

Original Sin - Evil in the Garden

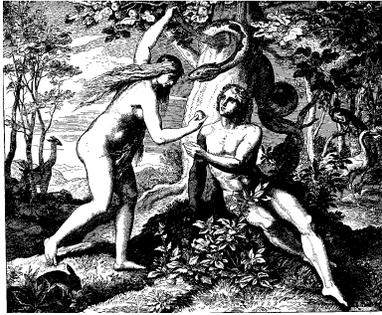
Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Evil in the Garden..... | 2 |
| Biographies of People Mentioned in the Bibliography | 4 |
| Bibliography | 5 |

Evil in the Garden

When Adam and Eve sinned, God condemned our first parents and cursed the serpent and the earth. But, He also graciously made a provision for their rescue and the rescue of all of us by bringing us back to Him (Genesis 3:15). He made promises of salvation in ever increasing detail to the Patriarchs, to David and Solomon, and to the prophets.¹ He ultimately worked our salvation through His only begotten Son (John 3:16-17). Here is how the story goes in a greatly abridged version.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17/ESV)



So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3:6-7/ESV)

"I [God] will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15/ESV)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16-17/ESV; c.f., Romans 8:32)

Our understanding of the introduction of evil into creation is a mystery² limited to knowing that Adam and Eve brought sin into the world by disobeying God, and that as a result God punished man and cursed creation: "the cause of sin is the will of the wicked, that is, of the devil and ungodly men; which will, unaided of God, turns itself from God, as Christ says in John 8:44: 'When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own.'"³ However, Scripture does not enlighten us as to why evil, in the form of Satan appearing as a serpent, could exist in an otherwise perfect world. We know that God gave Adam and Eve freedom to choose (Genesis 2:16-17), and that He probably allowed that freedom so that the loyalty, devotion, and obedience of His humans would be freely given. Also, prominent study Bibles such as these cited below and the *Book of Concord* do not provide reasons for the presence of Satan in the garden. It is possible that, once in the world, Satan may have desired to bring mankind into his army to spite God and exert some

¹ We shall read more about this in the item titled "Law and the Line of Promise and Blessing".

² Bill T. Arnold & Bryan E. Beyer, ed., "Genesis 1-11", *Encountering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 2008) p. 83.

³ Philip Melancthon, "Article XIX: Of the Cause of Sin". *The Augsburg Confession. The Book of Concord*. <http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php>. Accessed April 8, 2015.

Philip Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, Fred Kramer, trans. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House 2010) pp. 133-134. According to Melancthon there are three punishments for our first parents' sin: a) concupiscence (strong sexual desire), b) death and all calamities of mankind, and c) subjection of our infirm nature to the Devil.

power over creation. “Because he could not drag God from His throne, he assailed man, in whom His image shone.”⁴

*The Lutheran Study Bible*⁵

*The Concordia Self Study Bible*⁶

*ESV Gospel Transformation Bible*⁷

*The Old Scofield Study Bible*⁸

*The Book of Concord*⁹

The beginning and cause of evil is not God's foreknowledge. God does not create and cause evil, and He does not help or promote it. Rather, the wicked and perverse will of the devil and of men is the cause of evil as it is written: *For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.* (Psalm 5:4/ESV)¹⁰ God knew of the evil to come, but his foreknowledge does not create the sin or approve of it. To know is not to cause. However, God harnesses evil to turn to his purpose. These are examples of this:

God used King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria to punish Israel (1 Chronicles 5:26).

God used King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as His servant to punish Judah (Jeremiah 25:9).

God used King Cyrus of Media-Persia as His shepherd to restore Judah (Isaiah 44:28).

So, Original Sin is now in our nature, and we have to live with it - with Law and Gospel.

⁴ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. 1: Genesis Chapter 3*, John King, trans., <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc01/cc01008.htm>. Accessed April 8, 2015.

⁵ Rev. Edward A. Engelbrecht, Editor, *The Lutheran Study Bible (English Standard Version)* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009.) pp. 17-21.

⁶ Robert G. Hoerber, *Concordia Self-Study Bible (NIV)* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987) pp. 2-3, 10-11.

⁷ Bryan Chapell, Editor. *ESV Gospel Transformation Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2013) pp. 1, 7-9.

⁸ Rev. C.I. Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1996) pp. 8-10.

⁹ Philip Melancthon, “Article XIX: Of the Cause of Sin”. *The Augsburg Confession. The Book of Concord.* <http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php>. Accessed April 8, 2015.

Philip Melancthon, “Article XIX: Of the Cause of Sin”. *The Defense of the Augsburg Confession. The Book of Concord.* http://bookofconcord.org/defense_18_causeofsin.php. Accessed April 8, 2015.

¹⁰ Philip Melancthon, “Article XI: Election”, *The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord. The Book of Concord.* <http://bookofconcord.org/sd-election.php>. Accessed April 12, 2015.

Biographies of People Mentioned in the Bibliography

| Names | Biographies |
|----------------------|---|
| Calvin, John | Jean Calvin (born Jehan Cauvin, 1509 - 1564) was an influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism. Originally trained as a humanist lawyer, he broke from the Roman Catholic Church around 1530. After religious tensions provoked a violent uprising against Protestants in France, Calvin fled to Basel, Switzerland, where he published the first edition of his seminal work <i>The Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> in 1536. Calvin's writing and preaching provided the seeds for the branch of theology that bears his name. The Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, which look to Calvin as a chief expositor of their beliefs, have spread throughout the world. |
| Chapell, Bryan | Bryan Chapell is the Senior Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church (Peoria, Illinois) and the former Chancellor of Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, the denominational seminary of the Presbyterian Church in America. He is a speaker in churches and conferences around the country, preaching and lecturing on topics including grace, marriage, and journalism. |
| Melanchthon, Philip | Philipp Melanchthon (1497 - 1560), born Philipp Schwartzertdt, was a German reformer, collaborator with Martin Luther, the first systematic theologian of the Protestant Reformation, intellectual leader of the Lutheran Reformation, and an influential designer of educational systems. He stands next to Luther and Calvin as a reformer, theologian, and mold of Protestantism. Along with Luther, he is the primary founder of Lutheranism. They both denounced what they believed was the exaggerated cult of the saints, asserted justification by faith, and denounced the coercion of the conscience in the sacrament of penance by the Catholic Church, that they believed could not offer certainty of salvation. In unison they rejected transubstantiation, the belief that the bread from the Lord's Supper becomes Christ's body when consumed. Melanchthon made the distinction between law and gospel the central formula for Lutheran evangelical insight. By the "law", he meant God's requirements both in Old and New Testament; the "gospel" meant the free gift of grace through faith in Jesus Christ. |
| Scotfield, Rev. C.I. | Rev. Cyrus Ingerson Scotfield (August 19, 1843 - July 24, 1921) was an American theologian, minister, and writer whose best-selling annotated Bible popularized futurism and dispensationalism among fundamentalist Christians. Scotfield's correspondence Bible study course was the basis for his Reference Bible, an annotated, and widely circulated, study Bible first published in 1909 by Oxford University Press. Scotfield's notes teach futurism and dispensationalism, a theology that was in part conceived in the early nineteenth century by the Anglo-Irish clergyman John Nelson Darby, who like Scotfield had also been trained as a lawyer. Dispensationalism emphasizes the distinctions between the New Testament Church and ancient Israel of the Old Testament. Scotfield believed that between creation and the final judgment there are seven distinct eras of God's dealing with man and that these eras are a framework around which the message of the Bible could be explained. C. I. Scotfield's intent was to provide a concise but complete tool that would meet the need of someone just beginning to read the Bible. Scotfield Reference Notes is in the public domain and may be freely used and distributed. |

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