

Jeffrey S. Tunncliff  
TRS 661 – Christian Anthropology  
Short Paper

### “Creation – The Distinctive Christian View”

One can find different stories of the creation of the world in different cultures. As Schmitz discusses in *The Gift: Creation* all creation stories take place in pre-history. By pre-history, we mean before time and the world existed as we know them to be today.<sup>1</sup> They are called ‘myths’ not because they are fictional accounts but because they are stories not based on *factual* history. Creation is not an event *in time*. Rather, we use ‘myths’ in this sense to explain the origin of creation not in scientific terms but in attempt to explain the meaning of creation.<sup>2</sup> Schmitz states, “It is not the process of origination as such that is important, but the pattern of order that results from it.”<sup>3</sup>

This leads to the first distinction of the Christian view of creation. As creator, God is Lord. Everything and everyone owes their existence to God. However in the Christian View, God does not create humans to be subject to God. God creates humans to be free and gives them dominion over the world as told in Genesis 1:28b-30.<sup>4</sup> As seen in the title of Schmitz’s book, *The Gift: Creation*, creation is indeed a gift. It is freely given without requirement of reciprocity.

Schmitz goes on to outline three typical modes of creation in ‘myths’ as partition, emergence, and intelligent activity.<sup>5</sup> The first two of these do not fit the Christian view of

---

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982, 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> The Christian View of creation does not attempt to provide a scientific explanation as found in the theories of “Big Bang” and Evolution. In *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII, declared there was “no opposition between evolution and the doctrine of the faith about man and his vocation.” J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J. *The Christian Faith in the Documents of the Catholic Church*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 2001, 188.

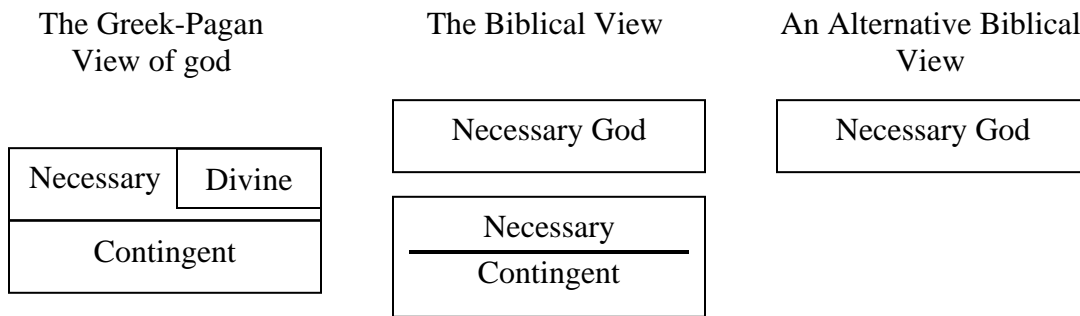
<sup>3</sup> Schmitz, *The Gift*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that when we speak of the distinctiveness of the Christian view of creation, one must acknowledge that much of the Christian View is found in the Old Testament and thus has common points to the Jewish view of creation. There *may* also be commonalities with the Muslim view of creation but the commonalities are fewer here. As Schmitz says common to all three religions is the “Lordship of God.” *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-9.

creation on a primary level. The Christian view of Creation is creation *ex nihilo*. In the first chapter of Genesis God simply speaks the word and creation happens. 2 Maccabees 7:28 speaks of how God created out of nothing. Schmitz’s third mode of intelligent activity comes closest to the Christian view of creation. However, it does not distinguish that in the Christian view, God is infinite. Thus, God is not simply intelligent but omniscient.

The Christian view of creation is also distinct from other views in how it maintains the distinctiveness of God from creation. Borrowing from the lecture material on Sokolowski, we can present the contrasting views of God in the world.



In the Greek-Pagan view of god, God is necessary but only in the way that some other things are necessary. The divine is a distinct part of necessary things but the divine is on the same level. In the Christian View, God is necessary but God is completely distinct from creation. As part of this, in no way, in the act of creation, God is not diminished in any way.<sup>6</sup> According to Genesis 1:27, “God created man in his image” yet God did not give up part of ‘himself’ to create humans.

The “Alternative Biblical View” is presented to make a further distinction of the Christian View of creation. God is a necessary being but creation is not necessary for God to

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 18.

exist. In Christianity, God exists with or without the world. This would be in contrast to views like that of Process Panentheism as presented by Whitehead.<sup>7</sup>

At this point, it is important to clarify the distinction of God from what God has created. In the error of Extrinsicism, the Neo-Scholastics maintained a two-tier view that separated God from nature. In the true Christian understanding, as found in Romans 1:20, while God exists apart from creation, “his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made.”<sup>8</sup> God is present in creation.

In the Christian view of creation is God’s continual action in creation. God does not create and walk away. What is distinct here for Christianity is that throughout Salvation History and most especially in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, God maintains a *personal* relationship with creation. In his Incarnation, God shares in the fullness of humanity. God does not create humans as subjects to adore God. God does this as a loving God who makes us free yet seeks to help us discover what it truly means to be good. In creating the world *ex nihilo* and creating “man in his image,” God brings us into being and defines what it means to be human. As described in *Gaudium et Spes*, what humans seek are answers to such questions as “their place and role in the universe, about the meaning of individual and collective endeavor, and finally about the destiny of nature and men.”<sup>9</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* goes on to state, “The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God.”<sup>10</sup>

The Christian View of creation provides the source of many of the answers to these questions. Our dignity comes from God and “In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word

---

<sup>7</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Corrected Edition. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne ed. New York: The Free Press, 1978, 342-351.

<sup>8</sup> Likewise, one avoids the error of Christomonism, the failure to maintain a distinction between Christ and the World.

<sup>9</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965. *Vatican Council II: Volume I, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, New Revised Edition. Austin Flannery, O.P. ed. Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996.

4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear.”<sup>11</sup> The Incarnation is a new climax in the Christian View of creation.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 22.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Schmitz, Kenneth L., *The Gift: Creation*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982.

Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, taken from J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J. *The Christian Faith in the Documents of the Catholic Church*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 2001.

Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Corrected Edition. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne ed. New York: The Free Press, 1978.

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965. *Vatican Council II: Volume 1, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, New Revised Edition. Austin Flannery, O.P. ed. Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996.