

## God the Creator of time:

### A critique of Brimblecombe's "God and Time" and an alternative approach

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Is God outside of time or subject to time? Has time always existed, or is it created? Has everything already happened in the presence of a timeless God? These are some of the questions Mark Brimblecombe addresses in his recent article.<sup>1</sup> That these questions should still be raised after nearly two thousand years of grappling with them shows that they are not easy to solve, nor are the solutions always convincing or adequate. In his article in *Stimulus*, Brimblecombe attempts a revision of the traditional Christian doctrine concerning God and time, rejecting the view that God is outside of time, in favour of the view that God is inside time. He claims that his alternative avoids the dilemmas inherent in the traditional approach.

However, I am convinced that Brimblecombe's solution is inadequate and not true to Scripture. He has certainly made some valid criticisms of the traditional view of God as "timeless," but he has not escaped from the problematics that produced that view. Even though he is actually reacting against the speculative Greek metaphysics behind the traditional view, he has instead simply opted for the opposite pole of the dilemma created by that metaphysical tradition. In order to resolve these problems, it is necessary to abandon the metaphysics which generated them in the first place.

One of the first indications that Brimblecombe has not escaped from the pagan speculative metaphysics is that he continues with the pagan confusion of time with motion, with his assumption that time can be identified with, or perhaps even reduced to, motion. Thus he writes,

Before creation, and therefore before movement, time did not exist.

But, this presents another problem. If a timeless God creates, this must

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1 Mark Brimblecombe. "God and time." *Stimulus* 3 (1995) 3:34-39. This article was prepared as a response, as published in *Stimulus* 9 (1997) 1:36-41.

be an action, so that at this point a static and motionless God *becomes* temporal.<sup>2</sup>

To identify time with motion in this way is to buy into the pagan Greek metaphysics which caused so many of the problems. To argue that time is motion, so that where there is no motion, there is no time, is to confuse motion with time. That some things are motionless (for instance, rock), does not place them outside of time. Motion takes place over time, but so does motionlessness. Otherwise, we would be unable to see that things are motionless, because we would have no temporal reference to discern that over time there was no motion. Similarly, it is possible for us to see motion, not because it *is* time, but because motion is a change of place through time. We could not have motion without time, because there can be no change where there is no time, but that does not reduce time to motion.

Movement occurs not in time, but in space. Time passes while movement continues, but the movement is spatial, from one (spatial) place to another (spatial) place. We do not move from one time to another time, but remain within the same time, which continues together with the spatial movement. But time is not motion, any more than motion is time.

Michael Cree's response to Brimblecombe makes an important point, when he discusses mathematical derivatives that enable us to grasp infinitesimal units of time without confusion. This is because, as Cree explains it, the concept does not confuse time and motion. Time can be understood without reference to motion, because motion is not an intrinsic feature or characteristic of time, although motion cannot be experienced or understood without simultaneously experiencing time.<sup>3</sup>

However, while this is all true for the creation, it is irrelevant to apply this reasoning to God. He is not subject to time, but the creator of time. He is not within time, but the origin of time. God does not move (change place through time) since God is not in any

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2 Mark Brimblecombe. "God and time." *Stimulus* 3 (1995) 3:35.

3 Michael Cree. "No time for God?" *Stimulus* 4 (1996) 1:47.

place, nor is he in any time. Both time and place are characteristics of the creation, and it is simply meaningless to apply either of these to God. If it is true to say that “God moves, and therefore is ‘in time,’” it would be equally accurate to say that “God moves, and therefore is ‘in space.’” Thus “space” or location would be uncreated, as well as time, and as this logic is extended to other characteristics of the creation, the doctrine of creation begins to provide ever diminishing returns, as less and less of created reality is seen as actually the work of God.

This pagan metaphysic can be seen in Brimblecombe’s argument that there cannot have been a beginning to time, since there has always been movement. “This,” he flatly asserts without a skerrick of proof, “is the doctrine of the Trinity,” on the grounds that the Tri-une God has always been an active relationship between persons, and any activity requires movement and therefore time. The crunch comes with Brimblecombe’s quotation from Stephen Davis:

Time was not created; it necessarily exists (like numbers); it depends for its existence on nothing else. Time, perhaps, is an eternal aspect of God’s nature rather than a reality independent of God. But the point is that God, on this view, is a temporal being. Past, present, and future are real to him... He has temporal extension.<sup>4</sup>

One could not look for a clearer statement of the roots of such a view in an undeniably pagan conception of reality. To say that anything at all exists necessarily, depending on nothing else, whether time or numbers, is to assert the very dualism that Brimblecombe seeks to avoid; a dualism of divine beings. For what is a divine being save that which exists without dependence on something else?<sup>5</sup> For time to necessarily exist means that it exists because something other than time requires that to be the case. God does not require time necessarily to exist; he chose to create it freely. Thus there could on this basis be only some other law or power which requires time to exist; therefore, there is a power behind time (and numbers) which demanded their existence. What is this

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4 Mark Brimblecombe. “God and time.” *Stimulus* 3 (1995) 3:36.

5 For a discussion of this point see Roy Clouser. **The myth of religious neutrality**. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1991, pp. 17-23.

power? Davis and Brimblecome say nothing about this, but it is certainly not God. To assert that anything exists apart from (1) God, and (2) that which God has brought into being, is to deny the Biblical teaching of creation. Nothing exists save that which God has made, including time and numbers, both of which do not exist either necessarily or independently, but only as characteristics of the creation God freely made.

### **God's relationship to time**

Brimblecome correctly observes that there is no concept of a “timeless” God in Scripture, where eternity means everlasting duration not timelessness or atemporality. But rather than pursuing this idea, Brimblecome continues with the pagan metaphysics which is in opposition to the Scriptural perspective, rather than propose a satisfactory alternative.

The traditional view that God experiences time as an eternal “now” is a speculative approach transmitted from the pre-Socratic philosophers through Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, to Christian thinking by Boethius, the fifth century philosopher, and continued by Thomas Aquinas. Boethius' conception of God's time as an “eternal now” dominated Western thinking up until Oscar Cullmann's radical departure from this view in his **Christ and Time** (1948).<sup>6</sup> This view includes both God and his creation within the one order of reality. Thus God is subjected to the laws which govern the creation, and is no longer the divine origin of those laws.

Thus the Greek concept of a changeless and atemporal God was incorporated into Christian thinking. God was considered to be changeless because he was seen as “simple,” that is, unable to be divided or reduced to component parts. Change was thus impossible for God, because he could not be altered by subtraction, division or addition. If God was unable to change, then he could not move, since motion requires a change and a desire within God to change, which is internal motion. Thus since time

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6 Peter Steen. “The problem of time and eternity in its relation to the nature-grace ground-motive.” In: **Hearing and Doing: Philosophical essays dedicated to H Evan Runner**. Edited by John Kraay and Anthony Tol. Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979, p. 136.

was seen as motion, then lack of movement meant lack of time. Therefore, God was timeless because constitutionally unable to change or move.<sup>7</sup> The difficulty then arose as to how God could begin to create since this involved a change in God from not creating, and not being a Creator, to beginning to create and thereby becoming a Creator. The eternity of the world was one (Aristotelian) solution to a false dilemma. But is the solution to this unbiblical approach to God simply to include God within the parameters of time?

Brimblecombe argues against the possibility or even the necessity of changeless being. That is to ensure that he can sustain his argument that God is temporal, since the timeless God is a changeless God in Greek metaphysics. God has a changeless being, as the Bible makes clear, in that he always remains the same God, he does not lose his power or his majesty, he does not acquire power or majesty, he does not become unjust or begin to be just. But is that what the Greeks meant by changeless being? Not at all. For them, changeless being was static and immoveable being. It was outside time, since only within time could change (movement) occur. Thus God was changeless, static, as with the “Unmoved Mover” of Aristotle. The “changelessness” of God in the Bible refers to his character, not to his immobility. God changes his mind, he alters his plans, all without ceasing to be who he always was.

Brimblecombe concludes his article by stating that “Life (including God’s life) is about relationships, and relationships only work in time.”<sup>8</sup> But to confine God within time, in order to sustain an unbiblical metaphysic, is to misconstrue the problem. Brimblecombe quotes J R Lucas to the effect that “If we are to characterize God at all, we must say that He is personal, and if personal then temporal, and if temporal then in some sense in time, not outside it.” Brimblecombe concludes from this that “persons are temporal.” This does not follow at all, as far as God is concerned. God is personal, in the sense that he is not a force, a power, a non-sentient being. But God is not a **human** person, and therefore not a **temporal** or creaturely person.

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7 For further discussion of how this was understood in the early church see G L Prestige. **God in Patristic Thought**. London: S.P.C.K., 1981, pp. 6-11.

In what sense we can use “person” at all of God is an incredibly complex matter, and cannot be entered into here. Suffice it to say, however, that for our purposes a personal God does not have to be a temporal God. He thinks, feels, remembers, loves, and so on: characteristics of a person, even though we can only speak about what this entails for God in purely human terms, in human concepts, rooted in human experience. God created us so that we could have fellowship with him in love, in joy, in trust, in sharing, and so on, and God relates to us in these ways. That is what it means for us to be a person. But dare we say that that is what it means for God to be a person? God relates to us as God, not as another human being. We relate to him as human beings, not as another god. But this does not necessitate that God is confined within the temporal horizon, as we are.

It may be true to say, as Brimblecombe does, that “every description of God’s action contains a temporal reference.” But how could this be otherwise? Our entire existence, our only possible experience and frame of reference is temporal. We have no other way of speaking of the situation. Not only that, we experience God’s action within a temporal frame of reference; that is, whenever God acts in creation, those acts take place in a specific moment of our time. But it is not true to say that these acts also take place in a specific moment of **God’s** time. For that is to assume that God is subject to, acting within, and limited by time per se.

For God to act in our time does not mean that God is also within that time. God is not in time, yet acts in our (creaturely) time. God is not in space, yet acts in our (creaturely) space. God relates to us as creatures subject to time, not as if we were outside of time. We are placed within a particular time, and God relates to us where we are, and when we are. But that does not bring God within time; it simply means that God’s relationships with us are subject to time and place **on our side of the relationship**, but not on God’s side. How could this be otherwise? We are subject to the laws of time and place, but God is not. The relationship then is between one party not subject to time and other parties who are subject to time, although the relationship is not itself subject to time. Thus Brimblecombe’s concluding sentence makes no sense,

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8 Mark Brimblecombe. “God and time.” *Stimulus* 3 (1995) 3:39.

when understood within this perspective. He states: “Life (including God’s life) is about relationships, and relationships only work in time.”<sup>9</sup> That would mean that not only God’s relationships but also God’s life is in time, and thus God is subject to time, leaving time as an uncreated, independent reality over against God. Dualism again results from this approach.

God is not within time, but the creator of time. God is not bound by time, but the one who upholds time. Time is a characteristic of the creation. God relates to us within time, because God established time. God relates to us in space, because God established space. God relates to us in love, because God established love. None of these things require that God exists within their creational bounds, because God established them and gave them their bounds. It is not necessary for God to be in time, or space, or any other characteristic of the creation, in order for God to be able to relate to us who are within time, space and so on.

That does not mean that God is unable to relate to creatures within time and place, because God is not bound by the laws governing time and place, laws which God himself established. If God is able to establish laws for time and place, then God cannot be confined within or subject to those realities. How could God create something that he was subject to? How could God bring time and place into being if he was located within time and within place? To postulate that both time and place exist apart from, and independently of, God, means that they are uncreated. To adopt this alternative is to reject the entire Christian tradition concerning creation, and to fall into the pagan dualism of the Greek philosophers.

Because God created both time and place, and the creatures within those realities, then he is perfectly capable of relating to them without also being subject to the laws which govern them. God is the law-giver, and if he is able to establish the laws for reality, then he can also relate to creatures subject to those laws without necessarily himself also being subject to or bound by these laws. That God can relate to persons within time does not mean that God must therefore also be a person within time, but that God

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9 Mark Brimblecombe. “God and time.” *Stimulus* 3 (1995) 3:39.

is the origin of personhood, and therefore can relate to that which he has himself brought into being. To argue otherwise is to assume that what God created he cannot relate to, unless he also is bound by the laws which govern that creature.

Time came into being with the creation, it exists as an inherent part of the creation, and will always remain God's creature. There was no time before there was a creation. Time does not exist independently of the creation, or apart from the creation. Time exists only as a characteristic of the creation which God brought into being, and always will be a characteristic of the creation. God is not within time, not bound or limited by time, and not "timeless." God is not subject to time, just as he is not subject to any of his creatures. God is not "outside" time, just as he is not "outside" the rest of creation. God and the creation have quite different reality, with nothing shared between them. God is not a creature, even in the smallest possible way, and the creation is not divine, even in the smallest possible way. They do not occupy the same space, since "space" is a creaturely characteristic, existing only in the creation. Prior to the creation, God was not in "space" since "space" did not exist, any more than time existed.

This has been stated with commendable clarity by Herman Bavinck, who wrote at the turn of the century:

Time makes it possible for one thing to continue existing in a succession of moments, for one thing to be *after* another. Space makes it possible for a thing to spread out to all sides, for one thing to exist *next to* another. Time and space therefore began to exist at the same time as the creatures, and as their inevitable modes of existence. They did not exist beforehand as empty forms to be filled in by the creatures; for where there is nothing there is no time or space either... Augustine was right when he said that God did not make the world *in* time, as if it were created into a previously existing form or condition, but that He made it together *with* time and time together *with* the world.<sup>10</sup>

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10 Herman Bavinck. **Our reasonable faith**. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977, p. 170.

## **God and creation**

So how can God relate to a creation which is spatial, temporal, physical, and so on? Because God is the creator of all spatiality, temporality, physicality, and so on. God can relate to creation because he brought it into being. He established the possibility for all the characteristics for the creation and they came into being in response to his creative word calling them into being. Let there be! And there was!

How can it be acceptable to speak of God, as Brimblecombe does, as limited in any way, even by the works of his own hands? If God is to be truly sovereign over his creation, that is, ruling over it with nothing impeding or restraining him in any way, then we cannot say that even God's own creation limits him. There is no power, no law, no necessity which imposes upon God, which exists alongside of God, or over which God has no control. There are only two kinds of reality, God himself, and the creation which he has brought into being and constantly upholds and governs by his word of power.

Thus creation is not a limitation on God. He has covenanted himself to it, binding himself to it in love and grace. But this is not a limitation on God. He cannot limit himself, or confine himself, even by his grace act of covenant promise. His covenant is freely made and freely sustained. To speak of the purposes of God as "necessary" objectives, as Brimblecombe does,<sup>11</sup> is to introduce into the acts of God a deterministic vein, that is, that God is somehow bound by his promises by something other than God's own faithfulness.

## **God and causality**

Brimblecombe argues that a "timeless" God could not create, since such creation is an action, that is, movement within time, and as soon as God begins to create, he is no more timeless but temporal. Creating, for Brimblecombe, is a "temporal act of bringing something into existence at a given point in time." From this he argues that creation is

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11 Mark Brimblecombe. "God and time." *Stimulus* 3 (1995) 3:37.

a causation with a temporal effect. For something to have a temporal effect requires temporal causation, since there can be no such thing as atemporal causation which causes a temporal effect. But why limit causality to temporality? Causality is also spatial and biological, kinematic and chemical, physical and psychological, to mention but a few different forms of causality.

So then, can a timeless, non-spatial, non-biological God bring about a temporal, spatial, biological creation? Certainly not if this is the way we wish to express the situation. God is not subject to, nor is he involved in, any causality of any kind, since causality is a purely creational phenomenon. God is not the “First Cause,” or the beginning of a chain of causality which results in effects within the creation. God is the author and originator of all causality.<sup>12</sup> The creation has causality as one of its creaturely characteristics, but God is not either a cause or subject to causality. Thus God did not create by “causing” “effects” but called creation into existence by his word. This word is not a “cause” since a cause is creaturely, God’s creating word is not creaturely.

So how can a non-temporal, non-spatial, non-causal God bring into being a creation that is temporal, spatial, causal? Because God has the power to do so. God is not bound by any possibilities, laws or restrictions, and has the freedom to create. That which he has created does not have to be “similar” to God, in fact cannot be, if we accept the Biblical teaching that there is nothing within the creation which is divine, nothing in God which is creaturely. There is no ontological continuity, no “chain of being” by which God can be seen as sharing something of our creationhood. If there is no ontological continuity, neither can there be any chain of causality. God did not “cause” the creation but created it by his divine power.

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12 This view is derived from the work of Herman Dooyeweerd. **A New Critique of Theoretical Thought**. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1954. Vol. 2, pp. 38-42. See also *ibid.* **Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular and Christian Options**. Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979, p. 212.

## God and predestination

Brimblecombe's views on predestination and God's foreknowledge are similarly rooted in his view of God as temporal. Thus he claims that texts such as Jeremiah 3:7 indicate a lack of accuracy in God's predictions. It is not as though God was unable to foresee what would happen, but in human terms, why would Judah want to be faithless to God after seeing what happened to Israel? The perplexity is not that the result is unforeseen, but that the result is completely imponderable. God is puzzled as to why Judah would continue to be faithless even after witnessing the exile of Israel. Surely anyone with a grain of sense would take notice and repent! But it was not so. Nor can Jeremiah 22:4-5 be seen as a "conditional prediction." God was not here making a conditional prediction, but a conditional **promise**. "If you do this then I will do this..."

God acts in covenant relationship with his people. He responds to our obedience or disobedience, to bless or to chasten us. God's sovereignty does not mean that he has predetermined everything, but has declared the purposes towards which he is working. No matter how we respond to God's law, he still guides the creation towards its goal. God therefore "repents" or changes his mind, not because his goal has changed, but because human responses require different responses from God to keep things moving to their appointed end. By saying that God changes, we are not claiming that he is subject to **temporal** change, but that God is **responding** to the world he made. The relationship we have with God is truly **relational** not **mechanical**, personal not automatic.

The whole tenor of Brimblecombe's discussion is an attempt to resolve the tension between contingency and necessity, determinism and freedom. The necessary-contingent polarity proposed by Brimblecombe is not a Biblical polarity but one which arises from an alien metaphysic imported into Scripture. Thus the confusion which results from attempting to discuss the future in terms of foreknown and predetermined events whose outcome is certain; foreknown and contingent possibilities, concerning which God can only predict the outcome with uncertainty, and unforeknown

contingent acts to which God must respond. This kind of scenario is fraught with difficulties.

Rather than maintaining, as Brimblecombe does, that the astrologists maintained the elements of necessity (fate) and contingency (fortune) from their Yahwistic faith, seeking a pagan substitute in gods of Fate and Fortune, we should see the very concepts of necessity and contingency when applied to God in this way as themselves pagan in origin. God is not bound by anything, nor can his ability to act be seen as contingent. God is not subject to creational categories, and necessity and contingency are applicable only within the creation order established and sustained by God **for creatures**.

The Greek concept of *pronoia* was not “essentially identical to the Old Testament understanding of providence as God’s guidance and provision.”<sup>13</sup> “*Pronoia*” was a pagan Stoic conception, and to see the Biblical teaching of God’s care and provision for his creation in the terms of “*pronoia*” is incorrect. While the NT authors did avoid this word no doubt because of the determinism that prevailed in connection with it, the early theologians were not so discerning. Providence in their conception became deterministic, and the church has struggled ever since with a pagan snake in the cradle (to use a pagan image).

### **Time and the incarnation**

Brimblecombe accepts Thomas Senior’s argument that “if temporal predicates apply to Jesus, and if Jesus is God the Son, then God the Son is temporal.” From this Brimblecombe concludes that this is inevitable if we are not to deny the union of divine and human in the one person of God the Son.<sup>14</sup> I find it incredible that such a statement could be made. Not only is it to confuse the human nature with the divine nature, both of which are united in the one person, which is what we mean by the incarnation, but it is to argue that all that is entailed by the human nature of Jesus is able to be transferred

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13 Mark Brimblecombe. “God and time.” *Stimulus* 3 (1995) 3:38.

14 Mark Brimblecombe. “God and time.” *Stimulus* 3 (1995) 3:36.

immediately to God. Jesus grew up from youth to manhood; did God mature in this way? Jesus was hungry and thirsty, cold, tired, and so on. But was God? Temporal predicates apply to Jesus, the incarnate Son, but they do not apply to the divine person of the Son, who remains God, without diminution or reduction. Not only that, to argue that the application of temporal predicates makes something temporal means that to apply temporal predicates to God the Son makes God himself temporal. The persons of God do not exist independently; we believe in only one God. So any argument which requires that God is subject to a creational limitation must be mistaken.

Since God relates from outside time to us who are within time, then God the Son remains always outside of time, while entering into time in Jesus and taking on all human characteristics, that is, temporality as well as others. But this does not mean that God the Son is temporal, because God the Son was not **changed into** Jesus, but in addition to his divine nature also took on human nature and experienced life as a fully human being. God did not become something he was not before, as Brimblecombe argues, but he took on what he previously did not have, human nature in the person of the incarnate Son.<sup>15</sup>

Brimblecombe suggests that in one sense God transcends our time, while it may be more correct to say that we are in God's time. This is the root of the problem which Brimblecombe is attempting to solve: there is only one time, and all reality, God and creation, is included within it. Is God in our time, or are we in his? This is the insoluble conundrum, because it begins with a false assumption and builds an edifice of sand that will not bear the weight placed on it. We are not in God's time, we are in creation's time. God is not in creation's time, he is the originator of that time. We cannot go "outside of time" to God, but nor does God have to come "inside of time" to relate to us. He can relate to us because he is our creator, he is not bound by any of

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15 See the important study by J C O'Neill. "The Word did not 'become' flesh." *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 82 (1991) 125-127. O'Neill argues that John 1:14 does not mean that the Word was "turned into" Jesus, which is how Brimblecombe interprets the incarnation, but that the Word was "born" or "made" flesh. "The Word did not turn into flesh, did not change its nature and become flesh, did not masquerade as flesh, and did not come on the scene as flesh." The Word continues to be the Word, and it was the Word who dwelt among us, and whose glory was seen. The "flesh" was subject to temporality while the Word remained outside of temporality.

the rules which pertain to the creation. That is not to say that God has not entered into our time in the incarnation, but that God did not enter **as God** into time, he entered into time as a human, subject to time, limited by time through taking on human nature for our salvation, but remaining always God.

### **Does time limit us?**

One of the features of this creation is its temporal character. The creation is bound to time, restricted within time, limited by time. But those limitations are in no way **negative**, they are essential for the creation as God made it to be, and thus part of what the creation is. This is still God's **very good** creation; its temporal character cannot be interpreted as a barrier or a hindrance to it. However, there are many ways in which human beings **experience** time negatively. We have all agonised over dental appointments, been bored with school-work, been terrified in the face of impending accident, or frustrated because time to spend on an enjoyable activity ends too soon, and so on. In such situations, time is experienced negatively: we cannot endure the speed with which time passes, either incredibly slowly or incredibly quickly.

But that negative experience of time has more to do with the sinfulness of the human condition than anything else. Of course time drags when we are bored, or races when we are enjoying ourselves; that is perfectly understandable. But much of our negative **experience** of time is because we are subject to the ultimate temporal limit: death itself. The time we have to enjoy life is limited, and thus the shortness of time for enjoyable activities is experienced in frustration because of the sense that all of us are inevitably running out of time, and we are unable to accomplish all that we would desire to do. But that is not the character of time, it is the nature of the human condition: limited not by time as such, but by death which brings to an end our time in life. But in eternity, unending time given by God, we will not have those limitations or frustrations, and time will be experienced positively. It is not **time** that causes our frustrations, but **death** which comes as the end of our time. The creation is always subject to time, even in the eschaton, where time will be without end, but still present nevertheless. However, time will then no longer be **experienced** negatively, as a limit

or a constriction. We will experience time as it was meant to be, the good gift of God to the creation.

Cree queries why physics only gives a static description of time, rather than a description of time more like our conscious experience of time. The reason is that physics grasps time in a “physical” way, whereas our experience of time is not “physical” only, but multi-faceted. The subjective slowness or speed of time, as for instance when we are bored or excited, is irrelevant for physics, which describes the laws relating to objects functioning in a particular way. But our experience of time is richer than that which can be explained by physics alone, or even by a large number of theoretical models (philosophical, theological, psychological, etc.), because we do not experience time in a theoretical way (mediated through analysis) but directly, as participants not observers.<sup>16</sup>

### **Summary and Conclusion**

God is not limited by time, nor is he “timeless” in the speculative Greek sense, because it makes no sense at all to speak of God as either subject to or exempt from creational categories and characteristics. God is the origin of all these, and as such remains apart from them while constantly upholding and enforcing them. His relationship with the creation is as its Creator, and as such is able to enter into relationships with that which he has created, while not being subject to the laws which hold for all that to which he relates. He is personal, not in the creaturely sense, but in so far as we can speak of God at all (which can be done only in human terms, as we have no others to use), God is a person with whom we have a personal relationship. That relationship takes place for us within our time on earth, but it is a relationship with God who is not within that time, although he relates to us in turn as creatures within time.

It has not been possible in a limited space to enter into dialogue with all of the ideas presented in Brimblecombe’s article. For instance, his discussion of predestination and

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16 For a detailed analysis of physics and time from a Christian perspective, see Marinus Dirk Stafleu. **Time and again. A systematic analysis of the foundations of physics.** Bloemfontein: Sacum Beperk, 1980.

God's foreknowledge needs addressing in much more detail, as it is rooted in his speculative approach that limits God to time.<sup>17</sup> While this article is necessarily limited, I trust that the ideas I have presented even in this fragmentary form will open up further discussion about this important topic.

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17 For a helpful discussion which follows the lines I have used see Gordon J Spykman, **Reformational Theology: A new paradigm for doing dogmatics**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992, pp. 507-512. Also *ibid.*, "A new look at election and reprobation." In: **Hearing and Doing: Philosophical essays dedicated to H Evan Runner**. Edited by John Kraay and Anthony Tol. Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979, pp. 171-191.