

Creation

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What is Creation?

- The view that everything but God was brought into existence by God, who alone has always existed.
- This is in contrast to various alternative views:
 - Atheism
 - Pantheism
 - Panentheism
 - Dualism
 - Polytheism

Various Alternatives

- Atheism
 - The cosmos has always existed.
 - There are no gods at all.
- Pantheism
 - The cosmos is itself God.
- Panentheism
 - The cosmos is God's body.
 - God is the cosmos' "spirit."

Various Alternatives

- Dualism
 - The matter of the cosmos has always existed.
 - The cosmos is something shaped by God.
- Polytheism
 - The matter of the cosmos has always existed.
 - The cosmos is something shaped by a god or the gods.

Creation

- ... is the teaching of the Bible and of traditional Judaism, Christianity & Islam.
- Here we sketch the teaching given in the Old Testament and New Testament as understood by evangelical and fundamental Christians.
- Their views of how to relate the idea of creation to scientific data range over a spectrum.

The Spectrum

- Young-earth (or recent) creation
- Old-earth (or progressive) creation
- Theistic evolution (or fully-gifted creation)
- We discuss these in another slide-talk entitled "Creationism."

Varieties of Creation

- At its most basic level, creation is the bringing into existence of that which did not previously exist, traditionally called *ex nihilo* creation.
- The Genesis account appears to apply this sort of creation to
 - The universe as a whole (heaven & earth)
 - Perhaps to life
 - Perhaps to the human spirit
 - But not to the human body

Varieties of Creation

- God's other creative actions in Genesis may have been alternatively:
 - *Ex nihilo* creation
 - His miraculous working with existing materials
 - His non-miraculous (providential) guidance of natural processes
- See our slide-talk "Creationism."

A Free Act

- God's creation of the cosmos was a free, personal action.
- He was not constrained by any logical necessity or by a need for companionship.
- Christians see God as having always enjoyed companionship because of the three-person nature of His being.

A Trinitarian Act

- Genesis tells us that God created all things by means of His Word — His spoken command.
- Christians understand this Word (from the beginning of John's Gospel) to be Jesus before He became a human.
- We learn also from Genesis that God's Spirit hovers over the waters at creation.
- Apparently the Holy Spirit works within nature to carry out God's purposes.
- God is thus both within & beyond His creation (immanent & transcendent).

God's Purpose in Creation

- God's purpose (or one of God's purposes) in creation was to "declare His glory."
 - This means to demonstrate His character...
 - ... His wisdom, goodness, power, justice, etc.
 - ... to the personal beings He would create
 - ... & to share these & other good things with them.

God's Creation Initially Good

- The creation was initially good, in fact, very good.
- But God also created free moral agents who could choose either to trust & obey Him, or else doubt & reject Him.
- The Bible's main plot line tells what happened as a result of the disobedience of the first humans, & how God subsequently reached out to rescue people from the consequences of their own & others' rebellion against Him.

The Great Dilemma

- The dilemma of how God can be both a just judge & yet merciful to those who deserve punishment is solved when God Himself suffers their punishment & provides their righteousness.
- God does this by becoming a created human being in Jesus of Nazareth, living a life of perfect obedience, & dying a criminal's death nailed to a wooden cross.

Created in God's Image

- Humans were created in God's image.
- This concept is not explained anywhere in the Bible, but it seems to be intended to contrast with animals being made "according to their kinds."
- The point seems to be that humans share some features with God that animals do not.
- As animals are called irrational in the NT, rationality is apparently part of this image.

Created in God's Image

- Many passages indicate that humans are spirits (personal beings, which can survive death), so this is included in our resemblance to God.
- Other features, such as moral and artistic capabilities, are probably a part of our spirituality.

Human Purpose

- God created humans to have responsibility and rule over at least the earth-bound part of creation.
- This means we are responsible under God for how we treat the plants, animals and non-living environment around us, as well as for how we treat one another.
- Our ability to do this has been badly disrupted by our rebellion against God, as has our behavior in all of our authority relationships: to God, government, employment, marriage & family.

Importance of Creation

- The idea that we & the cosmos are created has profound effects on how we view reality, & (if true) on the meaning & value of our lives.
- Unlike the other worldviews, creation explains both the real, objective standards of ethics, logic & beauty (along with the fact that we regularly violate these standards), the existence of both good & evil, and why the one is different from & preferable to the other.

Importance of Creation

- It explains why humans are more valuable than animals...
- ... why we view cannibalism with horror, but need not (& cannot) extend this to meat-eating and vegetable-eating.
- It explains why we have longings for a life beyond this one, and how God can be just even though justice is not always done in this life.

The End of This Creation

- According to the Bible, our cosmos has not always existed, and one day it will come to an end. It is "wearing out."
- One day, it will be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth, in which all will be well.

The End

