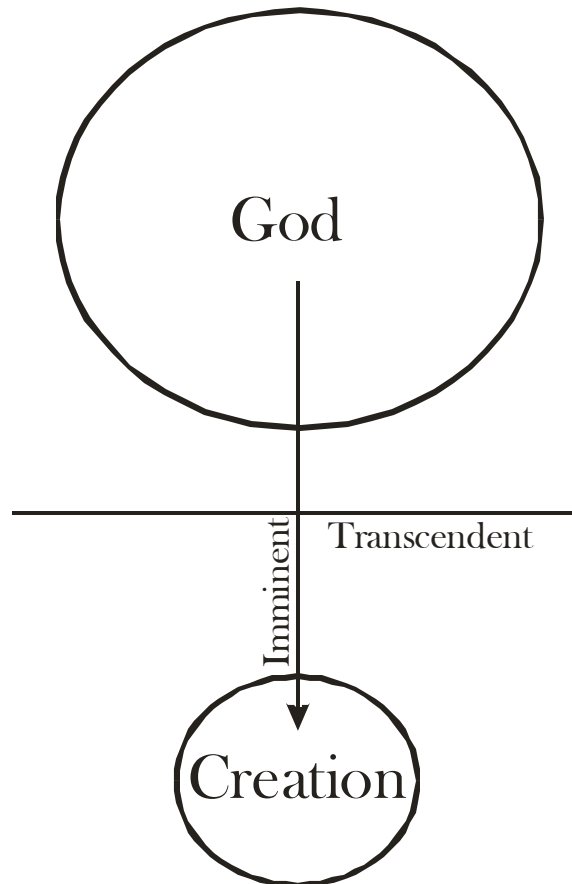


Biblical Christian Metaphysics: Summary and Extension

Introduction: Why use pagan “philosophical” words? We have warrant to do so because Scripture does so – e.g., John 1 (*logos* – *reason* and *monogenes* – *only begotten* were key philosophical terms used by Greek philosophers).



- I. Two-fold revelation of the Biblical God.
 - A. God Transcendent.
 1. God \neq creation.
 2. God is over creation as Lord and sustainer.
 - B. God Imminent.
 1. His providence.
 2. Westminster Larger Catechism: “God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible knowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.”
- II. The triune God, the basis of the biblical Christian view of reality.

- A. Westminster Larger Catechism: “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost ...”¹
 - 1. There is a unity in the Godhead: one God in the unity of three persons; i.e., distinction of persons, but one in essence (A. W. Tozer, “reason kneels to faith and love”).
 - 2. The biblical God is the eternal “One and the Many.”
 - a) The One – unity of persons.
 - b) The Many – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.
 - B. The three persons of the Trinity are *equally ultimate*.
 - 1. Unity in God is no more fundamental than diversity.
 - 2. Diversity in God is no more fundamental than unity.
 - 3. In their substance, the persons of the Trinity are equal (this is called the ontological [nature of being] Trinity vs. the economic [nature of function] Trinity).
 - a) Ontological (John 10:30).
 - b) Economical (John 14:28).
- III. The created reality: the temporal “one and the many.”
- A. The universe is composed of *many* things.
 - 1. Webster’s 1828: the collective name of heaven and earth and all that belongs to them; the whole system of created things; the *to pan* [the all] of the Greeks and the *mundus* to the Romans.
 - 2. To live in the universe, man must find and account for *unity* (generality, universals, meaning) in the midst of the *plurality* of things.
 - B. For the biblical Christian, there is a *created* “one and the many” (the temporal universe) and an *uncreated* “One and the Many” (the eternal, triune God).
 - 1. The unbeliever does not make this distinction (fruit of sin).
 - a) The temporal becomes “mixed” with the eternal, e.g., ancient Greeks and modern cosmology.
 - b) The “one” becomes the focus (as in monism).
 - c) The “many” becomes the focus (as in pluralism).
 - 2. The believer makes this distinction because God stands at the center of his thinking about everything.
 - C. How does the temporal “one and the many” relate?
 - 1. Since the temporal “one and the many” is a creation of God, then the various aspects of the created reality must *relate* with each other in accordance with the Creator’s decreed purpose.
 - 2. They relate *equally* or they relate in *subordination*.
 - a) Equal.
 - (1) Since every aspect of reality is created, then every aspect of reality is *equal* in that:
 - (a) They are equally derived from God.
 - (b) They are equally dependent upon God.
 - (c) Like the nature of their Creator, they are *equally ultimate*.

¹ See also the Athanasian Creed.

- (2) God orders the creation by His decree and His sustaining word.
 - (a) The basis for universal laws.
 - (b) The particular things of the created universe act in accord with God's decree.
 - (c) Man discovers God's decrees in the form of scientific law or general (universal) principles.
 - (3) However, at any time of God's purposed choosing, He can take one particular fact and set it into a *new* relation to created law (e.g., axe head floats): the basis for the Christian doctrine of miracles.
- b) Subordination.
- (1) God has also decreed a relation of *subordination* between the particular facts of His creation.
 - (2) Mechanical laws (what scientists call "laws of nature") are subordinate to teleological laws.
 - (a) Mechanical: water freezes at 32° F.
 - (b) Teleological (purpose): history is moving towards a predestined goal.
 - (c) Both laws are in essence teleological in that they adhere to God's decree.
 - (3) Mechanical laws are subordinate to man's reason. On what basis?
 - (a) God has given to man the mandate to take dominion over and subdue the created order (Genesis 1:26-27): *man as king*.
 - (b) Man must subdue God's created order *for* God (in accordance with His commands): *man as priest*.
 - (c) In order to subdue God's created order for God, he must be able to interpret God's creation (to "name" it): *man as prophet*.
 - (4) Subordination and miracles.
 - (a) e.g. Moses at the Red Sea.
 - (b) The mechanical laws of the physical universe were set aside at the behest or will of man in order to subordinate the will of man (Pharaoh, Moses, and the Israelites) to God.
 - (5) Summary.
 - (a) Non-living (inorganic) creation is subordinate to:
 - (b) Living creation (organic; e.g., plant and animal) which is subordinate to:
 - (c) The moral (ethical) nature of man, the crown of creation, which is subordinate to God, the Creator of all.

IV. Sin and Metaphysics.

- A. Sin and creation.
 - 1. Because of sin, creation is cursed; the creation is in discord.
 - 2. Man enjoin with Satan in opposition to God.
 - B. God actively redeems the creation (Genesis 3:15) in the same curse context.
 - 1. Redemption includes man *and* the physical universe.
 - 2. Redemption is a process (time and history) that counters the curse and will triumph over it on the basis of the Cross.
 - a) The curse was *definitively* lifted on the Cross.
 - b) Christ came to “destroy [render ineffective] the works of Satan” (I John 3:8).
 - c) As Christ bruised Satan under His feet, so does His church (Romans 16:20) *progressively* in time and in history.
 - 3. *Finally*, God’s redemptive program will conclude with the entire renewal of the heavens and the earth (where a believer’s body will be a resurrected and glorified body).
- V. Summary and Conclusion.
- A. What is the biblical Christian view of the nature of reality? The biblical Christian holds a two-layer theory of reality.
 - 1. God is the ultimate reality.
 - 2. The creation is a derivative (originates in and for God) reality.
 - B. According to the biblical Christian worldview, what is the relation between the temporal and the eternal?
 - 1. The eternal does not exist as a philosophical principle (as with the ancient Greeks and much of modern philosophy); the eternal is a person; and absolute, transcendent person.
 - 2. The eternal, triune God is the personal creator of the temporal universe.
 - C. The biblical Christian conception of reality goes counter to every theory of reality that the history of philosophy has evoked; it is a unique (and the true) understanding of the nature of reality.