



God in dialogue with his creation

Andreas May^{1*}

¹Department of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion,
University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa and Friedrich-List-Str. 66, D-59425 Unna, Germany
Email: may_devonian@yahoo.es

Abstract

Christian faith, theology and natural sciences are brought into conversation with each other to analyse different aspects of the dialogue between God and his creation. The methodological approach consists of bringing research results from theology and the natural sciences documented in current publications as well as philosophical considerations into a dialogue with the Christian faith. Furthermore, the chronological development is given special attention. Both philosophical considerations and physical observations show that this universe was created by a transcendent intelligent supreme being, the Christian God, and that it is very important for this supreme being to communicate with the intelligent living beings in this universe. God entered and continues to enter into an ever more intense and intimate dialogue with his creation in various ways, both in Earth history and evolution, and in the history of the people of Israel, as well as today in the Christian era. To remove all possible barriers and obstacles to dialogue, God himself became man in Jesus Christ. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the culmination of the dialogue between God and his creation. The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ had a very great impact on the triune God. God gives himself so much to the dialogue with his creation that he takes into his innermost being the human body of Jesus Christ, which is a part of his creation marked by time. At the end of time, all human beings who have chosen God will live eternally with each other and with the triune God in comprehensive and fulfilling communion. This all-encompassing and all-fulfilling dialogue of love will originate from the triune God and will fill and glorify the whole of creation. The article shows that dialogue is central to understanding the relationship between God and his creation. The intra-Trinitarian dialogue of love between the three persons of God is the starting point, model and goal of both creation and God's dialogue with his creation. Contribution: The synthesis of Christian faith, theology and natural sciences makes it possible to see more clearly how much God is in dialogue with his creation. This can help us to recognise more deeply God's love for his creation and especially for us humans, and to act from this insight.

Keywords: Christology; dialogue; evolution; incarnation; theology and nature; Trinitarian God.

Abstrak

Iman Kristiani, teologi, dan ilmu-ilmu alam dibawa ke dalam perbincangan satu sama lain untuk menganalisis berbagai aspek dialog antara Tuhan dan ciptaan-Nya. Baik pertimbangan filosofis maupun pengamatan fisik menunjukkan bahwa alam semesta ini diciptakan oleh makhluk tertinggi yang cerdas dan transenden, Tuhan Kristen, dan bahwa makhluk tertinggi ini sangat penting untuk berkomunikasi dengan makhluk hidup cerdas di alam semesta ini. Tuhan masuk dan terus masuk ke dalam dialog yang semakin intens dan intim dengan ciptaan-Nya dalam berbagai cara, baik dalam sejarah dan evolusi Bumi, dan dalam sejarah bangsa Israel, maupun saat ini di era Kristen. Untuk menghilangkan semua kemungkinan penghalang dan rintangan untuk berdialog, Tuhan sendiri menjadi manusia di dalam Yesus Kristus. Inkarnasi Yesus Kristus adalah puncak dari dialog antara Tuhan dan ciptaan-Nya. Inkarnasi dan kebangkitan Yesus Kristus memiliki dampak yang sangat besar pada Allah Tritunggal. Tuhan memberikan dirinya begitu banyak untuk berdialog dengan ciptaannya sehingga dia mengambil tubuh manusia Yesus Kristus yang paling dalam, yang merupakan bagian dari ciptaannya yang ditandai oleh waktu. Pada akhir zaman, semua manusia yang telah memilih Allah akan hidup kekal satu sama lain dan dengan Allah Tritunggal dalam persekutuan yang menyeluruh dan memuaskan. Dialog cinta yang mencakup segalanya dan memenuhi segalanya ini akan berasal dari Allah Tritunggal dan akan memenuhi dan memuliakan seluruh ciptaan. Artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa dialog sangat penting untuk memahami hubungan antara Tuhan dan ciptaan-Nya. Dialog cinta intra-Trinitarian antara tiga pribadi Tuhan adalah titik awal, model dan tujuan dari ciptaan dan dialog Tuhan dengan ciptaannya. Kontribusi: Sintesis iman Kristen, teologi, dan ilmu alam memungkinkan untuk melihat lebih jelas betapa

*Corresponding Author, ORCID ID 0000-0002-6714-3925

Received: September 06, 2022; Revised: January 03, 2023; Accepted: January 13, 2023

Tuhan berdialog dengan ciptaannya. Hal ini dapat membantu kita untuk mengenali lebih dalam lagi kasih Allah kepada ciptaan-Nya dan khususnya kepada kita manusia, dan bertindak dari wawasan ini.

Kata Kunci: Kristologi; dialog; evolusi; inkarnasi; teologi dan alam; Allah Tritunggal.

INTRODUCTION

The keyword dialogue provides such a wealth of literature in relation to God that one might think there is nothing more to add. From the large number of publications, special mention should be made of Suomala (2004), Witte (2004), Guilherme (2012), Vanzini (2015), Bridge (2016), Derdziuk (2016), Dreyer (2018), Harrower (2021) and Leung (2022). However, all these publications only look at individual aspects, do not take into account the findings of the natural sciences and do not have the entire history of the Earth in view.

Therefore, in this article I would like to look at some important aspects of the dialogue that God has with his creation, integrating Earth history, human history and natural sciences. By bringing Christian faith, theology and the natural sciences into conversation with each other, an impressive, comprehensive picture emerges, and familiar details reveal unexpected significance. The resulting synthesis highlights in a new way the magnificence of God and his extraordinary love for us. In order to produce this synthesis, I have to touch on many topics that I cannot go into in sufficient depth within the narrow confines of a journal article. Please understand that I cannot do so.

In what follows, I will first briefly touch on the question of whether there is a Creator God at all, then I will elaborate that intelligent life is particularly important to the Creator, and then I will explore the question of how the Creator can communicate with his creation. Having laid the foundations in this way, God's dialogue will be addressed briefly in the context of the evolution of living beings and the history of the people of Israel. Then I will look at the incarnation of Jesus Christ, which is the culmination of the dialogue between God and his creation, and what impact the incarnation of Jesus has on the triune God himself. The Christian era is also taken into account. Finally, I will work out that God's intra-Trinitarian dialogue is the starting point and the goal of his dialogue with creation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This essay attempts to create a synthesis of fundamental statements of the Christian faith, current contributions of theology and research results of the modern natural sciences. As a logical consequence, the methodological approach in this contribution consists of bringing research results from theology and the natural sciences documented in current publications as well as philosophical considerations into a dialogue with the Christian faith. This is done in different ways:

- a. Reference to research results from the natural sciences.
- b. Presentation of philosophical considerations that are in harmony with both the findings of the natural sciences and the Christian faith.
- c. Presentation and discussion of current contributions of theological research.
- d. Complementation with biblical passages from the Old and New Testaments.

One of the central findings of modern natural sciences is that human history is embedded in billions of years of Earth history. Therefore, the chronological development is given special attention in this article.

Since I, the author, am a Christian, the article has been written from a decidedly Christian perspective and philosophical and theological contributions by Christian authors are cited. Nevertheless, the first chapters “Creation and Creator God”, “Intelligent life is particularly important to the Creator” and “How can the Creator communicate with his creation?” are equally relevant to all monotheistic religions, since philosophical considerations that are compatible with all monotheistic religions dominate these chapters. Within the chapter “Evolution, soul and history of the people of Israel”, the paths of the different monotheistic religions begin to diverge, because with the Trinity of God and the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, beliefs of Christianity appear that the other monotheistic religions do not share. Since these specifically Christian statements of faith (Trinity of God and Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ) play a central role in the following chapters, followers of other religions will not find so many points of reference in these chapters.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Creation and Creator God

Before one can even address the question of dialogue between God and his creation, one must first ask whether there is a creation and a Creator God at all. This question is not trivial, because numerous people – especially atheists – will deny that there is a creation and a Creator God.

Although there is a library-filling literature on this complex of topics that goes back to antiquity, I would like to justify briefly why not only I, but also many other people are convinced that there is a creation and a Creator God.

The starting point is the generally accepted observation that something exists – we exist, the universe exists, and so on. As far as we can see, everything that exists has had a beginning and will have an end. Everything that exists has had a cause that has made it exist. The crucial question is whether this, which we observe in our everyday lives, also applies to the universe as a whole. The atheist side rejects this, and for several years naturalistic metaphysical considerations have been put forward to explain how a universe without a justifying cause is possible. Loke (2012) refutes these considerations.

The attempt by Hawking & Mlodinow (2010, p. 180) to make a creator of the universe superfluous through the law of gravity has become well-known. Namely, they think that the law of gravity makes it possible for the universe to create itself out of nothing. The considerations of Hawking & Mlodinow (2010, p. 180) have been refuted by numerous authors – Lennox (2011), Sánchez-Cañizares (2014), Lüke (2016, p. 32) and Tabaczek (2019) are worth mentioning. The criticism of the considerations of Hawking & Mlodinow (2010, p. 180) can be summarised as follows: Gravity only exists if there is matter. In “nothingness” there is no matter. Consequently, there can be no gravity there either. How can something that does not exist bring something into existence?

All attempts to explain the existence of the universe without a creator could be refuted or at least identified as having only little plausibility. Nevertheless, these attempts had led to Christian authors again increasingly seeking and examining arguments in favour of the universe having been created by a supreme being. A central position is held by the *Kalam* cosmological argument, which assumes that the universe had a beginning. It is covered in numerous publications – Swinburne (2004, pp. 133–152), Loke (2012, 2017, 2022b), Bussey (2013), Copan & Craig (2019a, 2019b) and Goetz (2021) deserve special mention. The anthology by Copan & Craig (2019b) presents important reasons why we believe that the universe had a beginning. Mention should be made of the Big Bang and the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which leads to an ever-increasing disorder in the universe. The philosophical

considerations and scientific observations discussed in these publications are good reasons to believe that the universe was created by an intelligent supreme being.

Thus we have shown that the actors in the dialogue we want to consider really exist. The next step is to consider whether we may assume that there is a dialogue between the actors at all.

2. Intelligent life is particularly important to the Creator

If an intelligent supreme being has created the universe, then it has pursued an intention in doing so. And to whom could his intention have been directed in a special way? Perhaps to the gas molecules and the stones that cannot think or feel and always obey only the laws of nature? Certainly not! Who then can think, feel and make free decisions? Only the representatives of intelligent life who have free will. And here, on planet Earth, it is us, the human beings. Only we are able to ask questions of meaning, like where we come from, where we are going to or what the meaning of our life is. If it was really an intelligent supreme being that created this universe, we are for that reason of greater importance to that supreme being than anything else in this solar system. It is then of essential, even existential importance for us to know what significance we have for this being, what plans it has for us and what it expects (or at least hopes) from us.

It follows that the supreme being must have an interest in communicating with us. The supreme being may have various reasons for entering into communication with us – for example, to tell us important “rules of the game” for our lives, or to let us in on its plans for the universe, or simply to communicate with us as beings who can have a dialogue with it... Anyway, if an intelligent supreme being has taken the trouble to create this universe, then it must naturally have a special interest in entering into communication with the intelligent beings of its creation.

Rosenblum (2020) takes a similar view. He believes that the relationship that develops between a loving God and a conscious creature is the underlying purpose of creation.

One might now ask: Why would this supreme being want to communicate with us and not with the animals or even the plants? Because only we can think, understand and make free decisions and only we ask about the meaning of life. These questions about meaning, origin and purpose give humans a special dignity and elevate them above all plants and animals. This does not mean that the supreme being is not also interested in and concerned for the other living beings and for the whole of creation; but the intelligent living beings have an outstanding importance and a special rank. Christians are convinced that God, the Creator of the universe, is interested in and concerned about all living beings. Nevertheless, human beings have a special place for God. Jesus expressed it this way: “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6:26). “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29–31).

The natural sciences also provide arguments that life – and intelligent life in particular – is especially important to God. Indeed, there is a “fine-tuning of natural constants” necessary for life to evolve (Barnes, 2015; Bradley, 2018; Chan & Chan, 2020; Loke, 2022b, pp. 142–144; Moritz, 2018, pp. 353–360; Nieminen, Loikkanen, Ryökäs, & Mustonen, 2020; Swinburne, 2004, pp. 172–188). To explain it very simply: If, for example, the gravitational constant were slightly different, either all the mass of the universe would form a single lump or everything would evaporate into a fine mist (Tucker, 2014, p. 6). Or if just a little bit of the miraculous abilities of water were to change, or carbon were no longer as good at forming large molecules, then life would no longer be possible in the universe. That is, to all

appearances, certain universal constants are set at the very value that enables and/or promotes the development of life as we know it. Some Christian groups and authors use this as a proof of the existence of an intelligent Creator (Bradley, 2018; McGrath, 2009; Meyer, 2021, pp. 146–163; Siniscalchi, 2014; Tucker, 2014; Waller, 2019).

The following counter-arguments are variously put forward to invalidate the “fine-tuning of natural constants” as evidence for the existence of an intelligent Creator:

- a. It could well be that there are other combinations of values of the natural constants that would be just as conducive to life. For example, Aguirre (2001) was able to develop a model that works with completely different values of the natural constants and yet, by all appearances, would not prevent intelligent life.
- b. The “multiverse hypothesis” considers the possibility that there could be many different parallel universes and claims that we “happen” to live in one of the few universes that makes intelligent life possible – this view is held, for example, by Greene (2011), Stenger (2014) and Tegmark (2014).

Glass & McCartney (2014) discuss the extent to which the multiverse hypothesis can refute the view that the fine-tuning of natural constants requires a Creator. They think that nevertheless the fine-tuning of natural constants argues very strongly for a Creator. Manson (2020) critically examines how philosophers and theologians use the multiverse hypothesis.

The works of Friederich (2017), Barnes (2020) and Loke (2022b, pp. 175–181) deal intensively with the counter-arguments against the view that the fine-tuning of natural constants requires a creator. Friederich’s (2017), Barnes’ (2020) and Loke’s (2022b, pp. 175–181) comments show that despite the multiverse hypothesis, the fine-tuning of natural constants is clear evidence that our universe was created by an intelligent supreme being. Furthermore, the fine-tuning of the natural constants shows that this supreme being wanted life to evolve in our universe – intelligent life.

3. How can the Creator communicate with his creation?

After we have worked out that the Creator wants to communicate with his creation – and in particular with the intelligent living beings – the question arises as to how such a thing principally is possible. To answer this, we must first clarify what the relationship of the Creator is to his creation. Theoretically, there are three possibilities:

- a. The Creator is identical with his creation, the universe (pantheism).
- b. The creation, the universe, is included in the Creator, but the Creator surpasses his creation (panentheism).
- c. The creation is clearly distinguished from the Creator. The Creator can act on the creation, but not the creation on the Creator.

Concept 1, pantheism, is incompatible with a universe created by an intelligent supreme being, because the cause-effect relationship gives rise to a distinction between Creator and creation.

Concept 2, panentheism, is frequently adopted today – see for example Kim (2010) and Revol (2020a). However, there are difficulties with fundamental contents of the Christian faith at various points. For example, how can the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ – and especially the self-emptying of Jesus in Philippians 2:7 – be understood if the creation into which God is born is itself part of God? Or how, in panentheistic concepts, can hell be understood as absolute remoteness from God?

Fully compatible with Christianity is only concept 3, that creation is clearly distinct from the Creator. We, the creatures, with our senses and the natural sciences can only perceive what is part of our universe, what can be grasped in the categories of matter, energy, space and time; what in other words is “immanent”. The Creator is not a component of our universe, nor is he made of matter or energy, and he has neither space nor time; for he himself created energy, matter, space, time and the entire universe out of nothing. The Creator is “transcendent”. The Creator in transcendence can intervene in our universe. However, we in immanence cannot advance into transcendence by our own power. It is very important that we become aware of this sharp division between immanence and transcendence. Especially nowadays, in the religious sphere, there is more and more erroneous talk of a gradual transition between immanence and transcendence (Oviedo, 2020).

From the fact that the intelligent supreme being who created the universe is precisely not part of our universe and does not consist of matter or energy, it necessarily follows that we cannot come to this supreme being by ourselves, with our own power. This supreme being can, if it so desires, approach us and make contact with us. And it can also listen to us if it so desires; but we cannot force this supreme being to do anything.

The following story may help to understand this: Imagine that a drawer draws figures on a sheet of paper, and the drawer is so ingenious that the figures can move independently on the sheet. The drawer can see everything the figures do, because he looks at the sheet of paper. Therefore, he can recognise when the figures want to tell him, the drawer, something. The drawer can tell the figures something by sketching or writing something on the sheet of paper. However, the figures cannot see the drawer, because they only see what is on the page, and they cannot leave the page.

We are like the drawn figures. We are trapped in immanence, in our universe of matter, energy, space and time. We cannot leave immanence by our own power and advance into transcendence. The transcendent Creator of the universe is not trapped and can be anywhere he wants. For the Creator, the barrier between immanence and transcendence is permeable, because he created everything. In contrast, for us this barrier is impenetrable, because we are creatures who live in immanence like the figures on the sheet of paper.

How can this supreme, transcendent being make contact with us out of his transcendence when he has no energy, matter, time or space? How can we perceive a message from this supreme being if we are bound to energy, matter, time and space? This supreme being from “outside” must cause, create or change something “inside” our universe. We cannot perceive the transcendent as transcendent without mediation. We can only perceive a shadow of the transcendent, namely what the transcendent causes in the immanent, in our reality. But when it is in our reality, it is always something immanent and we no longer have incontrovertible proof that it was originally something transcendent. We cannot prove but only BELIEVE that this immanent is an effect or communication of the transcendent.

The communications of the transcendent supreme being cannot be perceived as such unless one has at least some willingness to believe. Because the transcendent of these communications is not visible to the human eye and cannot be grasped by science. Eye and science can only perceive the immanent part of these communications.

What kinds of communications can we expect from the transcendent supreme being who created the universe?

- a. The Creator can express himself in creation itself, in the way things and the universe are.
- b. The Creator can express himself in the basic characteristics of all human beings, in their desires, longings and questions. Moreover, religiosity is a general trait of human beings. May (2022, p. 4)

elaborates that people already believed in an afterlife 448,000 years ago. It is therefore reasonable to say that religiosity is a fundamental human characteristic.

- c. The supreme being can communicate in the history of a people. For example, the Old Testament can be understood as the history of the people of Israel with their God.
- d. The supreme being can communicate himself in a person's personal history.
- e. The supreme being can create special feelings, thoughts and visions in people. Furthermore, the transcendent supreme being can give these people a motivation to communicate these inner experiences as well as this special knowledge to other people. In this way, these people become prophets.
- f. The supreme being can do things that go beyond the scope of the everyday, even rising above the laws of nature. We call this "miracle". The being who created this universe with its laws has of course also the power to override these self-given laws. However, this is no longer generally accepted. Nowadays it has gone out of fashion to believe that there could be miracles that could contradict the laws of nature. Not only philosophical currents such as naturalism or the "rational theology" advocated by Tetens (2015) reject the existence of miracles, but also various modern theologians have their problems with miracles. Like the theologian Rudolf Bultmann (Pöhlmann, 1984, pp. 55–79), they want to "demythologise" miracles and therefore do not want to accept events that break the laws of nature. For example, Pannenberg (2002) interprets miracles as extraordinary events that are signs of God's special action, but which nevertheless do not contradict the laws of nature. My counter-argument is: If a transcendent being is so powerful to create our universe together with its laws of nature out of nothing, it must also have the power to override these laws in individual cases. I therefore see no plausible reason to rule out completely the possibility of miracles in advance. Those who wish to look at the issue of "miracles in the scientific sense" from a philosophical side are referred to Plantinga (2008), Saudek (2011, pp. 143–145), Araújo (2018) and Kojonen (2019). All sceptics who do not want to believe that miracles in the scientific sense exist at all should be referred to the book by Duffin (2009). In this book, the sceptic Jacalyn Duffin examines 1400 medical miracles from the period 1588–1999 and comes to the conclusion that the events examined really are miracles.
- g. The utmost possibility of self-communication by a transcendent Creator would be to become a part of his own creation – to become human. It would be possible, but it would be an unimaginably great descent. If a human being decided to become an ant, it would be an infinitely smaller descent, a trifle compared to the becoming human of a transcendent supreme being. The eternal Creator of the entire universe would become like one of his limited creatures – what an idea! Moreover, for a human being who did not want to see the divine in him, this incarnate Creator of the universe would be just a human being like any other...

A transcendent supreme being has numerous different possible ways to communicate with us humans. All these possibilities have been realised by the God proclaimed by Christianity. However, it is true for all ways that the transcendent in them cannot be proven scientifically. One can always, if one wishes, seek an explanation that does without the transcendent, the divine. Thus, one can dismiss the happenings in one's own life as coincidences, interpret human religiosity as a biological adaptation within the framework of evolution and explain inner experiences and visions through malfunctions of the brain. Nevertheless, if we have the courage to accept that in such ways messages from a transcendent

supreme being can manifest themselves to us in our world, we discover important new contexts of meaning and messages that want to lead our lives to fullness, greatness and eternal happiness.

4. Evolution, soul and history of the people of Israel

The dialogue with his creatures is important to God. And this was already the case before humans had emerged on the path of evolution. May (2021) examines biological evolution and Earth history. In this context, May (2021, pp. 23–26) finds four extraordinary events in Earth history that were imperative for the evolution and unfolding of intelligent life on Earth. May (2021) justifies why in these events the work of the Creator of the universe becomes visible, who through these events intervenes in Earth history to influence the course of Earth history and evolution. May (2021, p. 29) recognises a dialogue between the Creator and his creation: “An interplay between an evolutionary process in which life unfolds, and seemingly random events that give this evolutionary process a new direction, becomes apparent. This interplay could be described with the image of a constant dialogue between the Creator and his creation. Life enters into the dialogue with the Creator by unfolding independently according to its own laws. From time to time, the Creator responds by intervening and then allowing life to follow its own laws again.”

An interesting parallel can be found in the reflections of Revol (2020a, 2020b), because in the context of evolution Revol (2020a, 2020b) speaks of a creative dialogue between the world and the Holy Spirit.

May (2021) even dares to infer from the dialogue of the Creator with his creation to the intra-Trinitarian dialogue of the triune God: “We have seen that in the relationship between the Creator and his creation, dialogue is of central importance. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that the Creator is not a monolithic block, but that he himself is in some way engaged in an inner dialogue. The abundance and beauty of our universe could then be a faint reflection of the abundance and beauty of the Creator's inner dialogue” (May, 2021, p. 30).

Not only the universe in its entirety with its approximately 2 trillion galaxies (Conselice, Wilkinson, Duncan, & Mortlock, 2016) presents an exuberant abundance and beauty. Evolution, too, has produced an exuberant abundance and beauty of diverse living beings on our small planet, a “tiny speck of dust in the sea of stars” (May, 2020, p. 180). Planet Earth today is thought to be home to a total of 9–11 million different species of living beings (Chapman, 2009; Mora, Tittensor, Adl, Simpson, & Worm, 2011). And throughout Earth's history, perhaps 180 million different species of animals have existed on Earth (Rödger, Ziegler, & Falk, 1993, p. 220).

For those who find these numbers too abstract, I invite you to go out into nature and perceive how many very different creatures interact with each other in the place where you are standing right now: The bacteria and fungi in the soil, the different plants that are the food for many different animals – from insects to mammals – and in the middle of it all, us, the humans. It is worthwhile to look consciously at the diversity of animals, plants, etc. at this point. This experience of the abundance of diverse living beings can be particularly intense in Indonesia, because Indonesia has a uniquely great biodiversity: “The Indonesian archipelago comprises two of the world's biodiversity hotspots” (von Rintelen, Arida, & Häuser, 2017, p. 1). However, this meditation can be done in almost any place on this planet, not only in Indonesia.

Through its exuberant abundance and beauty, creation becomes the first self-communication of the Creator: “Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been seen and understood through the things God has made” (Romans 1:20) – see also

Loke (Loke, 2022a). “The creation is a hymn of praise to the Creator, and creation for that reason alone possesses value and is worthy of protection” (May, 2020, p. 175). This self-communication of the Creator in the exuberant abundance and beauty of the universe, nature and living beings can only be consciously perceived by intelligent, rational living beings, because only intelligent, rational living beings can direct their gaze to something that lies outside the tasks of maintaining and transmitting life. Our reason can glimpse something of the reality of God in the contemplation of creation. In this way, creation itself becomes an invitation to his intelligent, rational creatures to enter into dialogue with him, the Creator. This creation, which emerges from the intra-Trinitarian dialogue of the triune God, becomes the invitation and the starting point of the dialogue between God and human beings.

What distinguishes humans from other living beings is not only their intelligence, but also the possession of the soul. The soul is non-material and transcendent and thus immortal (May, 2022, p. 2). Since the soul is transcendent, it cannot be proven by natural science. However, a great number of cultural and religious traditions (Ciocan, 2020; Ohlig, 2006, pp. 19–22) documents its existence. The soul is a voluntary gift of God to human beings. The Catholic Church teaches that the human body came into being through biological evolution, but that the soul is created directly by God (Ehrman, 2020, p. 181; Kemp, 2020). The soul gives us humans a special place within creation: “Only through the transcendent soul do we have access to transcendence. Through the soul, we become a being at home in two worlds simultaneously: in immanence and transcendence” (May, 2022, p. 2). Because of the soul, we are much better prepared for dialogue with God, the Creator of the universe, than all other living beings on Earth. The immortal soul also makes it possible to survive biological death and live eternally in communion with the triune God (Fernández Fernández, 2015; Ratzinger, 2007). The fact that God gives every human being a soul is further evidence of how important dialogue with us humans is to God.

The dialogue between God and human beings becomes very clear in the books of the Old Testament: God chose the people of Israel from among all human beings, so that this people would become his interlocutor and his mouthpiece in representation of all human beings. God made a historical journey with the people of Israel. In this journey, God gradually revealed himself more and more to the people of Israel – from Abraham through Moses and the prophets to Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, God conducted this dialogue on different levels that overlap:

- a. The personal dialogue between God and his friends, such as Moses: “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend” (Exodus 33:11). Suomala (2004) provides a detailed study of the dialogue between God and Moses. Bridge (2016) analyses Abraham's dialogue with God in Genesis 18.
- b. The dialogue mediated by the Scripture between God and the individual believer (Psalm 119).
- c. The dialogue that persons commissioned by God – especially the prophets – conduct with individual groups or persons to make known the will of God.
- d. The performance of miracles that invite faith – such as the passage through the Red Sea – and the reaction of the people involved.
- e. The dialogue between God and the people of Israel mediated by historical events.

Witte (2004) compiles numerous contributions on various aspects of the dialogue between God and human beings in the Old Testament.

The self-image of the Israelites and Jews as the chosen people led to a far-reaching limitation of the Jewish religion to this people. However, if one looks a little more closely into the Old Testament, one already finds passages there that show that faith in the God worshipped by the Israelites is intended for

all people – e.g.: “for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:7). It is obvious that from the beginning God wanted all people to enter into dialogue with him. In order to achieve this goal comprehensively, Jesus Christ was born from the Jewish people more than 2000 years ago.

5. Jesus Christ

The culmination of the dialogue between God and his creation is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. May (2021, p. 30) writes: “The incarnation of Jesus Christ can be understood as the culmination of the dialogue between the Creator and his creation. Since man, as the crown of creation, evades dialogue with his Creator, God becomes man in order to make dialogue with man as easy as possible. The mission of Jesus is to let us participate in the exuberant fullness of God (John 10:10).”

Christianity is convinced that the Creator of the universe has communicated himself in Jesus Christ, after having communicated to the people of Israel through prophets over a long period of time. In the parable of the wicked vinedressers handed down by Matthew, Jesus Christ sees himself as the radical and unsurpassable self-communication of God, building on a long tradition of prophets when he says: “When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants... Then he sent his son to them... So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him” (Matthew 21:34–39).

The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is a central truth of faith in Christianity, which is still the subject of intensive theological research today – see e.g. Sijuwade (2022). How far-reaching the incarnation of Jesus Christ is can already be guessed by meditating on the Apostles’ Creed: While the part of the Apostles’ Creed about God the Father radiates something eternal, static-untouchable, eternally unchanging, the part dealing with Jesus Christ is of a breathtaking dynamism. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that this part is dominated by verbs. First of all, there are the verbs conceived, born, suffered, crucified, died and buried. These verbs could describe the life of any human being. And that is what it is all about: the eternally unchanging God becomes human, fully human! The God who lives before and outside of all time and all matter becomes matter and submits himself to time. The Son of God submits himself radically to time and to all the other laws and limitations of this world created by him. He is conceived, born, suffers, dies and is buried. He solidarises with us and our suffering (van Niekerk & Niemandt, 2019, p. 172). He saved himself nothing: “...who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6–8).

Not only for the Greek world at the time of Jesus, but also for many people today, this is a scandal. Paul writes: “...but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles...” (1 Corinthians 1:23). Paul himself uses the word “skándalon” in the original Greek text (Lona, 2009, p. 63). An eternal-unchanging Creator, that makes sense to many people and religions, and philosophies can comfortably deal with that – one example among many is Tetens (2015, pp. 10–11). But a God who gives up his unlimited omnipotence, his fulfilled eternity and his unsurpassable bliss just to become a human being and let us humans kill him? Nevertheless, it happened! The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is not a pious legend, but a historical fact. Of all the historical details of Jesus’ life handed down in the Gospels, the Apostles’ Creed is limited to a single detail: “suffered under Pontius Pilate”.

Before Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, Jesus had always sought dialogue with the people of his time. “Jesus Christ, in obedience to God, approaches human beings, who live in disobedience to God, to enter into a partnership with them characterised by faith” (Rabie-Boshoff & Buitendag, 2020, p. 5). Again and again Jesus had tried to explain to people that his and our Father loves everyone. Again and again he

had invited people to return to the Father like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–24) and to trust in the merciful love of the Father. The “Our Father” is the invitation to and the exercise of trust in God the Father *par excellence*. For Jesus, the goal of the dialogue with human beings was to achieve that human beings could have an intensive dialogue of love with God, their Creator, and thanks to this dialogue with God, they could also have an intensive dialogue of love with their fellow human beings. Jesus put it this way: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

Jesus Christ as the Son of God was begotten by God the Father before all time. Jesus Christ as man was born a little more than 2000 years ago. Since then, Jesus Christ is not only fully God, but also fully human. Through the incarnation of Jesus, the dialogue between God and his creation has become much more radical and much more intense. Whereas before the barrier between transcendence and immanence hindered communication between God and human beings, now every human being who wanted to could communicate on an equal level with God incarnate. God had given himself into our hands and in return we humans killed him on the cross.

At first glance, Jesus’ death on the cross looks like the complete failure and definitive breaking off of the dialogue between God and his creation. However, through the resurrection of Jesus comes the decisive change for us humans: Death, which also represents the end of every dialogue, is overcome by Jesus Christ. A new eternal life with God the Father follows. Just as the resurrected Jesus Christ eternally continues the intra-Trinitarian dialogue of love with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, all people who have decided for God in their lives will also eternally continue their dialogue of love with the triune God.

Our hope that not everything ends with biological death lives on the fact that Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead. Paul writes: “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:13–14). The resurrection of Jesus is “the central content and therefore also the defining form of the Christian confession” (Fössel, 2017, p. 13). Therefore, it is very important to dispel doubts about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Loke (2020) presents the current state of research on the resurrection of Jesus. He comes to the conclusion: “Therefore, Jesus resurrected. I replied to the problem of miracles in Chapter 8 and concluded that, since Jesus’ resurrection occurred together with his claim to be truly divine, there are good reasons for thinking that a miracle of the greatest possible significance occurred on that first Easter morning” (Loke, 2020, p. 199). Cabal (2014) and Levering (2019) also provide defenses of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that are worth reading.

6. Dialogue in the Christian era

The command given by the risen Jesus to his disciples before his ascension was and is clear: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20). This is what the disciples and their followers obeyed. Today, Christianity is the largest religion on Earth with about 2.3 billion members (Hackett & McClendon, 2017).

How does the dialogue between God and his creation compare now, in the Christian era, to the time of the Old Testament?

On the one hand, one sees a clear continuity: on the levels where dialogue took place at the time of the Old Testament, dialogue continues now. On the other hand, one sees a strengthening of existing elements:

- a. The very fact that Christianity, in contrast to Judaism, is a world-spanning religion that explicitly invites every human being to dialogue with God, gives the dialogue between God and his creation a new dynamic.
- b. Already in the time of the people of Israel, the Holy Scriptures possessed a central significance for dialogue with God. This significance has become even greater through the continuation of God's self-revelation in the New Testament. Consequently, the Bible is used again and again by various Christian groups as a way for personal dialogue with God. Examples among many are the "*Lectio divina*", which has been cultivated in monasteries since the Middle Ages (Benner, 2010; Tibi, 2010) and the Roman Catholic community *Verbum Dei*, founded in 1963 (Martínez Sáez, 2014; Toro Bedoya, 2012).
- c. Through the revelations of the New Testament, we humans know God better. This simplifies dialogue. For example, intra-Trinitarian dialogue can become a model for our dialogues (Derdziuk, 2016).

Furthermore, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, entirely new dimensions of dialogue between God and human beings have emerged. In the man Jesus Christ, God broke through the barrier between transcendence and immanence. He thus offered and offers us a dialogue "at eye level". In Jesus Christ, God has placed himself in our hands.

Jesus further radicalised this "giving himself into our hands" in the Last Supper: "...Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians take these words seriously in their entirety and therefore, they believe that in the Eucharist the bread is truly transformed into the body of Christ and the wine is truly transformed into the blood of Christ, even though it still looks and tastes like bread and wine (Blanco Sarto, 2018; Faber, 2011, pp. 112-114; Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997, section 1333). In the Eucharist, Jesus Christ meets us in the forms of bread and wine. In this way, he gives himself to us in a very radical way. He gives himself into our hands again and again and invites us to an honest dialogue with him. He wants to be as close to us as possible. He wants to remove everything that could hinder the intimate dialogue with him.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper makes present the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the central and most important event of Christianity. Dreyer (2018) believes that the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ are of central importance for the dialogue between God, humans and the world. If one understands the Lord's Supper not only as a mere commemoration, but takes the presence of Christ in it seriously, an opportunity for intimate dialogue arises that no other religion can offer.

It becomes apparent that the dialogue between God and human beings in Christianity is much more intense and radical than before. Moreover, Christianity differs radically from the other monotheistic religions in that it knows that God is not a monolithic block but a trinitarian community of love. In this way, Christians are better prepared than members of other religions for "eternal life", the eternal communion with God in transcendence (see below).

Regarding "eternal life", however, there is even among Christians a widespread misunderstanding: it is pretended that there is a sharp break between biological life and the "eternal life" that follows. Jesus himself already corrected this misunderstanding by giving the following definition: "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have

sent” (John 17:3). Eternal life is to know God. And by “knowing” is meant not only a purely intellectual knowledge, but an existential knowledge that goes far beyond that. Crucial is the love relationship with God (Benedict XVI, 2007, section 27), which necessarily manifests itself in dialogue with God and in practised charity. We have this life on this earth to learn to receive and give love and to live in loving communion with God and other people. This is precisely what it is all about later, in eternal life after death: then the human being is in transcendence in eternal blissful communion with God and sees him face to face and lives eternally with the other redeemed human beings. This results in a continuity between life before death and eternal life after biological death. Here, in this life begins what we will live eternally – heaven or hell (Benedict XVI, 2007, sections 45–47; Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997, section 1033). This means that even now, in this biological life, we can begin to live eternal life by loving (Martínez Sáez, 2014, pp. 56–61; Toro Bedoya, 2011, pp. 97–93; Toro Bedoya, 2012, pp. 140–146). Dialogue with God in personal prayer plays a central role in this (Martínez Sáez, 2014, pp. 89–91; Toro Bedoya, 2012, pp. 173–180).

Personal dialogue with God is thus of existential importance for a Christian. Christianity provides numerous aids for this dialogue, some of which have already been mentioned. Worthy of special mention is that the Christian faith says that the triune God dwells in every Christian (Forteza Salas, 2013; Martínez Sáez, 2014, pp. 253–258; Toro Bedoya, 2012, p. 59). Jesus says it himself: “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (John 14:23). The indwelling of the triune God in human beings is an aid to dialogue with God that should not be underestimated; for we can find God within ourselves.

7. Impact of the incarnation of Jesus on the triune God

After his resurrection, Jesus Christ left immanence and returned to transcendence to God the Father. However, he did not return to God the Father as the same Son of God that he had been before his incarnation. He now additionally brought a human body with him. Jesus had received the human body in the course of his incarnation, because prior to that he, the eternal Logos, had had no more a human body than the other two persons of the Trinity.

As a necessary component of his incarnation, Jesus Christ had received a human body. God loves without reservations and without backsliding. “For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not “Yes and No,” but in him it has always been “Yes.” For in him every one of God’s promises is a “Yes”” (2 Corinthians 1:19–20). Therefore, Jesus Christ assumed his humanity for all eternity. With this, he also assumed his human body for all eternity.

In this human body Jesus had lived and suffered during his time on Earth. The marks of his suffering marked his human body. Through death and resurrection, this body was transformed into a resurrected body. This resurrected body still showed the wounds that Jesus’ body had suffered during the crucifixion (Joest, 2000, p. 136). The apostle Thomas testifies to this in John 20:25–28. This observation signifies that the Son of God coming from “timeless” eternity returns to “timeless” eternity with God the Father with a human body subjected to and marked by time.

To understand the explosive nature of this statement, one must realise that the prevailing view in Christian philosophy has been that God, as the Creator of the universe, is timeless (Mullins, 2016). However, if one imagines God to be completely timeless, certain observations and truths of faith are no longer easily explainable. For example, with a timeless God, how are we to imagine that he is patient with us (May, 2021, pp. 31–32)? Or how is a timeless Creator supposed to participate in a progressive dialogue (with his creation), since “progress” necessarily has a temporal component? Would intra-

Trinitarian dialogue even be possible in a completely timeless Trinity? Such conflicts have led some modern Christian philosophers and theologians to hold that God is not timeless, but that there is some kind of time with him. But how does this in turn fit with God being omniscient and already knowing past, present and future? This has led to an intense discussion in Christian theology for several years about whether God is timeless or whether there is a kind of time with him.

The view that there is some kind of time with God is held by Jackelén (2005), Holland (2012), Russell (2012), Diekemper (2013), Mullins (2016), Peters (2016), Sydnor (2018), Mullins (2021) and Everhart (2021). For Holland (2012), the incarnation of God is a central argument for there being time with God. Insisting on the timelessness of God are Levering (2004, pp. 89–107), Cobreros (2016) and Volek (2019). Padgett (2000, 2010, 2011) mediates between the two positions.

Depending on which aspect one considers in particular – either God’s omniscience or his patience and cooperation in a progressive dialogue – either one or the other position is more plausible. The whole thing reminds me somewhat of the wave-particle dualism of light, which behaves equally like a wave and like a particle. However, presumably any attempt at comparison is completely inappropriate. By what right do we presume to want to understand such profound things? For me, it only remains to say with Psalm 139:17–18: “How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them – they are more than the sand; I come to the end – I am still with you.” In any case, God’s time is different from our time. Psalm 90:4 says that very clearly: “For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past or like a watch in the night.”

Let us return to Jesus Christ: before his incarnation, Jesus Christ did not have a human body, now he has a resurrected human body with the wounds of his self-giving to humanity. The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ not only mark a “before” and an “after” in this universe, but equally they mark a “before” and an “after” for the triune God. God himself is affected, for Jesus Christ in his ascension carries the temporality of our world right into the interior of the Trinity of God. Resulting from this:

- a. Through the incarnation and the ascension, there was an essential change within the Trinity, for whereas before all three persons were exclusively immaterial and transcendent, now “suddenly” one of the three divine persons has a human body from immanence.
- b. Furthermore, this human body – by its wounds – shows very clearly the influence of time and the immanent creatures. By taking into itself a human body with wounds, the Trinity solidarises in an absolutely unheard-of way with all creatures suffering and subject to time.
- c. We do not know whether “before” the incarnation and ascension of Jesus Christ the Trinity was “timeless” or not, but we do know that by taking in the human body of Jesus the Trinity has taken in temporality into the very core of the Trinity.
- d. By the very fact that one can distinguish “before” and “after” the incarnation, a temporal component inevitably enters into the life of the Trinity.

On the basis of these key points we can guess what a far-reaching consequence the incarnation of God has not only for us, but also for God. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). God loves this world and us humans so much that he not only came into this world as a human being, but he also allowed himself to be changed in the innermost part of his Trinity through the ascension of Jesus. The eternally unchanging God allows himself to be changed out of love for his creation through a part of his creation that is subject to time – the human body of Jesus! Is a greater love, a more intense dialogue possible?

8. The triune God as the starting point and goal of dialogue

In considering the consequences of the ascension of Jesus Christ, the Trinity of God has come into focus in this essay. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, "...who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness" (Philippians 2:6-7). Through the ascension, he returned – in addition with a human body – completely to the Trinity in transcendence. The same movement – starting from Trinity and later returning to Trinity –, only in a much larger arc, is also done by the whole of creation and the dialogue between God and his creation.

A very fundamental aspect of the Trinity of God is that our God is community (or family) in himself. God is not a monolithic block, a transcendent iceberg floating untouched and untouchable through eternity. God is community, in him is eternal, living and life-giving dialogue, giving and receiving love, eternal exchange.

Against this background, the famous quotation from the First Letter of John also becomes understandable: "God is Love" (1 John 4:8). Love requires a sender and a receiver, a lover and a counterpart who is loved. A God, who is a monolithic block, as imagined by Judaism and Islam, would necessarily have to create a counterpart so that he could love; and such a God could only then be called a loving God; but to call God himself love would be difficult to justify.

The Christian God is quite different: He is communion in himself, and the three persons of God have each other as the counterpart of love (Parappally, 2014). Therefore, these three persons have a continuous dialogue of love with each other – for more on intra-Trinitarian dialogue, see Vanzini (2015), Derdziuk (2016) and Leung (2022). The triune God does not have to create anything or anyone in order to love, because his three persons love each other from the beginning. Therefore, the Christian God is love; and being love is the best definition for the Christian God; and therefore Christianity is the religion of love.

Everything that the Christian God creates results from the love of the three persons for each other. Just as a man and a woman who love each other are fruitful together and produce children, so the intra-Trinitarian dialogue of love caused the whole universe to come into being as an expression of his exuberant love (Stickelbroeck, 2017, p. 322). Now, at last, we glimpse why this universe is so large and contains so many stars and galaxies (Conselice et al., 2016). It is not because it would have taken so many stars and galaxies to produce us intelligent beings. No, the superabundance of the universe is a faint reflection of the superabundance of love in the triune God. And in a comparable way, the millions of different species of living beings that populate the Earth today (Chapman, 2009; Mora et al., 2011) are another image of the overflowing love of the triune God.

This dialogue of love between the three persons of the triune God is so fundamental, so important, that it even pervades Earth history and evolution (May, 2021, p. 30). When we consider the Trinity of God, we also begin to sense more deeply why humans are community beings, beings that can only truly develop within a community: Not biological constraints or God-imposed limitations are the ultimate reason! No! The ultimate reason why humans are community beings is because humans were created by God in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)! If God is community in himself, then only in community human beings can be fully the image of God (Parappally, 2014, p. 179). Especially in today's very individualistic society, we should always be aware that human beings are created for community. This is equally fundamental as well as pointing to the transcendent. Derdziuk (2016, p. 125) writes: "Upon realizing his or her likeness to the Triune God, i.e. the inseparable communion of the Divine Persons, a Christian

discovers that the Holy Trinity constitutes the model and source for his or her own involvement in maintaining relationships with other people.”

It is thus shown that everything that exists has its origin in the intra-Trinitarian dialogue of love. This intra-Trinitarian dialogue of love leaves traces everywhere that point to it: Both the superabundance of the universe and the history of life, as well as fundamental characteristics of human beings, prove that their origin lies in the triune God.

Not only the origin, but also the goal of all being lies in the triune God. The last chapters of the Book of Revelation bear eloquent witness to this. At the end of time, God will renew the whole of creation: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (Revelation 21:1).

Various theologians, such as Russell (2012), argue that this “new heaven” and this “new earth” will emerge from the “first heaven” and the “first earth” through a transformation comparable to the transformation of the earthly body of Jesus Christ into his resurrected body.

With regard to the destiny of humanity, it is said that “the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,” will be “the home of God ... among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:2-3).

In the “holy city”, all people who have believed the words of Jesus Christ and/or lived love will live in eternal happy communion with God and with each other. The love of God will fill them completely and “the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb” – that is, Jesus Christ (Revelation 21:23).

In this “holy city” all people of all times who have chosen God in their biological life will live eternally with each other and with the triune God in comprehensive and fulfilling communion (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997, section 1045). I would like to emphasise that in the “holy city” there will not only be a relationship between God and me, but also between fellow human beings and me. It will be an all-encompassing dialogue of love. At the centre of this dialogue will be the triune God. And the people whom God has deemed worthy to live with him will participate in this intra-Trinitarian dialogue of love and pass it on in the dialogue of love with fellow creatures (Carvajal Blanco, 2011, pp. 83-84).

In summary, at the end of time, all of creation will be transformed and return to the triune God. We humans will live in intimate communion with God the Father and God the Son. Then Jesus' wish will be completely fulfilled: “Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory...” (John 17:24). Therefore, God's intra-Trinitarian dialogue is not only the starting point but also the goal of God's dialogue with his creation.

CONCLUSION

Both philosophical considerations and physical observations revealed that we must assume that this universe was created by a transcendent intelligent supreme being, and that it is very important for this supreme being to communicate with the intelligent living beings in this universe. Between immanence and transcendence there is a barrier that we human beings in immanence cannot overcome. However, the supreme being in transcendence can overcome this barrier and communicate with us in various ways.

The starting point and goal of the dialogue between God and his creation is the intra-Trinitarian dialogue between the three persons of God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God's dialogue with his creation became more and more intense and intimate. A first fundamental self-communication of the triune God is the superabundance and beauty of creation. God continued the dialogue within the history

of the Earth – with the aim of creating intelligent living beings on the path of evolution, with whom a conscious dialogue is possible. To us humans, the intelligent living beings, God gave an immortal soul in order to be able to continue this personal dialogue for all eternity. God entered into communication with the people of Israel, the chosen people, in the most diverse ways.

Through the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, this dialogue was extended to all humanity. In Jesus Christ, God gives himself into our hands on the one hand as a historical event 2000 years ago, and on the other hand still today, in every Holy Mass in the Eucharist. For this and other reasons, Christians are better prepared than members of other religions for eternal communion with God in transcendence. All human beings can already now, in this biological life, initially live eternal life by loving. Dialogue with God in personal prayer plays a central role in this.

Through the resurrection of Jesus, death, which is also the end of all dialogue, was overcome. The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ had a very great impact on the triune God, because since and through the ascension of Jesus Christ, inside the Trinity there is also the wounded human body of Jesus Christ, marked by the traces of time. God gives himself so much to dialogue with his creation that he takes a part of his creation into his innermost being with the human body of Jesus Christ.

All creation is called to be transformed at the end of time. Then all human beings of all times who have chosen God in their biological life will live eternally with each other and with the triune God in comprehensive and fulfilling communion. Then, finally, there will be an all-encompassing and all-fulfilling dialogue of love. This dialogue of love will emanate from the triune God and will fill and glorify the whole of creation.

That dialogue has such great significance for understanding the relationship between God and his creation arises from the fact that God himself is in the innermost dialogue: dialogue of love between the three persons of God. This intra-Trinitarian dialogue of God is the starting point, model and goal of both creation and God's dialogue with his creation.

This study provides a broad overview of God's dialogue with his creation, but must necessarily refrain from illuminating important details. These gaps give rise to the following approaches for further research: What traces does the intra-Trinitarian dialogue of love leave in creation? What conclusions about the intra-Trinitarian dialogue can be drawn from these traces? In what ways did the incarnation of Jesus Christ change God's dialogue with his creation? What are the consequences of the fact that, with the human body of Jesus Christ, the triune God took a part of his creation into his innermost being? In this study, Christianity was considered. What influence do the other religions have on God's dialogue with his creation?

Acknowledgement

Prof. Jaco Beyers, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa and Busro Busro, Faculty of Ushuluddin UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia invited me to write this paper. This research is part of the research project #2402344 "Understanding Reality (Theology and Nature)", directed by Prof. Dr. Johan Buitendag, Department of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria.

REFERENCES

- Aguirre, A. (2001). Cold big-bang cosmology as a counterexample to several anthropic arguments. *Physical Review D*, 64, 83508. <https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevD.64.083508>
- Araújo, G. S. (2018). Miracles and natural law: Are they compatible? *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 28(2), 120–138.
- Barnes, L. A. (2015). The fine-tuning of nature's laws. *The New Atlantis*, 47, 87–97.
- Barnes, L. A. (2020). A reasonable little question: A formulation of the fine-tuning argument. *Ergo, an Open Access Journal of Philosophy*, 6(42), 1220–1257. <https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.12405314.0006.042>
- Benedict XVI. (2007). Encyclical letter spe salvi of the supreme pontiff Benedict XVI to the bishops, priests and deacons, men and women religious, and all the lay faithful on Christian hope. *Vatican*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html
- Benner, D. G. (2010). *Opening to God: Lectio divina and life as prayer*. Westmont: InterVarsity.
- Blanco Sarto, P. (2018). La cena del Señor a la luz de los diálogos luterano-católicos. *Estudios Eclesiásticos. Revista de Investigación e Información Teológica y Canónica*, 93(365), 417–453.
- Bradley, W. L. (2018). The fine tuning of the universe: Evidence for the existence of God? *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 70(3), 147–160.
- Bridge, E. (2016). An audacious request: Abraham's dialogue with God in Genesis 18. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 40(3), 281–296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089216637143>
- Bussey, P. J. (2013). God as first cause – a review of the Kalam argument. *Science & Christian Belief*, 25, 17–35.
- Cabal, T. (2014). Defending the resurrection of Jesus: Yesterday, today and forever. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 18(4), 115–137.
- Carvajal Blanco, J. C. (2011). La misión de la Palabra. Una lectura transversal de Verbum Domini. *Teología y Catequesis*, 119, 69–109.
- Chan, K.-Y., & Chan, M.-H. (2020). A discussion of Klass Landsman's criticisms of the fine-tuning Argument. *Theology and Science*, 18(2), 279–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2020.1755544>
- Chapman, A. D. (2009). *Numbers of living species in Australia and the world* (2nd ed.). Canberra, Australia.
- Ciocan, T. C. (2020). The value of the soul in the religious views. *Dialogo*, 6(2), 233–244. <https://doi.org/10.18638/dialogo.2020.6.2.21>
- Cobrerros, P. (2016). Supervaluationism and the timeless solution to the foreknowledge problem. *Scientia et Fides*, 4(1), 61–75. <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2016.015>
- Conselice, C. J., Wilkinson, A., Duncan, K., & Mortlock, A. (2016). The evolution of galaxy number density at $z < 8$ and its implications. *The Astrophysical Journal*, 830(83), 1–17.
- Copan, P., & Craig, W. L. (Eds.). (2019a). *The Kalam cosmological argument, volume 1: Philosophical arguments for the finitude of the past*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Copan, P., & Craig, W. L. (Eds.). (2019b). *The Kalam cosmological argument, volume 2: Scientific evidence for the beginning of the universe*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Derdziuk, A. (2016). Trinitarian paradigm for dialogue. *Journal for Perspectives of Economic Political and Social Integration*, 22(1–2), 125–139. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pepsi-2016-0007>
- Diekemper, J. (2013). Eternity, knowledge, and freedom. *Religious Studies*, 49(1), 45–64. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412512000170>

- Dreyer, D. (2018). God in gesprek – 'n Dialogiese Christologie. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 39(1), a1896. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.1896>
- Duffin, J. (2009). *Medical miracles: Doctors, saints and healing in the modern world*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ehrman, T. P. (2020). Anthropogenesis and the soul. *Scientia et Fides*, 8(2), 173–193. <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2020.018>
- Everhart, D. T. (2021). Transcendent temporality. *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*, 5(1), 28–54. <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v5i1.57883>
- Faber, E.-M. (2011). *Einführung in die katholische Sakramentenlehre* (3rd ed.). Darmstadt: WBG.
- Fernández Fernández, A. (2015). «Yo no moriré». *La vida después de la muerte. La escatología cristiana*. Madrid: Palabra.
- Forteza Salas, M. (2013). La inhabitación de la Trinidad en nosotros. In P. C. Teixeira (Ed.), *El verbo se hizo historia... Orientaciones para la oración en el Año Jubilar Verbum Dei* (pp. 119–132). Burgos: Monte Carmelo.
- Fößel, T. P. (2017). *Offenbare Auferstehung. Eine Studie zur Auferstehung Jesu Christi in offenbarungstheologischer Perspektive*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Friederich, S. (2017). Fine-tuning as old evidence, double counting, and the multiverse. *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 31(4), 363–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02698595.2019.1565214>
- Glass, D. H., & McCartney, M. (2014). Explaining and explaining away in science and religion. *Theology and Science*, 12(4), 338–361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2014.95439>
- Goetz, J. (2021). Theodicy, supreme providence, and semiclassical theism. *Theology and Science*, 19(1), 42–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2020.1825195>
- Greene, B. (2011). *The hidden reality: Parallel universes and the deep laws of the cosmos*. New York: Knopf.
- Guilherme, A. (2012). God as thou and prayer as dialogue: Martin Buber's tools for reconciliation. *Sophia*, 51(3), 365–378. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-011-0282-0>
- Hackett, C., & McClendon, D. (2017). Christians remain world's largest religious group, but they are declining in Europe. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>
- Harrower, S. (2021). The dialogical self analogy for the godhead: Recasting the “God is a Person” debate. *Scientia et Fides*, 9(2), 91–113. <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2021.020>
- Hawking, S., & Mlodinow, L. (2010). *The grand design*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Holland, R. A. (2012). *God, time, and the incarnation*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.
- Jackelén, A. (2005). *Time & eternity: The question of time in church, science and theology*. Conshohocken, PA: West.
- Joest, C. (2000). Der dreieine Gott und die Gemeinschaft der Menschen. *Geist und Leben*, 73(2), 132–137.
- Kemp, K. W. (2020). God, evolution, and the body of Adam. *Scientia et Fides*, 8(2), 139–172. <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2020.017>
- Kim, E. (2010). *Time, eternity, and the Trinity: A Trinitarian analogical understanding of time and eternity*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.
- Kojonen, E. V. R. (2019). Is classical science in conflict with belief in miracles? Some bridge-building between philosophical and theological positions. In R. J. Russell & J. M. Moritz (Eds.), *God's providence and randomness in nature. Scientific and theological perspectives* (pp. 205–234). West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press.
- Lennox, J. C. (2011). *God and Stephen Hawking: Whose design is it anyway?* Oxford: Lion Hudson.
- Leung, K. (2022). Transcendentality and conversation: On the Trinity and 'word-exchange'. *Modern Theology*, 38, 796–816. <https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12803>

- Levering, M. (2004). *Scripture and metaphysics: Aquinas and the renewal of Trinitarian theology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Levering, M. (2019). *Did Jesus rise from the dead? Historical and theological reflections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Libreria Editrice Vaticana. (1997). Catechism of the Catholic Church. *Vatican*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM
- Loke, A. (2012). Is an uncaused beginning of the universe possible? *Philosophia Christi*, 14(2), 387–407. <https://doi.org/10.5840/pc201214232>
- Loke, A. (2017). *God and ultimate origins. A novel cosmological argument*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
- Loke, A. (2020). *Investigating the resurrection of Jesus Christ: A new transdisciplinary approach*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003037255>
- Loke, A. (2022a). A critical engagement with N.T. Wright on Natural Theology. *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v6i2.64263>
- Loke, A. (2022b). *The teleological and Kalam cosmological arguments revisited*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94403-2>
- Lona, H. E. (2009). *Kleine Hinführung zu Paulus* (2nd ed.). Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- Lüke, U. (2016). *Das Säugetier von Gottes Gnaden: Evolution, Bewusstsein, Freiheit* (3rd ed.). Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- Manson, N. A. (2020). The multiverse: What philosophers and theologians get wrong. *Theology and Science*, 18(1), 31–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2019.1710348>
- Martínez Sáez, J. (Ed.). (2014). *Id y haced discípulos»: Seguimiento, Fraternidad, Misión*. Burgos: Monte Carmelo.
- May, A. (2020). Milliarden Jahre Evolution – Geschenk und Auftrag. In T. Dienberg & S. Winter (Eds.), *Mit Sorge – in Hoffnung. Zu Impulsen aus der Enzyklika Laudato Si' für eine Spiritualität im ökologischen Zeitalter* (pp. 175–183). Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet.
- May, A. (2021). What can Earth history and evolution tell about the creator of the universe? *International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science*, 5(8), 19–41. <https://doi.org/10.26520/ijtps.2015.8.19-41>
- May, A. (2022). Since when have humans had a soul? *HTS Theologies Studies / Theological Studies*, 78(2), a7311. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i2.7311>
- McGrath, A. E. (2009). *A fine-tuned universe: The quest for God in science and theology*. London: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Meyer, S. C. (2021). *Return of the God hypothesis: Three scientific discoveries that reveal the mind behind the universe*. New York: HarperOne.
- Mora, C., Tittensor, D. P., Adl, S., Simpson, A. G. B., & Worm, B. (2011). How many species are there on earth and in the ocean? *PLoS Biology*, 9(8), e1001127. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1001127>
- Moritz, J. M. (2018). Big Bang Cosmology and Christian Theology. In R. Gordon & J. Seckbach (Eds.), *Theology and science: From Genesis to astrobiology* (pp. 345–372). New Jersey: World Scientific.
- Mullins, R. T. (2016). *The end of the timeless God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mullins, R. T. (2021). Divine temporality and providential bodgery. *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*, 5(1), 147–174. <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v4i3.54853>
- Nieminen, P., Loikkanen, J., Ryökäs, E., & Mustonen, A.-M. (2020). Nature of evidence in religion and natural science. *Theology and Science*, 18(3), 448–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2020.1786221>

- Ohlig, K.-H. (2006). La muerte y su "superación" religiosa en la historia de la humanidad. *Concilium*, 318, 15–26.
- Oviedo, L. (2020). Immanence and transcendence: On/off difference or gradation? Implications for science-and-theology. In M. Fuller, D. Evers, A. Runehov, K. W. Sæther, & B. Michollet (Eds.), *Issues in science and theology: Nature – and beyond* (pp. 19–29). Cham: Springer.
- Padgett, A. G. (2000). *God, eternity and the nature of time*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock.
- Padgett, A. G. (2010). God and time: Relative timelessness reconsidered. In M. E. Stewart (Ed.), *Science and religion in dialogue* (pp. 884–892). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Padgett, A. G. (2011). The difference creation makes: Relative timelessness reconsidered. In C. Tapp & E. Runggaldier (Eds.), *God, eternity, and time* (pp. 117–125). Farnham: SurreyAshgate.
- Pannenberg, W. (2002). The concept of miracle. *Zygon®*, 37(3), 759–762. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9744.00452>
- Parappally, J. (2014). Die christliche Erfahrung Gottes als Communio. *Geist und Leben*, 87(2), 193–198.
- Peters, T. (2016). Time in eternity and eternity in time. In J. Baldwin (Ed.), *Embracing the ivory tower and stained glass windows* (pp. 3–12). Basel: Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
- Plantinga, A. (2008). What is "intervention"? *Theology and Science*, 6(4), 369–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700802396106>
- Pöhlmann, H. G. (1984). *Gottesdenker. Prägende evangelische und katholische Theologen der Gegenwart. 12 Porträts*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Club.
- Rabie-Boshoff, A. C., & Buitendag, J. (2020). Jesus: Divine relationality and suffering creation. *HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies*, 76(1), a6128. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i1.6128>
- Ratzinger, J. (2007). *Eschatology: Death and eternal life* (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Revol, F. (2020a). A critical approach to the concept of panentheism in the dialogue between science and theology: Distinguishing between divine transcendence and immanence in creation. In M. Fuller, D. Evers, A. Runehov, K. W. Sæther, & B. Michollet (Eds.), *Issues in science and theology: Nature – and beyond* (pp. 101–115). Cham: Springer.
- Revol, F. (2020b). The concept of continuous creation part II: Toward a renewed and actualized concept. *Zygon®*, 55(1), 251–274. <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12583>
- Rödder, G., Ziegler, F.-K., & Falk, E. (1993). Wie viele Arten? Der Stand der Forschung gegen Ende des Jahrhunderts. *Paläontologische Zeitschrift*, 67(1–2), 215–222. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02985879>
- Rosenblum, P. M. (2020). Seeking purpose in creation and evolution: The agapic principle. *Theology and Science*, 18(1), 86–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2019.1710352>
- Russell, R. J. (2012). *Time in eternity: Pannenberg, physics, and eschatology in creative mutual interaction*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Sánchez-Cañizares, J. (2014). Whose design? Physical, philosophical and theological questions regarding Hawking and Mlodinow's Grand Design. *Scientia et Fides*, 2(1), 231–241. <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2014.011>
- Saudek, D. (2011). Science and Eschatology in the Open Universe. *Science & Christian Belief*, 23, 133–157.
- Sijuwade, J. (2022). A transformational incarnation. *Theologica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v7i1.64663>
- Siniscalchi, G. (2014). Fine-tuning, atheist criticism, and the fifth way. *Theology and Science*, 12(1), 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2013.836890>
- Stenger, V. J. (2014). *God and the multiverse: Humanity's expanding view of the cosmos*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

- Stickelbroeck, M. (2017). Theismus und Trinitätsglaube. In G. Augustin, C. Schaller, & S. Śledziewski (Eds.), *Der dreifaltige Gott: Christlicher Glaube im säkularen Zeitalter. Für Gerhard Kardinal Müller* (pp. 304–323). Freiburg: Herder.
- Suomala, K. R. (2004). *Moses and God in dialogue*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Swinburne, R. (2004). *The existence of God* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sydnor, J. P. (2018). God is not eternal, nor are we: On the blessedness of being in time. *Process Studies*, 47(1–2), 172–190.
- Tabaczek, M. (2019). Vacuum Genesis oraz spontaniczne powstanie wszechświata z niczego a klasyczna koncepcja przyczynowości oraz stworzenia ex nihilo. *Scientia et Fides*, 7(1), 127–162. <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2019.007>
- Tegmark, M. (2014). *Our mathematical universe: My quest for the ultimate nature of reality*. New York: Knopf.
- Tetens, H. (2015). *Gott denken. Ein Versuch über rationale Theologie* (4th ed.). Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Tibi, D. (2010). Lectio divina. Gott begegnen in seinem Wort. *Geist und Leben*, 83(3), 222–234.
- Toro Bedoya, C. M. (Ed.). (2011). *Esbozo de unos ejercicios espirituales*. Burgos: Monte Carmelo.
- Toro Bedoya, C. M. (Ed.). (2012). *Temario de espiritualidad Verbum Dei "vida y amor" y la escuela de apóstoles*. Burgos: Monte Carmelo.
- Tucker, R. (2014). Fine Tuning Mission to reach those influenced by Darwinism. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 35(1), a891. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i1.891>
- van Niekerk, P., & Niemandt, N. (2019). The radical embodiment of God for a Christology of a new era. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 75(1), 165–174. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5633>
- Vanzini, M. (2015). La Croce di Cristo come dialogo tra Dio e l'uomo. In R. Díaz Dorronsoro & M. Vanzini (Eds.), *Egli manifestò la sua gloria. Saggi teologici offerti al Prof. José Antonio Riestra in occasione del suo 70° genetliaco* (pp. 175–193). Roma: Edusc.
- Volek, P. (2019). Das Verständnis des zeitlosen Gottes. *Scientia et Fides*, 7(1), 111–126. <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2019.006>
- von Rintelen, K., Arida, E., & Häuser, C. (2017). A review of biodiversity-related issues and challenges in megadiverse Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries. *Research Ideas and Outcomes*, 3, 20860. <https://doi.org/10.3897/rio.3.e20860>
- Waller, J. (2019). *Cosmological fine-tuning arguments: What (if anything) should we infer from the fine-tuning of our universe for life?* London: Routledge.
- Witte, M. (Ed.). (2004). *Gott und Mensch im Dialog: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.