

THEODICEAN QUESTIONS - THINKING ALOUD ON THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

J.T.A.O.

What is God?

Goodness, Perfection, Being, Life, Justice, & all his other attributes which we abstract from his nature.

What is non-god?

Evil, imperfection, non-being, death, injustice, & all such things as are a lack of the divine attributes.

What was before creation?

Only God.

Was there God and nothing?

No. There was only God. There was not even nothing.

Was God within a space?

No. There was no space yet made. There was only God.

Is God contained or local?

No. He cannot be because those things besides him are made by him and cannot be prior to him.

Is creation God?

No. Creation was made. God is, of necessity, not made. God cannot be made, else he would not be God. He is eternal and maker of all things.

From what was creation made then if not from God?

Creation was made from nothing. *Creatio ex nihilo*. Apart from God, there is nothingness. Non-god is nothingness.

Did this nothingness exist along side with God from eternity?

No. God alone is eternal.

From whence then came this nothingness?

As Luria rightly deduced, we read from Vital, “Before the creation was created, a most supreme, simple LIGHT filled the whole of existence. There was no vacant place, no aspect of empty space or void, but everything was filled by that simple Infinite LIGHT...When it arose in his pure will to create worlds...to bring out the perfection of his actions, his names, and his attributes, the Infinite contracted himself...After he contracted that light and withdrew away, it left a vacant space, an empty hollow void.” This is called by the Cabbalists the צמצום (*tzimtzum*) and we need not adopt their whole system to acknowledge the reasonableness of this concept. For it must have been that the eternal and infinite contracted himself in order that there would be a void, a non-god, a nothingness. This is the origin of non-being, and from it did God bring things to be - all things besides himself.

What was the preliminary act of creation?

This contraction, by which nothingness came to be (or, more properly, came to *not-be*), so that there is now God & non-god, infinite & finite, Being & non-being, Something and Nothing.

Is Nothing good?

No. It cannot be. It is the lack of all the divine attributes.

What is the lack of good?

Evil.

What is evil?

A lack of good.

What is God's act of creation?

To make from nothing, something.

Is this act good or evil?

It is good.

Why?

Because it takes that which is most opposed to God and his attributes, and imbues it with his attribute, mainly that of being, but also all those following, such as goodness, beauty, logic, justice, &c.

Would it not be good to leave the Nothing as nothing?

No. Nothing is a total lack of Goodness, and so it is the absolute and end of evil.

If that is so, that the act of Creation brings good from evil, why then does there remain in this world evil?

Within time evil remains, but it does not within eternity. It cannot.

Is God satisfied to leave evil in this world?

NO. HE WHO IS PERFECT & GOOD WILL BRING ALL THINGS TO THEIR GOOD & PERFECT END. Perfection is only satisfied with perfection and cannot abide imperfection.

Why then does he not make all things perfect from the beginning of time?

For one, this is impossible within time that things be perfect. Time itself only exist because there is change, and that which is perfect cannot change.

Secondly, perfection cannot be created because true Perfection is God alone, who is necessarily uncreated.

If Perfection cannot be created (because Perfection is only the uncreated, infinite One) how then can creation be made perfect?

Through a union with Perfection.

What is the tendency of that evil which now remains in the world?

Its tendency & desire is to return to the nothingness from which the world was made.

How is this tendency manifest in the world?

It is manifest by evil actions, evil words, and evil thoughts, as it is also

manifest by natural evil.

Both moral and natural evil destroy and work to bring death. Evil clings to the Nothingness and pulls created things towards Nothingness, towards non-being.

Is creation a finished act?

No. The act of creation is on-going, until it is brought to Perfection.

May an unfinished act be rightly judged as if finished?

No. May we judge a quilt from a spool of thread that has been unwound for the stitching or a garden from a pile of muck? No. Man only lives threescore & ten. His life is a vapor. What a small portion of the worlds he sees! He, like his Creator, demands perfection, but he forget he himself is part of the imperfection of this world, and should the world be made suddenly perfect, he must be eliminated.

Why ought we to hope that Goodness will prevail, and that Evil will be brought to an end?

We may so hope because it is the nature of evil to destroy, and evil will eventually meet that end. Death itself will die. But the nature of Goodness is Being, Wholeness, and Perfection. It remains and does not become evil. So when Evil dies away, Goodness remains always. Where evil is compleat is non-being & death. Where goodness is compleat is being & life.