

Creation, Fall, Redemption: The Theological-Historical Motif of the Bible

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The God of the Bible is a God who is intimately connected with what He has made. This world is personal in a very genuine way. This personal dimension to reality is what makes the Cross of Christ comprehensible (because the “Sin Problem” – what is wrong with this world - must be resolved from above, on behalf of sinners) and also interpretative of history (since it is God’s “marker” testifying to His ongoing concern for what He has made and intends to put right). A Biblical picture of God, therefore, will lead us to see reality in the following outline:

- a) The Universe is an *ex nihilo* creation not a product of chance (Gen. 1:1ff.; Heb. 1:12; 11:3). This excellent definition is given by Torrance:

“The creation of the universe out of nothing does not mean the creation of the universe out of something that is nothing, but out of nothing at all. It is not created out of anything – it came into being by the absolute fiat of God’s Word in such a way that whereas previously there was nothing, the whole universe came into being.”[\[1\]](#)

- b) The creation is under a curse (Gen. 3:17-18; Rom. 8:20-22).

Creation is subject to vanity, futility and frustration because of mankind’s fall. The universe’s continual cycle of birth, growth, death and decay demonstrates this subjection. The universe is in a process of deterioration...and it appears to be running down. Nature, like mankind, is in a state of decay, deterioration, pain and futility.[\[2\]](#)

- c) This reveals a linear view of history.[\[3\]](#) History is going somewhere (Acts 17:26-27; 15:18). Hendrikus Berkhof notes,

“Although the Reformers were afraid of sectarian interpretations, they, like the Middle Ages, were convinced that history moves between the Fall and completion, that Christ is the centre of this, that we are involved in the struggle between him and evil, and that he will gain the victory in that struggle. This view of history has for centuries been typical for Europe; indeed, it made Europe, and gave seriousness and direction to the actions of Europeans.”[\[4\]](#)

- d) Men will be judged by God at an appointed day in the future (Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 3:19). As a theological theme final judgment needs to be more visible than it currently is. We need to get back to the realism of the Puritans and the first evangelicals, who made “Judgment Day” a driving force in their preaching and teaching. Any theology worth its salt must be practical once it is presented. Here

is John Brown of Haddington with advice to students of Divinity:

“See that ye be real Christians yourselves. I now more and more see, that nothing less than real, real Christianity, is fit to die with, and make an appearance before God.”^[5]

- e) God has provided salvation through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, who lived and died as a man, and who will return to Earth to rule as unchallenged Lord (Acts 2:36; 3:13-21; 1 Cor. 15:3-4). The Cross thus becomes the glass through which all existence must be viewed if it is to correspond to reality.

The horizon of creation is at the same time the horizon of sin and of salvation. To conceive of either the fall or Christ’s deliverance as encompassing less than the whole of creation is to compromise the biblical teaching of the radical nature of the fall and the cosmic scope of redemption.^[6]

It is no surprise to find that what is found above as a basic description of reality is also the Gospel blueprint. However, the Christian worldview also covers the realm of Ethics.

- a) The Bible teaches that there are moral absolutes of right and wrong, good and evil (Isa. 5:20; Jn. 14:6).
- b) Because God has made man a moral agent he is required to choose to do the good and avoid the evil (Rom. 2:4-16).
- c) Because we are created in God’s image God requires us to “do unto others what you would have them do unto you.” Human government is expected to punish the guilty and exonerate the innocent (Matt.7:12; Gen.9:6).
- d) There exist standards of conduct and propriety which man ought to follow (though these are not to be confused with Victorian prudery).
- e) Life does not consist of stuff to make us feel either cozy or superior. “It is better to give than to receive.” (Lk.12:15; Acts 20:35).
- f) Nevertheless, Christianity is not a religion of constraint (as Islam). It allows people to demur, though it warns of the dread consequences of doing so (Matt. 7:21-27).

^[1] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*, (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1996), 207.

^[2] John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis*, vol. 1, (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2003), 135-136.

- [3] For a good discussion of historiography see John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past*, (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975), especially pages 6-182.
- [4] Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History*, (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966), 23-24.
- [5] *The Systematic Theology of John Brown of Haddington*, Introduced by Joel R. Beeke & Randall J. Pederson, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, [1782] 2002), iv.
- [6] Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 86.