



Introduction to “The ‘Other’ Question”

Review of Previous Article

Gnosticism is one of the most persistent and pervasive human models contrived to obliterate the created order and return mankind to its supposed original divinity. “. . . [It] is the belief that the world, and man, was created by a lesser, capricious god, . . . called the ‘demiurge,’ and is utterly corrupt and irredeemable. However, a few human beings have a divine spark of the highest god. This spark is trapped in utterly corrupt human flesh, and can only be reunited, at death, with the highest god, through the acquisition of special knowledge handed down from teacher to disciple.”

“Christian fundamentalism is actually a special case of Gnosticism with . . . added features thrown in for political effect.” The global resurgence of Gnosticism under the guise of “fundamentalism” jeopardizes the created order. Not only is humanity armed with the means for destroying the earth, but Gnostic fundamentalism also is now *determined* to do so in order to return “believers” to their original divinity!

There is only one solution to the threatened destruction of the created order by a nihilistic postmodern fundamentalism. That solution is the One-and-Only Supreme God, who created, sustains and will shortly transform the entire created order. This God alone — who *became* the God-man as Jesus Christ and, by this once-and-for-all act, became manifest as *both* covenantal parties — constitutes the covenant for and with mankind.

Like the covenant itself — fulfilled between God and man as Jesus Christ — the created order is an eternal and irrevocable *gift*. As Lucien Richard beautifully stated, “Creation is . . . a gift. Creation as such, then, is covenantal, emerging from a faithful and free God.”

Overview of This Article

On one hand, traditional philosophy intuitively assumes that there is an ultimate, universal substance or essence. All “things” are merely shadows or appearances that are transient and dispensable. On the other hand, the counterintuitive view of patriarchal Judaism is that the universe is not based on ultimate substance(s) or essence(s). Rather, *all reality is relationality*. Primal relationality precedes and pre-exists all manifest entities. For Judaism the fundamental metaphor for relationality is “covenant.” The concept of relationality or covenant involves three aspects — the covenant itself along with two corporate parties to the covenant. Covenant is therefore a triune relational reality.

Ultimately, God is not a Party or an Agent to the covenant. Rather, God *constitutes* the Covenant. God as divine Reality, Self or Person was not constituted as “Sameness.” God was, is and becomes “Otherness.” In his own subsistent relationality God constituted Original and Internal “Otherness.” Then God proceeded to extend relational “otherness” external to the Godhead. This involved the external “otherness” of the created order.

True “otherness,” whether internal or external, involves communion. It is communal. It is dialogical. Furthermore, for “otherness” to involve true communion, it must be mutually contingent. It must be free. By exercising that freedom, mankind rejected the external “otherness” that God bestowed. Mankind chose to reject the gift of external “otherness” in the false assumption that it could return to the supposed original essence of God himself!

Having exercised the freedom to reject “otherness,” we as creatures find that we are incapable of transforming ourselves to a delusional uncreated essence. Nor are we ourselves capable of creating the genuine triune “otherness” of communion with our neighbor and with God. In this predicament we must therefore turn to the astounding axial event that embraces all history and all eternity. Through this event the Creator himself acted to become the Human “Other.” He acted to expend the energy and pay the ultimate price necessary to call the “other, again and again, into communion.”