

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL – APOLOGETICS

In a recent debate, Kevin Sharp began his time by conceding the following concerning the once “nail in the coffin debate” of the problem of evil.

“You might have noticed I didn’t use the problem of evil in my arguments here at all. That’s because contemporary Christian philosophers of religion, to their great credit, have largely dismantled the problem of evil. (Kevin Scharp – Dr. of Philosophy at Ohio State University)”

Free will defense

- (1) God is omnipotent (that is, all-powerful).
- (2) God is omniscient (that is, all-knowing).
- (3) God is perfectly good.
- (4) Evil exists.

Logical problem – It’s logically inconsistent for a Maximally powerful being to allow evil

Evidential – It’s improbable that God has good reason for suffering

Emotional – I refuse to believe in a God who would allow that to happen.

I. Atheist Argument: It’s Logically Impossible For God And Suffering To Coexist

1. An all-loving, all-powerful God exists (L&P).
2. Suffering exists (S).
3. If God is all-powerful (P), He can create any world that He wants (C).
4. If God is all-loving (L), He prefers a world without suffering (WS)
5. Therefore, God does not exist.
6. If an all-loving, all-powerful God exists (L&P), then He can and prefers to create a world without suffering (C&WS). (SP, 3, 4; AD,1)
7. However suffering exists \sim (C&WS) (Premise 2)
8. Therefore, an all-loving, all-powerful God does not exist \sim (L&P) (MT, 2,6, This is a valid logical form but unsound in it premises)

II. Rebuttal of Premise # 3. If God is all-powerful, He can create any world that He wants.

- A. If God created man with a free will, then man can sin and bring about suffering.
- B. It would be logically impossible for God to make someone do something freely.
- C. If God is always consistent with His nature and truth, then He cannot do something logically impossible.

III. Rebuttal of Premise # 4. If God is all-loving, He prefers a world without suffering.

- A. God can and does have overriding purposes for allowing the suffering in the world.

B. The overriding purposes would be God's glory and power over suffering, God's revelation of His love in Christ, man's salvation, the believer's sanctification, and understanding of good.

C. Conclusion: God could not have created another world with as much good as, but less suffering than, this world, and God has good reasons for permitting the suffering that exists.

IV. Scripture

A. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. ([Jn 16:33](#))

B. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. ([Ro 5:3-5](#))

C. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. ([1Pe 5:10](#))

D. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. ([1Pe 2:21](#))

E. Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. ([2Co 4:16-18](#))

F. As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. ([Ge 50:20](#))

G. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. ([Ro 8:28-29](#))

1. What we really mean when we say this is that I can't think of a reason God would allow evil.
2. But if we can concede his is a maximally great being, he could have reasons we don't understand for allowing evil
3. He can't do whatever he wants to do.

In Christian Doctrine

1. The chief purpose of life isn't happiness or comfort but a knowledge of God and his glorification.
2. What if the dial for suffering is actually set to reach the most people for salvation?
3. We are in a state of rebellion against God and his purpose
4. Gods view of life stretches beyond this life and into eternity
5. Knowledge of God is an incommensurable good.