

GROWING Together

ISSN: 1481-9465

EVIL: WHY?

Read your newspaper, listen to the news. Everyone, from presidents to pastors, has much to tell us about evil: international terrorism, military conflict, violence on our streets, and abuse in our homes.

Evil exists, but where is its source?

Surely, it cannot come from the heart of a loving God. Can we put the blame on a powerful, demonic figure called Satan? But why would the all-loving Creator God tolerate an evil, spiritual rival?

Where is evil to be found in Scripture?

In that part of the Bible Christians call the Old Testament we find someone called Satan who, far from being an independent devil, is actually an angelic servant of God, used, as we read in Job 1 and 2, as someone permitted by God to disturb the comfortable lives of earth's inhabitants. In Genesis 3 the serpent, known among the ancient Semites as a symbol of cunning craftiness, was not at first identified with Satan.

Why do Christians live with many misconceptions?

Hebrew prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, refused to accept that a loving creator God could be opposed by an evil, demonic figure, although the idea has always persisted in popular folklore. About two centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, some in the Jewish community spoke of war between the champions of light and darkness, identifying Satan as the Prince of Darkness. It is evident from the teachings of Jesus, and in the writings of the apostle Paul, that this identification became widely accepted in the Jewish community. Satan came to be recognized, no longer as a servant of God, but as a "fallen" angel and the author of all the evil in the world. This was the teaching of the early Christian Fathers and it forms much of today's Christian understanding.

Is evil ever stronger than God?

The answer is no. But it's easier to blame an external entity like Satan than to wrestle with one's own problems.

Why does God allow pain and suffering?

Why doesn't God stop it? Our Creator might have made a world where everyone would automatically live in peace and harmony. But then we'd be like puppets, dancing on a string. God chose to take the risk and grant us free-will. God's heart must break whenever our free-will is abused and we need to remember, and Christ reminds us often, that God is always on the side of the oppressed and all who suffer abuse.

What does the cross say to us about evil?

Jesus died to show how far God's love is prepared to go. At Calvary he confronted evil and shared its consequences with us. There we see how God in Jesus shares our human suffering. Whenever a child is abused we cry, "Where is God? Has God forgotten us?" No, God has not forgotten. God shares the child's suffering and pain. But God's answer to evil is not only to bear the pain with those who suffer but also to remind us that we, as children of God, must respond to evil in Christ's name and do something about it! While God's response is to walk with us, our response needs to be "No!" to the evil we see around us.



GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five monthly Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ's faithful.

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