It is hard to find a work more relevant the theme of human suffering than the book of Job. It is in essence 42 chapters detailing the suffering of a man, how his friends fail to comfort him and then the response of God to his plight. I have read the book more than once, and in each reading there has always been one passage that stood out to me the most. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for a hypocrite shall not come before him.” (Job 13:15-16). To me this quote relays two important facts about the story of Job. First when it comes to either enduring suffering or turning from it into absolute despair, Job chose to endure. No matter how the text goes on after this to see Job speaking of how broken he is by what he believes to be God’s turning away from him, he never at any moment out rightly denies God. This has always been a remarkable feat of character to me. Having everything taken from you without knowing the reason why and yet keeping your faith is a rare and practically unheard of resolve when compared to how such an ordeal would be handled by our current generation. And secondly this quote to me shows the understanding that Job has of the relationship between God and Man when it comes to suffering. Job believes it would be hypocritical of him to turn his faith away from God due to his suffering because in his eyes God is justified to do whatever he pleases with Job’s life. Everything that was good in Job’s life prior to his ordeal came from God, and he received it not for good conduct or a matter of righteousness, but because of Grace. Surely other men in the world during that time were equally as kind and good as Job but did not have the same wealth. So when the wealth was taken away, Job saw it as well within the rights of God. This is an understanding that very few people of faith, whether they worship the same God as Job or another, have today.

From W.B Yeats *The Second Coming* I find the following quote to be interesting when evaluating how humanity deals with suffering and troubles. “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.” (Yeats 7-8). The first thing that would need to be defined is who Yeats considers to be “the best” of humankind and “the worst”. If living in a world in which “anarchy is loosed” the best in turn lose all of their conviction, whether in faith or simply the spirit to continue living, then what is it about them that makes them the best? If the best of humanity loses heart, while the worst are filled with “passionate intensity” which I take to refer to worldly passions and desires, then what can be said for the state of mankind? To me Yeats is saying that none of us truly will be able to endure the level of suffering that he believes to be coming when Christ comes again. He is obviously referring to the great tribulation spoken of in the Book of Revelation, and by wrapping the good in with the worst as failing to stand firm, Yeats is saying that as a race we are neither equipped nor able to endure the highest levels of suffering. All peoples of faith are bound to turn away.

With regard to Chicxulub it is the author’s statement after rushing to the hospital to see his daughter’s state that to me says something about how we deal with suffering as a race. “I \_\_mutter, out of breath, “just tell me and it’s yours,” (Boyle). Here the Father, having just arrived at the hospital, prays a desperate prayer to God asking to be told of anything he could do to save his daughter. This man is in despair, and afraid that he may have lost one of the most important things in his life. Under the stress of this situation, he seeks God, or a God, to help him. From his earlier language “You’d better get down on your knees and pray to your gods” (Boyle) we can conclude that this man isn’t a believer in higher power(s). But in his moment of greatest need, in what is almost a fail-safe strategy (as in it wouldn’t hurt to try) he cries out to God for help. To me this has always been an interesting part of the human psyche, specifically for those who find no reason to believe in the existence of God. When there is something that is needed desperately, they are more than willing to step out in faith and call on the name of God. This is natural; they need something and can see that nobody around them can help. But what I have never understood is the disappointment that comes thereafter when there is no answer. It is said that we are made in the image of god, Imago Dei. If this is true, then we can suspect that God, like us, would find it strange to receive a request for help from someone who has never spoken to him, and has essentially denied his existence. That would hurt my feelings, and perhaps it hurts his. And when someone hurts your feelings, you aren’t likely to pick up their calls. Of course there is so much more to that argument, and it is not at all conclusive, but it is just a thought on how we handle suffering from the perspective of those who do not believe in a God.

And finally with The Aquarium the narrators statement that “One of the most despicable religious fallacies is that suffering is ennobling—that it is a step on the path to some kind of enlightenment or salvation. Isabel’s suffering and death did nothing for her, or us, or the world. We learned no lessons worth learning; we acquired no experience that could benefit anyone” (Hemon) pretty much summarizes a final view of human suffering with relation to God. God should not allow anyone to suffer; if he is real he must be evil because of the existence of suffering. If there was a God, there would be no suffering because he would prevent it, and if he fails to prevent it then he is not God. This view is common, and is probably the most cited rebuttal for anti-religion people in any conversation centering on the existence of God. I chose this quote and this view as the ending because I feel that it does well to juxtapose the difference between those who retain faith and those who don’t. Simply put, those who retain faith believe that their suffering is not God’s fault, and those who lose faith or do not have it at all believe that it is. This dynamic is difficult to speak about, but it is present among nearly all of humanity when trying to have any conversation on the nature of suffering.

Works Cited

Boyle, T. Coraghessan. "Chicxulub." The New Yorker. The New Yorker, 19 June 2017. Web. 23 July 2017.

Hemon, Aleksandar. "The Aquarium." The New Yorker. The New Yorker, 19 June 2017. Web. 23 July 2017.

Job (New International Version). N.p., n.d. Web. 23 July 2017.

Yeats, W. B. "The Second Coming." Poets.org. Academy of American Poets, 27 July 2015. Web. 23 July 2017.