life of wicked debauchery and condemnation. Does this mean that we should encourage the deaths of children today, to save them from growing up in sin? Of course not. We have no commission from God to do such. There is no special nation status to protect as there was with Israel. God's plan for redemption in Christ has been completed. There is no continuing need for the types of warfare in the development of God's plan through Israel. God has not spoken to any one in the Christian age to engage in physical war in His name, although He is in control of the rise and fall of nations (Jer. 18:7-10).

CONCLUSION

We have shown that belief in an all-powerful, wholly good God is not a contradiction to the additional fact that evil exists. This world in which we live is the best possible world for the purpose for which God created it, that is, to recognize God's existence and to come to know Him through general (creation) and special (Bible) revelation, and to love and serve Him and our fellowman. The suffering in this world has its place in leading us to fulfill God's plan for us, seeing with eyes of faith a "better country," a heavenly one, not here, but hereafter (Heb. 11:13-16).

God is wholly good in His eternal purpose for man, including His plan to bring into the world the Messiah (Christ) through the nation of Israel. Those wars and events, which some style as moral atrocities against the character of God, were in fact the acts of a sovereign God in punishing sin and removing it to the degree necessary to maintain the operation of His plan to redeem mankind through Jesus Christ.

If these things are not true, there are no satisfying answers to why evil exists or how God can be good, in view of the existence of evil and the historical events attributed to His will in the Old Testament. Contrary to Steve Allen's charge that Christians need to be freed from their "prison" of thought along these lines, we can be quite comfortable in believing that these matters are reconciled in God's character and eternal purpose for us, as He "works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11).

¹ Parts of this section are taken from a lecture given at the 21st Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship at the Getwell Church of Christ, Memphis, TN, entitled, "*Moral Difficulties in the Bible*," IN: **The Inspiration of the Bible**, ed., Jim Laws (Memphis: Getwell Church of Christ, 1996), 532-555.

² Thomas Paine, **The Age of Reason** (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1974), 60.

³ Paine always referred to the Old Testament as the "Bible" and called the New Testament either the "New Testament" or simply a "Testament."

⁴ Paine, **The Age of Reason**, 100.

⁵ Ibid., 103.

⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁷ Steve Allen, **Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion, and Morality** (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990), back flap of jacket cover. Allen's second book on this topic is cleverly called, **More Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion, and Morality**, also published by Prometheus.

⁸ Allen, **Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion, and Morality**, xvi.

⁹ Ibid., xxix.

- ¹⁰ James D. Bales, **Moral Difficulties in the Bible**, unpublished manuscript, n.d. Photocopy from the author. 707 Race St., Searcy, AR 72143.
- ¹¹ Paul Kurtz, ed., **Humanist Manifestos I & II** (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Press, 1973), 17.
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- ²¹ Drs. Paul D. Meir, Frank B. Minirth, and Frank B. Wichern, **Introduction to Psychology and Counseling** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 96-97.
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What follows is a brief bibliography of some books on this subject which I did not have time to read before preparing the written manuscript. Hopefully, I can make some observations from these in my oral presentation where applicable.

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