

Religion & Creation by Keith Ward. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1996

Part One: Four Scriptural Traditions

1. Hbw Bible [Tanak] Prophetic traditions

Psalm 95 “great King above all Gods” .. one among many. [henotheism] but monotheism soon established. Creates through his Word (his thought and intention)

God is above all images. But the Word and Spirit are intimately known by prophets.

In his presence is the fullness of joy.

There is no evil power in conflict with God - all is in accordance with his will. Human beings may adapt to his plans, and so find life. Biblical thought is intensely practical and not theoretical about God and is therefore interested to see human beings respond to relationship.

Martin Buber emphasised personal nature of God. Although apophatic tradition reminds us that God is far greater than we can conceive. But can God be affected? Heschel says the prophets make this clear. For although God’s mystery remains in deep darkness, God chooses to relate to us through prophets in mercy and delight. Torah helps us to see we are of concern to God, who wants response.

But pictures of God alien to our expectations - blood and vengeance! It is a strong belief in omnipotence of God without clear view of human responsibility or divine love. But early accounts do accept that **political historical experience** has salvific and moral dimension. But theodical problem remains. Hesed and sorrow?

God expressed as Perfection, Promise, Power, Presence.

2. The New Testament

Karl Barth. NT is clear that Jesus and Father are intimate - one? Chalcedon sees this as bridging the gap between finite and infinite. Human/divine self-offering shocks Jews.

Barth says God’s love requires Otherness and fellowship from beginning [not so, a Prime Mover] But finite creatures err and Son of Man retrieves and transfigures this, revealing hope of end of estrangement.

Church seen by some as predestined company. Or perhaps we can say, we are called to select priestly community for the sake of world. Christianity brings a pessimism about human culture from Apocalyptic period. But Jesus brings “Good” news.

Is incarnation a natural outworking of monotheism of Hbw Bible?

Doctrine of Trinity derives from worshipping Jesus as God and knowing HS alive in the Church. “Experiential basis of worship of Creator, Discipleship of Jesus, indwelling of HS.” Trinity is therefore a revealed truth. Yet only in 20th Cent that monarchical view has been challenged.

3. The Koran.

Uniqueness of God (unitarian) and impossibility of identifying any finite thing with God (transcendental) No covenant relationship with a particular group of people. All Gazzali and Thomas Aquinas brought Aristotle into their faiths. This is now dispersed from Islam.

God does not produce an Other but all things depend on him. Only the world directly expresses God's will. "He is closer to you than the vein of your neck". Our destiny is to be willing instruments of God's creativity.

Traditional Islam suspends all intellectual effort to understand nature of God. Although God has hands and feet we do not know in what way that can be so. Sufis said there can be no reality outside God - all are modalities. Sura 112: God is "the One and Only".

Nothing will happen to us except what God has decreed for us. Yet again, we are rewarded or punished according to our deeds. Determinism seems rife. Yet somehow we all return to the Lord.(96:8)

4. The Upanishads.

Again, Aristotelean influences abound. Brahman is the absolute transcendent infinity, boundless and unchanging. Brahman is understanding and bliss. Our highest bliss through non-attachment. The Self can be found within since we are already a part of it. "He who abiding in the mind is other than the mind." Yet how can the One consist of All?

So, there are two types of Brahmin, the formed and unformed, mortal and immortal, the higher and the lower Brahman.

The One thought, "Would that I were many" and emitted the elements from itself. So did the universe derive from nothingness or a desire of the Self? Two Upanishads speak of wanting companionship or duality. But how can the non-dual be related to anything?

How can the Brahman know everything and not know sorrow? - yet sacrifice and ritual surround the philosophy.

Sometimes the Upanishadic phrase Being-Consciousness-Bliss or *Sachchidananda* is used to describe the Supermind and is used by Christians of God.(a Trinity) Our purpose is to evolve beyond ourselves to become Supermind.

Hegel spoke of three moments: Essential Being, Self-existence or otherness, and Self-Knowledge in that other.

Was Hinduism a revised form of Buddhism after all, since the Vedic tradition was reworked in the Vedanta to take account of it.

Part two : Objective Reality of God

Instructive to note that faith is not adopted in a speculative dispassionate manner.

Religion is essentially practical affair. Search for happiness. Yet surely it also carries factual content on which that search is based.

Braithwaite argued it acted as psychological aid to living a agapeistic life.

Tillich asked to acknowledge theology as "symbolic".

Accepting a God is not thinking there is another dimension 'out there' but that there is meaning in one's life, and that the reality one encounters is personal. The scientist asks "Why do events occur as they do?". Religious question, "is there any meaning to my existence?" So apprehending this calls for affection not purely cognition.

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Part Four: Cosmology and the Trinitarian God

Chapter 12: Creation and Modern Cosmology

Modern Physics of Friedmann-Lemaitre-Robertson-Walker talks of Big Bang.

Arthur Peacock uses this to posit God. But surely creation is not time-limited in this way. God did not create space and time to exist, but non-temporally causes all times and spaces to exist. *Ex nihilo* means that it depends totally upon God and no other.

Spinoza suggested that in God there is only reality, not potential, so creation must exist because God is. But "In the Beginning was.." implies the orthodox thought that time had a beginning, and that God created it out of nothing.

Hawking suggests that there is no evidence of cosmic process. Yet to result in conscious beings the parameters had to be drawn improbably tight. God makes sense of this.

Paul Davies : the existence of finite minds "can be no trivial detail, no minor by-product of mindless, purposeless forces. We are truly meant to be here."

So God is not seen as an intervener from outside a closed deterministic system, but as the total field which sets the fundamental constraints ..and goals of the cosmic process ..and continually influences events towards that goal" Pannenberg asks us to think of Spirit of God as a total field which environs the cosmos. God has ordained laws, elegant and intelligible, which makes the universe trustworthy, predictable, yet which leave room for creativity, consciousness, and free action.

Whitehead says God is not omnipotent for God is not the ultimate cause of everything that happens, but a fellow sufferer who understands. Yet God is not confined to the temporal process. God is dipolar, absolute yet working with what is given. God shares the travail of the world, responding to prayer and seeking to persuade through love. This is akin to what most in the pew believe but it is a limiting of God's power.

Creative Emergence: Universe created to realise a distinctive set of values, the laws of nature setting up the possibilities. The values exist eternally in God but might now exist in a new way. Conscious beings are sub-creators with specific rôles in the creative pattern. The laws allow both God and Humanity to be freely creative. Divine intention always to bring conscious beings into freely chosen loving relationships. God uses the maximum influence for good within those parameters and can thus intervene when it is sign-ificant (semeia) to do so. These will be revelatory acts at specific Moments, with a disclosive function. . These miracles show that matter and spirit interact. So resurrection shows how matter can be so united to God to become sacrament of life, immune from decay and dissolution. Foreshadowing of the goal of evolution.. fulfilment of physical process.

So physical cosmos is emergent value-oriented totality.

13. Creation and the Trinity:

If we exclude imperfection or limitation from Godhead how do we account for suffering? Semitic tradition distinguished God and Creation and this was reinforced by Greeks, and so they attributed suffering to the finite realm and kept God impassable. We need perfection to include notions of change, creativity and affectivity.

The Necessity of Creation.:

Divine is self-expressing so essentially other-creating. God could have been good without any universe, but could only be loving with one. Self-diffusive love requires other, sympathetic knowledge of the feelings of others, & creative response to the acts of others.

Idea of a Social Trinity:

Can God be loving within the Trinity without external universe?

Richard Swinburne talks of F & S loving and needing to create a third, HS. having diverse mental contents. (but this is subordination - for God cannot create an 'uncreated' godly P)

But the classic doctrine demands that Ps differ only in their relation to one another and not in any substantial property or else it is polytheism.

Pannenberg says that what binds the three is Love. But this makes love a force superior to the Ps. It also talks of love in some hypostatized sense. It sounds like the Ps independent.

F: "God is the ultimate basis of all the forms of goodness we hope to share. God stands infinitely beyond us, though relating to us in loving-kindness as the source of good."

S: "As love manifest, God takes on the form of a person like us, and we can relate to him in devotion and a certain kinship. Yet here also God has a cosmic dimension which transcends our humanity, being the pattern of all creation and the final unity into which we hope to grow."

HS: "As the power of love, God works creatively within us to transform us into the image of love manifest as person."

"So we live in the power of the Spirit on the pattern of the Son, in total dependence on the Father. Love relates to us as unbounded goodness, as self-emptying personal being, and inward unitive power. This threefold form of love is the form of one divine subject in three distinct substances, forms of awareness and activity."

Trinity only exists embryonically in the Gospels. However Augustine's *De Trinitate* concentrates on one mind operating in three ways. The east begins from the biblical basis.

Social Trinitarians have a problem: any model of divine love within the Trinity is simply the love of God for the divine self, and not the love of another who may pose a real otherness and distance. Thus the ontological distinction between God *in se* and God *pro nobis* is, finally, inconsistent with biblical revelation. God's threeness is only existent in relation to creation. There is however an immanent Trinity (in se) but it is only given to us in revelation.

The Basis of Trinitarian Doctrine:

Our experience of God as loving Father, Jesus as obedient Son, Spirit as the one who makes Jesus present in every time, and unites all to him.

Rabbinic Judaism hypostatized attributes of God - e.g. Sophia. Torah. Christianity took Christ/wisdom as consubstantial.

God as ocean of being, within whom there is both intelligible contemplation and creative life. The perfection of both individual and communal being. Cyril of Alexandria says: "Everything is from the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit." (Contra Julianum)

Depth of Being: infinite potency, ground of all being, beyond conceptual grasp.

Power of Being: creative activity, actualizing endless particular forms.

Manifestation of Being: archetypal pattern, completed image of creative activity.

Thus the one God subsists in three distinct manners of subsisting.

"The doctrine of the immanent Trinity is not a speculative philosophical basis for Christian belief. It is a stumbling attempt to say what the primordial aspect of God may be, if the economic revelation of God as Trinity is an authentic self-disclosure of the Divine."

"throughout the process which is the history of the universe, the primal source constitutes itself in relation to the world as Father, as transcendent Judge and Deliverer. This Father calls a particular people into fellowship. God becomes known as a transcendent but loving presence, who calls a particular people into covenant relationship. God sends the Spirit to inspire the

prophets and make known the divine will. The divine being is embodied, first in Torah and then in the person of Jesus, as the incarnation of the cosmic image upon which all things are patterned. The Christ is incarnated on earth as the particular historical image of divine love, responsive to created human beings, whom he guides and teaches. The Spirit in relation to the historical process, becomes the one who makes the love of Christ present within creatures. "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts." This is the responsive aspect of the Divine, which interacts with created beings to check tendencies to disintegration and guide them actively towards perfection. .. Finally, as creation returns to its source, the Spirit sanctifies, reconciles, and unites all things within the perfected and actualised form which is the cosmic Christ. In the Spirit and through Christ, all things return to the Father, and all the values of temporal existence are conserved in a completed experience, in which all sentient creatures can share in an appropriate way. "His purpose is.. to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." P.340-1.