



"God can't possibly exist given the evil and pain I see in the world!"

Paul Copan

'*Can God exist?*', We often ask this question as we look at the suffering and pain around us, and the question that is really on the heart is, '*How can I come to understand how God is love when there is this suffering?*' which is a different question. It's important to recognise that there are these two questions.

One kind of question, the first question, asks whether or not we should say that God exists considering the suffering we can see. Then there is also another kind of question, a very important kind, which asks about God's nature - how can He be said to be good? - in the light of the problem of evil and suffering.

Put more simply in the context of questions that come from suffering, 'Is God there?' isn't the same question as 'Is God good?' Each kind of question has a different kind of answer. Now we've been clear that we are talking about whether or not God *could* exist, we can begin to pose our questions more accurately.

So what exactly could a thoughtful person say in response to someone who questions whether or not God exists given the existence of suffering, evil and pain in the world?

§ All perspectives (atheism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity) or worldviews must deal with the problem of evil. It's not just the Christian who must give a response. Every worldview must produce some kind of explanation for not only the existence, origin and fact of evil, but each view must also provide a diagnosis and solution.

§ A number of atheistic (or non-theistic) thinkers

flatly deny that evil needs to be defined, or acknowledge its reality fully, which is very telling about the lack of explaining power of their worldview.

Having said all this, what kind of picture could a Christian start to draw in the sand, to help us make some sense of what seems so senseless?

§ If God has a morally justifiable reason for permitting the evils that he does, then this reasoning also rebuts or refutes the logical problem of evil.

§ Even if we don't know God's reasons for permitting evil (and there is no basis for thinking we should), this doesn't prove that such reasons don't exist. In fact informed philosophers of religion today acknowledge that the logical problem of evil is not a good argument against God's existence. If we had the power only to help others but not to harm them, we would not have any deep or meaningful responsibility for one another.

§ If God were to remove pain and suffering so that the consequences of sin would be hidden from us, we would live in an illusory world, having the impression that we are doing fine without being reconciled to God. If we did not experience the consequences of sin, we would never be dissatisfied in our state of separation from God. If God is to deliver us from our sin and separation from him, he must make us aware of our sin. Finally, there is another issue in this.

The problem of evil presents a question not only for the person trying to give an answer to the problem, but also for the questioner. If you have the real existence of evil and no God, since evil disproves God then how can you have an objective human-mind independent moral law? When you define evil you can define it in a couple of ways, It is either (1) The absence, lack or corruption of goodness or (2) a departure from the way things ought to be. The problem with (1) is that (1) presupposes a standard of goodness, and that (2) presupposes a design plan. If true objections then both point to God whose character is the very standard of goodness and who is the designer of the universe.