



Introduction to “The Mythology of Evil”

Review of Previous Article

Mankind has always exhibited the “rebellious refusal of creaturely status, the desire ‘to be like God’ (Genesis 3.5).” For thousands of years, mankind has fiercely held the conviction that God is self-existent “oneness” and that, since man was originally made in this divine image, he is destined to participate with God in divine, self-existent “oneness.”

However, the principle of self-existence bears fearful consequences. The first consequence of self-existence is narcissistic isolation. To demand self-existence is to demand to be alone. Thus, the inevitable result of the self-existent principle is repudiation of the “other.” The second consequence of self-existence is death. Self-existent “oneness” is never satisfied until all its rivals are exterminated. Ultimately, as Martin Buber observed, the age-long passion for self-existence invariably ends in the deactualization of the self. The third consequence of self-existence is delusional self-deification. The deceptive fantasy of imagined self-existence is the claim of final divinization.

The fundamental truth is that God is not God apart from relationship. This means that, from the very “beginning,” God abandoned self-existence for relational co-existence. Furthermore, since love can only exist in relationship to an “other,” the only way that the One God could express his love and extend his relationality was through creation.

For thousands of years, God has tried to educate us mortals to his loving purpose. He has permitted our imagined self-existence to run its course so that the fruit of narcissism, death and masquerading delusions might be discerned and finally rejected by humanity. Moreover, in his own manhood God recapitulated or retraced the entire history of creation. Throughout his earthly existence Jesus, the human manifestation of God, developed relationality with nature, with life, with all mankind. Finally, at Calvary, he cried, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). Jesus thus pronounced the end of the old

history — the end of death, non-existence, narcissistic evil, and the delusion of self-existent deity. By his triumphal death Jesus reconciled the world unto himself (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19).

Soon we shall be relationally united — everyone for and with the “other” — for an eternity of fellowship, loving commitment and creative enterprise. Soon “the most painful difficulty” will be seen as a most enduring “surety.”

Overview of This Article

For nearly six millennia virtually every culture and civilization has been concerned with the attempt to define evil and trace its origin. In ancient Egypt evil was identified with original watery chaos, which was ruled by the serpent dragon, Apophis. The good gods later struggled forth from a small hillock that had emerged from chaos itself.

In Babylon, Tiamat, the evil goddess of salt water, represented the older powers of darkness and inertia. It was only after a violent struggle that Marduk — the son of the good god, Ea, and his wife — split Tiamat with his sword and used her body to create the heavens and the earth.

In the Zoroastrian myth there were two primal twins — one good and one evil. It would take a millennial struggle for the good god, Ahura Mazda, to conquer his evil counterpart, Angra Mainyu.

Judaism had multiple myths to account for the origin of evil. One account attributed participation in the origin of evil to Sophia (Wisdom), the female aspect of the One God. Sophia allegedly gave virginal birth to Samael (Satan), who instigated evil. A second account attributed the origin of evil to Adam’s alleged first wife, Lilith (Genesis 1), who disguised herself as a serpent and tempted Adam’s second wife, Eve, to sin. A third account traced the origin of evil to angels. The angels, called “sons of God,” were attracted to the “daughters of men,” who then gave birth to evil giants (Genesis 6:1-6).

Both Catholic and Protestant Christianity have traditionally attributed the origin of evil to Eve and Adam, who were tempted by the serpent to become as gods, “knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17). In traditional Christian belief that “original sin” has been transmitted to every successive generation through sexual intercourse.

With the sole exception of Judaism, no culture has dared to attribute the origin of evil to the One and Only Supreme God. It was only in the fifth century BCE that Second Isaiah boldly represents God as declaring, “I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things” (Isaiah 45:6, 7).