



WHY EARTHQUAKES ARE PART OF GOD’S PROGRAM

- PART 1

GEOPHYSICAL FORCES VS. ATHEISTS

By **Wilfred Hahn**

Over the past several years, my wife and I have traveled through a number of regions infamous for their earthquakes and volcanoes. For example, we visited Indonesia, a country with many active volcanoes. One that we ascended in East Java was Mount Bromo. Looking down into its crater, smoke and boiling lava could be seen.



Another such seismically active country was Iceland. Almost everywhere one goes in this country, hissing geysers of boiling water can be found. Fortunately, volcanic activity is closely monitored and authorities seek to alert citizens of any impending dangers.

Nonetheless, volcanoes are deadly. A visit to ancient Pompeii provided an example of the fatal and massively destructive powers of erupting volcanoes. Entire cities and populations were wiped out by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. This may be among the most infamous of historical volcanoes. (We will also review recent volcanic activity.)

However, we mainly want to focus on another geophysical force—earthquakes. Earlier this year, traveling in New

Zealand, we observed their destructive impact close-up. In the cities of Wellington and Christchurch, for example, we saw many buildings either condemned or closed-off to public access until structural repairs could be made. Over 180 people died in the 2011 quake striking the Christchurch region. New Zealand experiences a high incidence of tremors and earthquakes.

Just how destructive are these geophysical forces? According to Munich RE, worldwide natural catastrophes caused an estimated \$175 billion of losses in 2016.¹ Of these, geophysical disasters (earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis) accounted for 27% of the loss in monetary terms.

Earthquakes or volcanoes: Which is more destructive? To answer this, we must consider loss of-life estimates—not monetary equivalents. While insurers

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(the main audience for the Munich RE report) will obviously want to focus on their underwriting losses, God, of course, is inclined to be more concerned with human lives.

According to a study by an international group of professors, which surveyed the global impact of earthquakes and volcanos taking place between the years 1900 to 2014, earthquakes accounted for loss of life of an estimated 2.32 million people. By contrast, volcanoes caused an estimated 980,000 deaths on earth over this period. As such, one could infer that earthquakes are more than twice as deadly (at least, that has been the case over that short period of 114 years surveyed).²

Before continuing, we must deal with a contentious question: Why does God allow geophysical disasters? Given the fatalities and the high-profile nature of geophysical catastrophes, this is a question that most will have pondered at some point in their lives. In fact, some people refuse to believe in God because they reason that He is unjust to allow so much death and suffering through geophysical forces or otherwise.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not have an adequate answer to this query. They may be stopped dead in their tracks attempting to respond to this most basic of apologetic questions. Let's first defuse this “popular” question, before continuing our study of earthquakes. We'll begin by referencing Scripture, and then review some statistics.

Firstly, people who trip on this question likely have no concept of the identity, character, and infinity of the Judeo-Christian God—Jehovah God. The only god that many

people will likely accept is one that they themselves can control and understand.

By presuming to judge and condemn things far above their understanding, they have implicitly placed themselves above God. They instead believe in a very small god, failing to realize that their god is really themselves; therefore one that is capricious, inconsistent and powerless.

The question to put to people that fault God is to ask them to define what the term “god” means to them. And, assuming that they do not believe in God, they must also answer the question as to why evolutionary forces have given rise to so much human suffering around the world. We will explore this point further.

The One and Only God, on the other hand, clearly states His position relative to humans: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).

Moreover, the Bible says that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of [all] wisdom” (Psalm 111:10), and that He is “changeless” (James 1:17). It should be obvious to all that He created all (Romans 1:20), and has proven Himself to mankind by accurately foretelling the future and resurrecting His Son.

Failing to recognize these truths, they remain blinded. Others may volitionally and spitefully choose not to believe in God ... expressly defying Him. They are likely to be offended by the notion that there are answers “higher” than them, though they are made of flesh that returns to the earth.



Consider the record of human wars. WWI alone was responsible for the lives of some 50 million. WWII claimed another 20 million. Politically motivated deaths in the 20th century worldwide are estimated to be in the hundreds of millions (estimates vary significantly).



Let us return to our core question: Why has God left natural systems and physical phenomena to operate independently and to cause suffering? Because, God gave dominion over the earth to mankind, as well as the freedom of choice (the ability to voluntarily love God and to be obedient to His statutes).

The world would be a much worse place for humans if there were no freedom of choice and there were complete immunity from all the physical elements; all suffering, adversities, human hardships, and God's disciplinary actions. It would be a world of chaos, treachery and without love. Atheists and humanists agree that "absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Comparative Destructiveness

Therefore, we must ask the question: Who or what causes the most suffering in this world? Let's review the candidates. We will start with the familiar—geophysical forces.

Throughout the scope of human history, just how deadly have volcanic eruptions and earthquakes been? Again, referring to the survey cited earlier, we do some rough math. We calcu-

late that one out of every 7,000 people that lived on earth between the year 1900 and 2014 will have perished from an earthquake.

What about volcanos? Here, only one in 16,000 people would have succumbed. We guesstimate that some 16 billion people will have been alive during this space of time. To be sure, these are speculative estimates at best, though they partly rely on estimates of historical populations made by the Population Reference Bureau.³ We conclude that earthquakes register the most deadly on the scoreboard.

Considering the casualties of all geophysical forces has apparently earned God the title of "The Ultimate Supervillain" of all time (as presented on the website of the rabid atheist Richard Dawkins' Foundation for Reason and Science).⁴ It certainly is strange that God should suffer such an epithet ... by humans no less. After all, aren't *Homo sapiens* the biggest killers by far?

Let us briefly look at humanity's record of killing and villainy. Just what decimation and disasters, in comparison, have been caused by humans—actions for which they alone have been responsible.

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Zbigniew Brzezinski (former National Security Advisor in the Johnson and Carter administrations) in his book, *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-first Century*

(1993) estimates that “political motivated carnage” accounts for some 167 to 175 million deaths in the 20th century. That equates to one casualty out of roughly every 90 people that lived during that period. That mortality rate is more than 50 times that of earthquakes and volcanoes combined—yes, 50 times greater.

What about homicides? A 2013 study by the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) reported a global average intentional homicide rate of 6.2 per 100,000 in population in the year 2012.⁵ If one assumes that the same homicide rate applied over the period 1900 to 2014 some 50 million people would have been murdered. That is a mortality rate more than 20 times that of earthquake activity.

Other statistics involving death and suffering could be considered. We have only reviewed natural forces and human actions. We can firmly conclude that humans are the biggest voluntary killers on the planet. To the atheists, this is a devastating fact. Their god of “evolutionary forces” must therefore be the most brutal of all. To the atheist evolutionist’s theory, not only has their god cause uncountable pointless deaths among all “evolving” life forms, but also its crowning product is the biggest villain of all—the human.

Turning to the Bible

In view of the statistical data we have surveyed, it will not be surprising to discover that the Bible has much more to say about earthquakes than volcanoes. In fact, earthquakes play a pivotal role in God’s kingdom.

Volcanic activity, by contrast, seems not to be documented in the Bible. In fact, there is even no specific term for “volcano” found in Scripture. However, there are verses in the Bible that may possibly be interpreted as the result of volcanic activity.

For example, “Oh that you would rend the heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains might flow down at your pres-

ence” (Isaiah 64:13). “The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yes, the world, and all that dwell therein” (Nahum 1:5-6). Mountains that “flow down” or the hills that “melt” sound like they may involve lava flows.

Perhaps the account of the Israelites being led by Moses to the foot of Mount Sinai, involved an active volcano. Says the Bible of this event: “You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness” (Deuteronomy 4:11). Perhaps. There are tens of other references to smoke, fire, pitch and melting mountains. All of these references, and many more, appear to be imagery of supernatural events, apocalyptic or otherwise. It remains conjecture as to whether a literal volcano is found in the Bible.

Earthquakes, by contrast, are extensively portrayed in Scripture. Not only does the Bible mention specific historical occurrences, it also uses earthquakes in literal prophecies, as well as symbolically and metaphorically. Earthquakes play an important role in God’s kingdom. Moreover, we discover that earthquakes have yet to play large and specific roles in the future, according to Bible prophecy. We will examine these further in Part II. (MC)

ENDNOTES

- 1 https://www.munichre.com/site/corporate/get/params_E-760103026_Dattachment/1351568/20160103_RZ_Big-five-overview-en.pdf
- 2 <http://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU2015/EGU2015-8119.pdf>
- 3 <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2002/HowManyPeopleHaveEverLivedonEarth.aspx>
- 4 <https://richarddawkins.net/2015/01/god-the-ultimate-supervillain/>
- 5 https://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKewiZ5saT7eDSAhVK9YMKHd9nBDkQFgghMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unodc.org%2Fdocuments%2Fgsh%2Fpdfs%2F2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf&usq=AFQjCNFKMzlE6O60ovq1JDQkd6oEbmnpDQ&sig2=K_imS0a9EBcxI95K7QCrdw