

DID A FORM OF "EVIL" EXIST BEFORE THE FALL?

by
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The problem with answering this question is to define the term evil. If we mean by the term moral evil, then the answer is an emphatic no. There are two possible ways that evil could have existed, but only if we use an alternate definition such as:

Topic #1. Evil may be used of natural processes of nature which may be beautiful or powerful, but at the same time violent or disorderly. These things are amoral in nature.

Topic #2. Evil may be used in the lesser sense of the factors which make evil possible. In other words evil potentially existed in things considered good.

According to Isaiah 45:7 God himself claims to be the one who creates evil ((r). Multiple questions surround this text. Was Isaiah speaking of the original creation or an ongoing creation in the present world order? Is the evil in question moral evil, the disasters of judgment, or natural evil? Note the variations in the following translations and how some translations attempt to answer the question¹:

King James Version (1611)	I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create <i>evil</i> ; I the LORD do all these.
Jewish Publication Society Version	I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create <i>evil</i> ; I am the LORD, that doeth all these things.
New American Standard Version (1995)	The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating <i>calamity</i> ; I am the LORD who does all these.
New Revised Standard Version	I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create <i>woe</i> ; I the LORD do all these things.
American Standard Version (1901)	I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create <i>evil</i> . I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things.
The Berkeley Version	I form the light and create; I make peace and create <i>calamity</i> ; I am the LORD who does all these things.
New International Version	I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create <i>disaster</i> ; I, the LORD, do all these things.
New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures	Forming light and creating darkness, making peace and creating <i>calamity</i> , I, Jehovah, am doing all these things.
New English Bible	I make the light, I create the darkness, author alike of prosperity and <i>trouble</i> . I, the LORD, do all these things.

<p style="text-align: center;">Good News Bible (Today's English Version)</p>	<p>I create both light and darkness; I bring both blessing and <i>disaster</i>. I, the LORD, do all these things.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Septuagint (LXX) (Uses the Silvermountain SGREEK font)</p>	<p>Egw\ h(kataskeua/saj (Aor. Act. Part.) fw=j, kai\ poihsaj (Aor. Act. Part.) sko/toj, o(poiw=n (Pres. Act. Part.) e)rh/nhn, kai\ kti/zwn (Pres. Act. Part.) <i>kaka/</i>: e)gw\ Ku/rioj o(Qeo\j, o(poiw=n pa/nta tau=ta</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton (A Literal Translation of the LXX)</p>	<p>I am he that prepared light, and formed darkness; who made peace, and create <i>evil</i>; I am the Lord God, that does all these things.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Latin Vulgate (St. Jerome)</p>	<p><i>formans lucem et creans</i> forming light and creating <i>tenebras faciens pacem</i> darkness; fashioning peace <i>et creans malum</i> and creating evil; <i>ego Dominus faciens</i> I, the Lord, (am) fashioning <i>omnia haec</i> all these</p>

The words for creating and making (rB/h&(/rcy) are found in Genesis 1 and later biblical creation passages. This would suggest that Isaiah was putting the genesis of evil in the original creation.

In opposition to this is pointed out that:

- 1) The perfect form of the verb is not used as one would expect, but rather the participle, which would suggest an ongoing process.
- 2) In the original creation everything is created good.

The rejoinder would be that there was chaos and violence in the original creation and it is this that Isaiah is referring to in his song to Cyrus. Let us examine some of the creation texts that picture these things.

I. A Violent or Chaotic Creation

A. In Genesis 1:1-2 (NNAS) it says,

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

Notice the language of chaos:

- 1) "formless and void"
- 2) "darkness was over the surface of the deep"

In creation the work of God and man, as the image bearer is to bring order out of chaos. For three creation days God forms the formless world into a habitation fit for man and thus he removes formlessness. For three days He fills the void with appropriate occupants with the sixth day climaxing in the creation of the image bearer.

The Creation Event (1:1-2)

The Removal of <i>tohu</i>	The Removal of <i>bohu</i>
Day #1: The creation of light	Day #4: The creation of sun and moon (the stars also)
Day #2: The separation of sky and sea	Day #5: The creation of sea and sky creatures
Day #3: The separation of land and water The appearance of vegetation	Day #6: The making of land creatures The creation of man

Day #7: Creation Rest (2:1-3)

Each cycle of days performs two tasks:

- Cycle one introduces light and removes formlessness.
- Cycle two makes the light bearers and fills the void.

Man's role according to the creation mandate was to "subdue" the earth. Subdue is the preferred translation of [Gen 1:28](#) in many popular English versions. It implies a certain amount of chaos that man, as the image bearer, is to bring into submission. This is a radically different picture than the idea that he lived and would live forever in a tranquil world.

B. A parallel passage (Job 38-42) introduces much the same picture of a world created with apparent evil as a constituent part.

II. The Creation of the Potential for Evil

A. The Question

How does God who is good create evil? He creates things that in and of themselves are good and necessary then by his permissive will allows these to function. These would include:

1. Freewill:
 - a. The ability and inclination to truly obey God
 - b. The ability to choose to disobey God's commandment.
2. Commandment: Without a commandment to be broken there can be no sin for sin is transgression of the law.
3. Desire
 - a. Desire (for food or sex)
 - b. Self Esteem (pride in a good sense)
 - c. Aesthetic Appreciation (to perceive by the senses and value an object)

B. The Biblical Materials

The second creation account ([Genesis 2:4-25](#)) and the fall narrative (Genesis 3) deal with this. In them man is presented as having freedom to eat from any tree he desires except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Freedom is real! Man can eat anything, but must make the choice to avoid the one tree. Both Adam and Eve have desire for food. Eve sees the tree as a delight to the eyes. She has self esteem that has been tempted into becoming pride--she saw that it was something that could make her wise, knowing good and evil and thus she would become like God.

Footnotes

¹The original Hebrew word *ra'* ((ar) was ambiguous in that it could be used of either natural or moral evil. The two early translations, the LXX and the Vulgate, left ambiguity in the text, but many of the modern translations remove the ambiguity in favor of a less offensive translation (cf. NIV).

²Apparent evil is when something initially appears to be evil, but upon a closer examination of the facts or the acquisition of additional facts is not really evil. Sawing off a leg by a sadist is different than the amputation of a leg by a surgeon.