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Good and Evil: What's the Problem?

Jeremy P. Backal
St. John Fisher College

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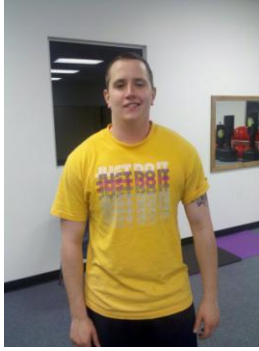
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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"In the world as we know it, God gave people free will. So He could create a free universe where man has to live for himself. In this and in this only, can God create a world where people are like God, because He has free will, He can do whatever He pleases and in His effort to create man in His likeness, He was forced to give free will to man. In doing so, God gave man the choice to be evil. —The problem of evil suggests that if God is omniscient, omnipotent, and morally good, He would be able to and would want to eliminate evil. Yet evil exists. A conclusion seems logical: either God is not all of those things, or He does not exist. In this brief essay I submit an alternative solution to the problem of evil."



Jeremy P. Backal

God and Evil: What's the Problem?

{These are only the thoughts of a young man, taking a course on the Problem of Evil. They in no way reflect the ideas of my instructor, classmates, or any organization or affiliation. I ask that you do not judge me based on them, or take them to heart. They are just thoughts, questions, and a vague understanding of the intricacies of this life, of the problem of evil, and of God as they come to a perhaps-at-time-naïve student. – J. Backal}

In the world as we know it, God gave people free will. So He could create a free universe where man has to live for himself. In this and in this only, can God create a world where people are like God, because He has free will, He can do whatever He pleases and in His effort to create man in His likeness, He was forced to give free will to man. In doing so, God gave man the choice to be evil. “The problem of evil” suggests that if God is omniscient, omnipotent, and morally good, He would be able to and would want to eliminate evil. Yet evil exists. A conclusion seems logical: either God is not all of those things, or He does not exist.

In this brief essay I submit an alternative solution to the problem of evil.

God IS all omnipotent, omniscient, and morally good. He knows that evil is present in the lives of some people. He knows he can stop it. But why should he? It is up to MAN to save himself. Man has to prove to God that he can stand up for himself and he must look to God for guidance, advice, direction, and truth and, when it comes down to it, to do what is necessary to cast out evil. That is, moral evil which can be cast out. Of course God is omnipotent and can

remove all evil, but what is the point? How will man ever learn, if God does everything for him? No one does everything for God. He is the ultimate teacher. By forcing man to learn these lessons first hand, God allows man to find his place in God's Kingdom. This life is a test for man, and those who pass it will live in eternity in the Kingdom of the Lord. Evil is part of life, and is perhaps the most challenging part of the test God presents to us. Along with temptation it is the basis of God's examination of each individual man.

A man chooses to be evil. He is influenced, yes, by his surroundings and his knowledge, his past, and beliefs. But ultimately, a man chooses how he will conduct himself and how he will live his life. It is this ability to choose that is God's greatest gift to us. Just like a man can choose to stand against oppression, or for freedom, he can also choose to be evil. We are warned not to be evil: "The path of the wicked enter not, walk not on the way of evil men; shun it, cross it not, turn aside from it and pass on" (Proverbs 4:14-15). God is always judging and will give us our final judgment on the Day of Reckoning. This warning is given to all men, but not all men heed it. Similar to the warning our mothers give us not to put our fingers in an electrical socket, we all hear it and understand it, but some of us are too curious for our own good.

We should see everything that happens in this world as a sign of God's blessing; that He should choose us to bear witness to it, and that He chooses us to learn from it. Man was granted the grace of God over every other creature. It is through every creature that God can act, and God can speak; but it is man that God created in His image, and it is man that must revere God, and learn from Him, and take His lessons to heart, and be glad that He has chosen man to be His student.