

Is God 'Omnipotent?'

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The word "omnipotent" means "all-powerful." In the popular mind, it has come to imply, when applied to God, that He causes everything that happens. Specifically, God is thought by the traditional advocates of this concept to be responsible for deciding which plane shall crash and which baby shall be born healthy or unhealthy. If "omnipotence" implies all this, then, I do not believe that God is omnipotent.

I do believe that God is powerful. I believe that He is more powerful than many traditionalists believe Him to be. I believe that His power is beyond our understanding, for how can we comprehend the power behind the origin of the galaxies? How can we comprehend the Creator of the atom in all of its complexity and precision? God has indescribable power, but He is not omnipotent, in the technical sense.

He is not omnipotent, in my view, because accident is possible within this magnificent universe. A thousand babies are born, and 999 are healthy (with an assist not only from God, but from the practitioners of modern medicine, who are His agents). God is responsible for the process of birth and procreation. It is an unbelievably complex and miraculous process. Nonetheless, things can go wrong, even with this almost sure process. The world is not perfect. God's power is beyond our comprehension, but it is not perfect.

Some people think that if God is not perfect, that He is not God, for, to their mind a god must be perfect. Why? Isn't it enough that God's ability is magnificent beyond our comprehension? Surely, we would prefer that He be perfect (perhaps, that is His aim and hope), but God is not merely the projection of our wishes. He is what He is.

Does God cause some to have cancer and not others? I trust not. The perplexity of the doctor and surgeon before cancer (they are doing better all the time) is just a pale imitation, in my opinion, of God's frustration before this deviation from health. He does not choose suffering for any of us.

What does God do when a good person dies too young? I do not believe that God is beyond suffering Himself. I think He cries with us. The imperfection of this grand universe is His suffering. When sadness visits us, we are not alone. The Maker of the Universe is at our side.

What is left when we lose a loved one? Only the universe and its Creative Spirit. Only the millions of opportunities to grow and to experience happiness. We cannot mourn overmuch for the imperfections. We have to grasp the near perfection that abounds all around us.