

namely, the Father, and then of the Son, who is creator, and then of the Holy Spirit, the perfectos."⁸¹ Created in love, this world becomes a temple, the place and environment of God's relationship with humanity. The presence of God in the world, as if in a temple, is a prefigurement of the entry of the Son of God into human flesh, the incarnation (see Heb 10:5).

102 The Incarnation of the Son of God reveals the purpose of the created world. At the appointed moment of history, the Son of God descends into creation in order to raise creation to God. This is accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit. In the six days of creation, the Holy Spirit prepares an environment for humanity (see Gn 1). In the Old Testament, God prepares humanity for the encounter with the incarnate Son of God, so that through Jesus Christ all creation might be brought to the Father, and "that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

a. The Freedom of the Creator

103 Holy Scripture begins the account of the creation of the world with these words: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gn 1:1). God was, is, and remains always "in the beginning" of everything created, and all that comes forth in time. The evangelist John writes about God as the beginning of everything: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8). Saint Irenaeus of Lyons writes that all things came forth from the hands of God, by the Word and the Holy Spirit.⁸²

104 God realizes his plan for the creation of the world through his Word: "Let there be light ... let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters" (Gn 1:3, 6). This creative Word reveals himself in Holy Scripture as the Son of God, begotten of the Father: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation ... he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Coil: 15-17).

105 God creates freely; nothing limits his creative freedom. God's creativity is expressed in creation, in bringing forth being from non-being. God calls forth into being that which did not exist, and did not necessarily have to exist. In other words, what God called into existence did not come into being out of any necessity. Holy Scripture does not tell us how the world came to be. Instead, it speaks about the *who* (the Father),

⁸¹ BASIL THE GREAT, *On the Holy Spirit*, 16, 38: PG 32, 136.

⁸² See IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Against Heresies*, IV, 20, 1, 3-4: PG 7, 1031. See also *Against Heresies*, V, 1, 3: PG 7, 1122-1123.

through whom (the Word, the Son), and *in whom* (the Holy Spirit) God called this world into existence.

106 God is the Creator. This means that God not only created the world but that he is always present in his creation, and that he is always creating. Hence, creation is a sign and expression of God's creative love. Through human beings, creation is called to respond to love with love and to long for God as God longs for them: "God desires that he might be desired and he loves that he might be loved."⁸³

b. The Goodness of Creation

107 In the account of the creation of the world, Holy Scripture discloses the way in which God assesses the world created by him: "And God saw that it was good" (Gn 1:10 et al.). Like an artist, God creates a masterpiece; he examines his creation with attention, and he delights in it. The Father contemplates the world and recognizes within its features the face of the Son—the first-born of all creation, by whom and for whom all was created (see Col 1:15f). The face of Christ comes through ever more distinctly throughout history—all the way to the incarnation of the Son of God and his second coming in glory. Creation is the visible icon of the invisible God. As history unfolds, this creation is being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit into a "new creation," prefigured in the glorified body of the Risen Christ.

108 Contemplation—a deeper way of looking at the world, to which God calls us—teaches us to see the surrounding world not only as a material thing, or as something useful and pleasurable for our egos, but as the sphere of action of the personal God, who is distinct from us and from the world. The words of prayer from the Rite of the Great Blessing of Water provide us with a wonderful example of the Christian view of the world:

The sun sings your praises; the moon glorifies you; the stars entreat you; the light obeys you; the depths tremble before you; the springs serve you. You have stretched out the heavens like a tent; you have established the earth upon the waters; you have enclosed the sea with sand. You have poured forth air that living things may breathe...⁸⁴

109 Contemplation of the world, in light of an experience of the personal God who alone is good (see Lk 18:19), provides the foundation for affirming the goodness of the world, of matter, and of all creation. "The

⁸³ МЛХИМУС THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua*, 31: PG 91, 1280.

⁸⁴ Trebnyk, *Rite of the Great Blessing of Water for the Feast of theophany*, Third Prayer.