

# A Comparative Study of Cosmology revealed from Christology and Trinitarian approaches

(short version)

Victor Christianto

June 2015

# A Comparative Study of Cosmology revealed from Christology and Trinitarian approaches

(short version)

Victor Christiano,\* email: [victorchristianto@gmail.com](mailto:victorchristianto@gmail.com),

\* url: <http://independent.academia.edu/VChristianto>, [http://researchgate.net/profile/Victor\\_Christianto](http://researchgate.net/profile/Victor_Christianto)

## Introduction

This brief article is prepared as a short speech on the topic: Cosmology revealed from Christology and the Trinity. Given this very broad topic, so I made some assumptions to restrict, among them:

- a. I assume that the participants have an adequate background understanding of what is meant by Christology and the Trinity, so I will not repeat the basic definitions.
- b. although in general what is meant among physicists with cosmology is a branch of science that studies the formation and development of the universe, in the context of this discussion I will discuss cosmology as a conceptual framework of the universe, not necessarily these concepts should be confirmed empirically. (6)

This paper was made with the realization that in the last 7-8 decades has raised a variety of cosmological theories that do not mention at all about God, where the role of man be lost in the cosmic drama of space and time, and this has been a particular challenge for many Christians both lay and theologians who are still leaning in God as the Creator of the universe (3, p. 184). Indeed, some Christian thinkers assumed that modern cosmological theories such as the Big Bang are quite close to the biblical doctrine of creation, but not a few who think that the big bang actually replaces the role of God in creation with a random chance process triggered by fluctuations in vacuum. Others argue that the singular point where the universe began to expand need not be equated with the point of creation. Presumably these issues are more in depth than just maintaining the idea of six-day creation, like what most Creationists told us.

The situation with somewhat similar dilemma also arises in the question of the origin of life on Earth, where the classical view, as was proven by Louis Pasteur through experimentation, stating that the origin of life is life (biogenesis), while the latest scientific developments tend to support

the idea that life occurs spontaneously from simple chemical reactions, even cutting-edge theory explains the existence of a common ancestor called the Last Universal Common ancestor (LUCA).

Then how should our attitude as Christians in addressing the various dilemmas? This article is an expression of perceived concerns with respect to the direction of the authors of modern cosmology and dilemmas faced by Christians who want to uphold their faith, therefore the writer will try to look at cosmology from the perspective of the Trinity and Christology.

Basically the author agrees with Norris, Jr., that it is necessary to develop a new cosmological paradigm which can provide a response to the modern cosmology (3, p. 185). Dialogue between cosmology and the Bible (Scripture) is possible and necessary, particularly if we cite the thinking of 6th century Christologists such as St. Maximus the Confessor. According to Paul M. Blowers, Maximus's theology enables us to do: "*scripturalizing*" of the cosmos and "*cosmologizing*" of the Scripture. (3, p. 199)

### **Trinitarian approach to Cosmology**

First of all, it must be recognized that there is no well-established concept of Trinitarian cosmology, let alone that has reached the stage of empirical confirmation. Neville also wrote that the idea of the Trinity is always rooted in revelation and speculation at the same time (1). The starting point of the concept of the Trinity is Christology, and a Christology thesis is rooted in the belief that Jesus is the Son of God because He is the Word made flesh (1, p.9). From this it can be drawn a basic idea that the doctrine of the Trinity was originally stems from Christology, particularly the New Testament Christology.

Thus if we read the Old Testament from the New Testament lens, we see that since in Gen. 1: 1-2 already called about the role of God (the Father), the Spirit of God was hovering and also the word of God with power (dabar YHWH). If only we can ignore that Genesis was written by a monotheistic Jews, then the mention of these three actors is sufficient for us to say that the forerunner of the Trinitarian cosmology has existed since Genesis. 1. According to the St. Basil, God the Father is the "primordial cause of everything that has been made," the Son is "the operative cause," and the Holy Spirit is "the perfecting cause." see (2) p. 250.

Indeed, since the fathers of the church, including Irenaeus and Aquinas, Christians generally assumed that the creation of the Bible is the creation of nothing (creation ex nihilo). Irenaeus for

example, writes that there is one God the Father is one God, who created everything from nothing through his Word. He repeatedly wrote about the Father who has created with His two hands (29). Of course what is meant by the two hands are the Word and the Holy Spirit. Although Irenaeus explains these concepts to read Gen. 1: 1-4,26,27 but of course the views were rooted in the apostolic teachings of the risen Christ. In other words, the trinitarian view of Irenaeus actually stems from Christology. One more thing that should be noted, that the term Trinity itself is not yet known in the second century AD (Irenaeus period), because the term was emerging around the third and fourth centuries. So presumably not appropriate for reading Irenaeus from the standpoint of the development of thinking one or two centuries later (34). In a later development, few people distinguish between social and latin Trinitarianism, which essentially are as follows: (35):

- a. Social Trinitarianism: "three distinct and discrete persons." But this may be more suitable called tritheism, although there are some theologians who see this concept remains as monotheism. For example: Plantinga, (?)
- b. Latin Trinitarianism: "three persons in one substance." This model is further developed into a model of psychology by Augustine of Hippo in his De Trinitate (37).

Just for a side note, in a modern version of this psychology model can be linked with the theory of "plural self" (38). Plural self-concept has been studied seriously in modern psychology (39). That is, the human being as God's image also has a complex identity (plural), and that fact is an indirect hint that monotheism complex (Trinity) is more relevant than the simple monotheism. However, Karl Rahner has addressed some of the problems that exist with the psychological model of the Trinity, and he prefers to use the term "hypothesis." See (38a). Furthermore, for a discussion of modern thinking about the Trinity in relation to postmodernism, see for example (18).

Back to the biblical narrative of creation, the actual theory of creation out of nothing is not the only possibility, because there are several possible alternative interpretations of the Genesis 1 narrative. See for example (13):

- creation from 'primordial chaos': if "tohu wa bohu" can be interpreted as chaotic and formless.
- creation from a kind of primordial fluid
- continuous creation (creatio continuans): Robert Millikan
- cyclic universe: Roger Penrose

- continuously expanding universe since infinite time: Fred Hoyle
- and one more possibility: creation without singularity.

### **Some Problems with the Big Bang model**

If one can develop a theory in accordance with cosmological observation data but without involving the singularity hypothesis, then it means the big bang (big bang) become irrelevant. From a theological perspective, Aquinas argued that the existence of God does not implicitly suggest that the age of the universe is limited, and this position is supported for example by Arthur Peacocke and Ian Barbour, see (6). In other words, the big bang theory is not a necessary condition for evidence of the presence of God.

The author himself found the idea of the Big Bang bit corny, even if Georges Lemaitre connected it to the "creation ex nihilo." Although there are many writers who have been denied the big bang theory, such as Fred Hoyle, Geoffrey Burbidge and Halton Arp, here the author would only give 3 refutations by elementary logic, namely:

- a. First: There is no sane person would build a house by blowing up a pile of bricks with a grenade. In essence, very, very small chance that all the order and structure that we observe in the universe is the result of purely random process. In other words, the big bang models have serious logical flaw.
- b. second: Careful calculations show that if the big bang happened because of fluctuations in the vacuum (Vacuum Fluctuation), then the implication is the cosmological constant would have a value of more than  $10^{10}$  times greater than the observed value now. So it is clear that the assumption of many scientists that the big bang was triggered by fluctuations in vacuum would be simply an unfounded assumption. (Indeed, lately the hypothesis that the big bang came from vacuum fluctuations much to gain followers, especially those who argue that the universe started from nothing; but the essence of their argument is that the Universe did not require a Creator or God, see ref. (40)).
- c. Big Bang Theory has a primary assumption is that the universe began from a very small primordial egg. This hypothesis of cosmic egg was first proposed by Georges Lemaitre, based on the findings of Edwin Hubble, an American astronomer. If the law of Hubble is extrapolated backwards it will be found the starting point of the universe. The starting point is what is called a singularity or big bang (15). The question is: what if it can be shown that the singularity is not

necessary to explain astronomical data?

Unfortunately, the big bang theory is already widely accepted as an indisputable fact, or in terms of Lakatos: research program (research program). As a result, almost all the paper that criticized the theory will necessarily be rejected in any scientific journal, because it does not comply with accepted research program as a consensus. It shows the repression of the authority of science worldwide; see ref. (15). Even Fred Hoyle once called the big bang as "religious fundamentalism"(6). For further discussion, for example the readers can see a website by Eric Lerner: [www.bigbangneverhappened.org](http://www.bigbangneverhappened.org)

However, thankfully lately there are also some cosmologists who propose cosmological models without singularities. Of their courage to break down a well-worn theory should be appreciated. See example ref. (16).

In the context of Gen. 1, the universe could be considered to be eternal, but the earth and the solar system were created from a kind of primordial oceans. Theologically, God always be dynamically Trinity in eternity, and this topic has been appointed as the dissertation by Adrian Langdon (19).

Another approach taken rampant among experimental physicists is trying to look at what happened before the big bang, though of course the levels of speculation this approach is quite large (17).

### **Christology approach to Cosmology**

One of the most striking things in the Hymn of Jesus is the Logos who became flesh. Although there are similarities between these notions to the concept of Logos as a rule or immutable laws that govern the various changes in the universe (such as Heraclitus, the Stoics, and Philo), there are many significant differences between them (3, p. 186-287).

In the Hymn of Jesus, the Logos is personal, consubstantial with the Father, begotten by the Father, and incarnated into human and descended into the world and entered into human history. So instead of a human becomes divine, but instead of a divine being human. Regarding the question of whether the worship of Jesus as the Son of God, Kurios, and the Logos was emerging at a later stage, or indeed a unique original belief of the early Church, can be seen in the work of James Dunn (43).

Although the view of the cosmos in the light of Christology is most clearly evident in John 1: 1-

14, but there's also Paul's writings that discuss the cosmic Christology, for example Col. 1: 15-17. Because it is alleged that the cosmic Christology of John's version has a closeness in conceptual with cosmic version of Paul's Christology. In fact, according to John Gibbs, Cosmic Christology is at the core of Paul's conception of the divinity of Jesus, which is no less important than the theology of the cross. It should be noted that Paul's concept of the divinity of Jesus is not from Hellenism, but rooted in the tradition of the early church itself. The combined evidence from various sources indicates that the work of the cosmic Christ is not less essential to the Christology of Paul than the redemptive work of Christ, see (4, p. 479).

The question then is: is it possible to develop Christological Cosmology from a theological-scientific discourse into an emancipatory science?

In my opinion, there are some things that can be drawn from the Hymn of Jesus (Jn. 1:14), of which:

- a. The Word and God the Father has an eternal existence and unity. The implication is the Word and the Father's identities are relational.
- b. The Word is the source of life for humans.
- c. The Word is the light of the world, and the darkness can not beat it.
- d. The Word was already willing to go down into the world and into the meat (sarx), which is Jesus Christ.
- e. The Word of God is very involved in the process of creation of the universe (cosmos). And without Him nothing is finished in all of creation.

Of those phrases, then obviously there is a clash between the Word that is bright with a dark world. So the assumption of dialectical history is not true that says that advances in human civilization happened as a result of multiple-collisions between thesis and antithesis (Hegel). The truth is always conflict because the eternal dark world tends to reject the Light. Thus, the progress of civilization occurs because the Light itself which gives light unto the darkness of the world, so the world is gradually transformed into increasingly bright. This may conceivably be similar to the process of *diffusion* or *osmosis*.

The clear implication here is that those who were chosen to be the children of God are also called to take part in the world, with a variety of functions, among others:

- creation functions: creating order back,
- enlighten the darkness of the world who do not know God,

- restore order amid the chaos of the world (returning order),
- a witness for Christ, the Word
- sew dark world and full of suffering (rather close to the principle of "tikkun olam" which held the Jewish community).

### **Concluding remarks and implications**

1. Although there are differences, both Trinitarian and Christological approach can be a starting point for developing a biblical approach to cosmology. Cosmological models which are built from Trinitarian or Christology have practical-ethical implications, while contrasting big bang cosmology or its derivatives which tend to put a man in a position of helplessness in the midst of the cosmic stage.
  2. Both approach (Trinitarian and Christological) are very potential to be developed further into the starting point of the dialogue in the context of religious pluralism.
  3. In this paper there is nothing new about the Trinity and Christology.
  4. Although the author is not advocating Social Gospel (Social Gospel), but at least the church can begin to actively build intense communication with the public, for example by means of open dialogue on theological issues in the public sphere. A dialogic interaction can emerge opportunity to exchange an understanding of the Trinity, Christology and others with other religious communities. Such a dialogue should be taken though certainly not make everyone converted in one go. In Jn. 7:14-8:59 narrated that Jesus also often communicated openly with the Jews even if the results are disappointing.
  5. Now, a variety of online media means providing ample scope in that direction.
- In this paper, the author only had time to explain some basic ideas, in the hope of triggering ideas deeper by the readers. What is your opinion?

Version 1.0: 7 juni 2015, pk. 3:36; version 1.1: 9 juni 2015, pk. 7:29, version 1.2: 15 juni 2015 pk. 00:51, version 1.3: 21 juni 2015, pk. 22:36, version 1.4: 23<sup>rd</sup> june 2015, 17:04

VC, email: [victorchristianto@gmail.com](mailto:victorchristianto@gmail.com)

### **Main references:**

- (1) Robert C. Neville. Creation and the Trinity. Theological Studies Vol. 30 (March 1969), 3-26.  
Url: <http://www.robertcumingsneville.com/robert-neville-articles>
- (2) Christos S. Voulgaris. The Holy Trinity in Creation and Incarnation. The Greek Orthodox theological review, vol. 42/3-4, 1997. url: <http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr>
- (3) Russel Bradner Norris, Jr. Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm. Pro Ecclesia vol. v no. 2
- (4) John G. Gibbs. Pauline Cosmic Christology and ecological crisis. Journal of Biblical Literature Vol. 90, no. 4 (Dec. 1971), pp. 466-479. Url: [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)
- (5) Kathleen P. Rushton. The Cosmology of John 1:1-14 and its implications for ethical action in this ecological age. Colloquium 45/2, 2013. url: <http://brisbaneansatz.org/2014/02/16/colloquium>

### **Secondary references:**

- (6) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Cosmology and Theology. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmology-theology/>
- (7) Karlina Supelli dkk. Dari kosmologi ke dialog. Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 2010.
- (8) Jurgen Habermas. The Theory of Communicative Action, 2 vols. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.
- (9) Roger Bolton. Habermas's theory of communicative action and the theory of social capital.
- (10) Maureen Junker-Kenny. Habermas and Theology. New York: T&T Clark International, 2011. Lihat chapter 1, p. 1-40
- (11) Nicholas Adams. Habermas and Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- (12) V-M. Karkkainen. Trinitas dan Pluralisme Agama. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2013.
- (13) David A. Leeming. Creation myths of the world, second edition. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010.
- (14) Eugenie C. Scott. Evolution vs. Creationism: An Introduction. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- (15) Jerry Bergman. A brief history of intolerance in modern cosmology. Answers Research Journal 2 (2009): 1-9. Url: <http://answersingenesis.org>
- (16) Ovidiu Christinel Stoica. The Friedmann-Lemaitre-Robertson-Walker big bang singularities are well behaved. Arxiv: 1112.4508 (2011). Lihat juga (16a) E.I. Guendelman, creating the universe without a singularity and the cosmological constant problem. Arxiv: 1306.4977 (2013)
- (17) "The cosmos - before the big bang," New Scientist magazine, issue 2601, april 2007
- (18) Wayne J. Hankey. Theoria versus poesis: Neoplatonism and Trinitarian difference from Aquinas, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion, John Zizoulas. Modern Theology 15:4, october 1999
- (19) Adrian E.V. Langdon. God the eternal contemporary: Trinity, Eternity and time in Karl Barth's church dogmatics. PhD dissertation to McGill University, 2008.
- (20) Mary Catherine Hilkert. The Mystery of Persons in communion: The Trinitarian theology of Catherine Mowry LaCugna. Word and World, vol. xviii, no. 3, summer 1999.
- (21) Irene Ludji. God as sound-consciousness. Indonesian Journal of Theology Vol. 2 No. 1 (2014), url: <https://journalteologi.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/04-ijt-2-1-2014-god-as-sound-consciousness4.pdf>
- (22) David W. Hall. Calvin di ranah publik: demokrasi liberal, hak asasi, dan kebebasan sipil. Surabaya: Penerbit Momentum, 2009.
- (23) The Holberg Prize Seminar 2005. Religion in the public Sphere. Ludbig Holberg Semina Fund, Seminar report, 2005.
- (24) Jurgen Habermas and Christian Lenhardt. A postscript to knowledge and human interests? Philosophy of the social sciences 1973, 3:157. Url: <http://pos.sagepub.com>
- (25) Jurgen Habermas. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.
- (26) Jurgen Habermas, Religion in the Public Sphere. Url: <http://www.sandiego.edu>
- (27) Ljubisa Mitrovic. New social paradigm: Habermas's theory of communicative action. Facta Universitatis, Philosophy and Sociology, vol. 2, no. 6/2, 1999, 217-223

- (28) S. Susen. Critical Notes on Habermas's theory of the Public sphere. *Sociological Analysis*, 5(1), pp. 37-62. Url: <http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/1101>
- (29) Stig Hjarvard. The Mediatization of Religion: a theory of the media as an agent of religious change. Paper presented to the 5th Intl. Confr. On Media, Religion, and Culture: Mediating religion in the context of multicultural tension. The Sigtuna Foundation, Sweden, 6-9 July, 2006.
- (30) Mark Chaves and Philip S. Gorski. Religious Pluralism and Religious Participation. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 27 (2001), pp. 261-281. [Www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)
- (31) Veit Bader. Religious diversity and democratic institutional pluralism. *Political Theory* 2003, 31, 265. Url: <http://ptx.sagepub.com>
- (32) Chad Meister. *Introducing Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Chapter IV: Cosmological arguments for God's existence.
- (33) Robert Letham. *Allah Trinitas*. Surabaya: Penerbit Momentum, 2011. h. 96-97
- (34) M.C. Steenberg. *Irenaus on creation: The Cosmic Christ and the Saga of redemption*. Leiden: Brill, 2008. P. 63-64
- (35) Vincent Brummer. *Atonement, Christology and the Trinity: making sense of Christian doctrine*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005. P. 97-107.
- (36) Gregory A. Barker & Stephen E. Gregg. *Jesus beyond Christianity: the classic texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- (37) Russell L. Friedman. *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. P. 52-56
- (38) Leon Turner. *Theology, Psychology and the Plural self*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008;
- (38a) Karl Rahner. *The Trinity*. London: Burns & Oates, reprinted 2001, p. 115-118.
- (39) Achmad Chusairi. Diri-jamak (plural self): diri dalam tinjauan psikologi diskursif. *Jurnal Insan* vol. 12 no. 01, april 2010 (ringkasan tesis di Fakultas Psikologi UGM, Yogyakarta)
- (40) Natalie Wolchover. What's the total energy in the universe? url: <http://www.livescience.com/33129-total-energy-universe-zero.html>
- (41) According to story, one student came to Einstein and asked him: "The questions in this year's exam is the same with last years." "True," replied Einstein, "but this year all answers are different." see <http://www.julianrubin.com/einsteinjokes.html>
- (42) Ajat Sudrajat. *Jurgen Habermas: Teori Kritis dengan paradigma komunikasi*. Url: <http://staff.uny.ac.id/system/files/penelitian/Ajat%20Sudrajat,%20Prof.%20Dr.%20%20M.Ag./Jurgen%20Habermas%20-%20Teori%20Kritis%20dengan%20Paradigma%20Komunikasi.pdf>
- (43) James D.G. Dunn. *Did the first Christians worship Jesus? New Testament evidence*. London: SPCK, 2010.