## The doctrine of creation Ex Nihilo

### Introduction

#### ***Questions to consider in the doctrine of creation:***

##### What is meaning of the word “creation”? How is creation *ex nihilo*? What are the theological consequences of rejecting this doctrine?

##### How does the doctrine of creation relate to the doctrines of the Decree and Providence?

##### Is the ability to create *ex nihilo* communicable to creatures?

##### Is it possible for the creation to have existed from eternity past?

##### What does it mean to be a creature in light of creation and the Creator?

##### Could God have made another infinite Being through creation *ex nihilo*?

#### ***Special Theological Issues Related to the Doctrine of Creation***

##### ***Divine Immutability: Did God change when He created the world?***

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##### ***Creation proves that Yahweh is the true God. (Jer. 10:10-13, et al.)***

##### ***God and Time***

###### Did God create time when He created the heavens and the earth?

###### Theories of Time

Dynamic (A Theory)

Static (B Theory)

###### How does an eternal, immutable God relate to a mutable, temporal creation?

##### ***The Purpose (Telos) of God in Creation***

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##### ***Natural Theology as a Result of God’s Creation***

##### ***Divine Providence as Continuous Creation***

##### ***Theories of Harmonization Between the Creation Narrative and the Physical Sciences***

### Scriptural Terms for Creation

#### ***Create, Produce, Generate, Regenerate***

##### *Bara* (ar`b`)

###### Gen. 1:1- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

###### Gen. 1:21- God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

###### Gen 1:27- God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

###### Gen. 5:1- This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

###### Is. 43:7- Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

##### *Ktizo* (ktivzw)

###### Col. 1:16- For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.

###### Rev. 10:6- and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer,

#### ***Make***

##### *Asah* (hc`u`)

###### Gen. 2:4- This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.

##### *Paal* (lu~p`)

###### Prov. 16:4- This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.

##### *Poieo* (poievw)

###### Acts 17:24- The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

#### ***Form***

##### *Yatsar* (rx~y`)

###### Gen. 2:7- Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

###### Is. 43:7- Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

##### *Plasso* (plavssw)

###### I Tim 2:13- For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve.

### The Idea of *Ex Nihilo* Creation

#### ***Definition of Ex Nihilo Creation***

##### Creation is the “free act of God whereby He, according to His sovereign will and for His own glory, in the beginning brought forth the whole visible and invisible universe, without using preexistent material, and thus gave it existence, distinct from His own and yet always dependent on Him.” (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 129)

##### “*Out of nothing*; referring to the divine creation of the world *not* of preexistent, and therefore eternal, materials, but out of nothing. This view is normative for Christian theology and is consonant with a theory of two-stage creation, i.e., (1) of the material substratum of things and (2) of actual things by the informing or imparting of form to matter.” (Muller, *DLGTT*, 107)

#### **Biblical Proofs for *Ex Nihilo* Creation**

##### Gen. 1:1- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

##### Ps. 33:6- By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

##### Rom. 4:17- (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

##### Heb. 11:3- By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

#### ***Active & Passive Creation***

##### *Active Creation (Creatio Activa)*

##### *Passive Creation (Creatio Passiva)*

#### ***Immediate & Mediate Creation***

##### *Immediate or Primary Creation (creatio immediata sive prima)*

##### *Mediate or Secondary Creation (creatio mediata sive secunda)*

#### ***Ex Nihilo Aspect of Creation***

##### *Definition of “Out of Nothing” or “Out of Nothingness” (ex nihilo)*

###### Meaning of *ex nihilo nihil fit* (From nothing, nothing comes.)

###### *Positive Nothingness (Nihil Positivum)*

###### *Negative Nothingness (Nihil Negativum)*

##### *Prime Matter, Secondary Matter & Substantial Form*

###### *Prime Matter (materia prima)*

###### *Secondary Matter (materia secunda)*

###### *Substantial Form (forma substantialis)*

#### ***The Hexaemeron or Work of the Six Days of Creation***

##### *Relationship to the Concept of Mediate Creation*

##### *The Theory of Days as Long Periods of Time*

##### *The Theory of Literal 24 Hour Days*

##### *The Work of the Individual Days*

###### The First Day

###### The Second Day

###### The Third Day

###### The Fourth Day

###### The Fifth Day

###### The Sixth Day

###### The Seventh Day

#### *The Ruination-Reconstruction or Gap Theory of Creation*

### *The Agent of Creation: The Triune God*

#### ***The work of creation is the first essential, external (ad extra) act of the Triune God.***

##### *The Father* (I Cor. 8:6)

##### *The Son* (John 1:3; Col. 1:15-17)

##### *The Holy Spirit* (Gen. 1:2)

#### ***Creation is a Free Act of God.***

##### The *ad extra* act of creation is not a necessary work of God.

##### Eph. 1:11; Job 22:2-3; Acts 17:25

##### The decision to create was *not* grounded in an *absolute necessity,* nor a *necessity of nature*.

##### The act of creation can be described as a *necessity of the consequence*, based on the decree to create.

#### ***Fourfold Causality & Creation***

##### God is the *Efficient Cause* as the agent who produces the creation.

##### The Prime Matter or First Material, the formless earth of the first act of *ex nihilo* creation, is the *Material Cause* of creation.

##### When the Prime Matter is informed with its Substantial Form in the second act of creation, the result is “Secondary Matter,” which is the individuated species of the created order. Thus, the Substantial Form is the *Formal Cause*.

##### The *Final Cause* is the glory of God.

#### ***Creation is a gracious act of God.***

### *The Ontological Results of Creation*

#### ***The Transcendence of God***

##### The created universe is essentially distinct from its Creator*.*

##### Ps. 90:2

#### ***The Immanence of God***

##### *The Creator of the Universe is present and active in His creation.*

##### Ps. 139:7-10; Acts 17:28; Eph. 4:6

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### Types of Presence Resulting from Creation *[[1]](#footnote-1)*

#### **Introduction**

##### Understanding the type of presence of a being or thing helps the student of theology understand the relationship of the various types of substances which can be simultaneously present in a given instance.

##### This study will help the student understand issues such as (1) the dual natures of Christ, (2) the relationship of the human soul-spirit and body, (3) the various ways of understanding divine presence, and (4) demon possession.

#### **Local or Circumscriptive Presence**

##### *Local Presence* is the mode of presence of *finite, physical* things.

##### This type is also designated as *Circumscriptive* *Presence* because a physical object is spatially extended and can located by circumscription.

##### Physical human bodies, as an example, are present *locally* and *circumscriptively*.

#### **Spiritual or Virtual Presence**

##### **Introduction**

###### A *Spiritual* or *Virtual Presence,* in contrast to a *Local Presence*, is the mode of presence of any spiritual being, such as a human soul-spirit, an angel, or God.

###### Since a spiritual being is non-physical, it must manifest its presence in the physical world by a power (*virtus*) of operation.

##### **Types of Spiritual or Virtual Presence**

###### **Illocal or Definitive Presence**

*Illocal* or *Definitive Presence* is the mode of presence of a *finite*, spiritual being, which cannot be circumscribed or assigned to a spatially defined place (*locus*).

This mode of presence is defined and delimited (*definitiva*) by the finitude of the being in its power of operation. This means that the limited, non-physical substance has limited causal powers as well as a limited presence.

Human soul-spirits, angels, and demons are present *illocally* and *definitively*.

Example: A finite spirit, angelic or human, can only act in one place at a time.

###### Immensity, Omnipresence & Repletive Presence

*Repletive Presence* is the mode of presence of God, the *infinite*, spiritual Being who fills (*repletiva*) every place, but cannot be contained or defined in any way by the place.

1 Kings 8:27: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!” (NASB)

God and the created universe are not coextensive in being or substance. The creation is limited and God is infinite.

Repletive presence is conceptually related to immensity and omnipresence.

*Immensity* means the divine substance is unlimited or immeasurable. It is an immanent, non-relative attribute of God. It is God’s substance considered apart from any relationship to creation.

*Omnipresence* is used to indicate the spiritual presence of God in all created places simultaneously. It is a relative attribute of God. It is God’s essence considered in its relationship to the creation.

*Omnipresence* may be distinguished from *Repletive Presence* in the sense that while *Omnipresence* affirms that God is present in every place in the creation, *Repletive Presence* affirms that God is everywhere present in the creation, while transcending the creation in His Being. Thus, the created universe and the divine Being are not co-extensive.

#### **Questions & Issues**

##### How does the concept of presence relate to the issues of life and death, both spiritual and physical?

##### How does the concept of presence relate to the issue of demon possession?

##### How does the concept of presence relate to the issue of the work of angels?

##### How does the concept of presence relate to the issues of ontological Christology?

##### How does the concept of presence relate to the issue of whether God is in Hell? Or in unbelievers?

##### How does the concept of presence relate to the issue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

### False Theories of the Origin of the World

#### ***Dualism***

#### ***Ex Deo Creation: Pantheism***

#### ***Atheistic-Physicalistic Evolution***

#### ***Miscellaneous Polytheistic Views***

#### ***Eternal Existence (e.g. Mormonism)***

1. *See* Muller, *DLGTT*, 147, 239-243. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)