



Goahead Theological Seminary & College

9 East Homestead Ave. Palisades Park, NJ 07650 in USA

1-201-852-3600 / 1-917-530-1991 / gtstheology@gmail.com

Theology

Theology is a major field of study within Christian theology, encompassing the biblical and theological study of the Christian God as revealed in the Bible. It deals with the essence and work of the triune God.

Topics in Theology

The following are essential areas of theology in Christian theology:

- The Essence of God
- The Revealed Definition of God
- Arguments for God's Existence
- The Names of God
- The Attributes of God:
 - Incommunicable Attributes (Absolute Attributes)
 - Communicable Attributes (Universal Attributes)
- The Trinity
- The Works of God
 - Creation
 - Providence

The Essence of God

The essence of God is a discussion of what the true God is like.

The Concept of God in Modern Theologians

- Even today, the concept of God is not fully recognized in the explanations of modern theologians.
- Barth - Using dialectical methods, he asserts a transcendent God who cannot be known (incognitio). He speaks of the God of the Wholly Other..



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- Bruner - Emphasizes transcendence as absolute personality and absolute Other.
- Bultmann - God is our statement about human life. When someone speaks of God, they are speaking to themselves. This is understood from an existentialist perspective.
- Tillich - God is a symbolic being and the basis of existence.
- Paul Van Buren - Like Altizer, who, influenced by postmodernism, argued for the "death of God," does not view the concept of God as a historical event, but rather argues that it is meaningless from a linguistic perspective.
- Moltmann - He says that it is a future being that reveals itself in the form of a promise for the future, a being before the world.
- Wolfhard Pannenberg - He says that it is a universal historical transcendence and that it appears as God at the end of history..

Criticism and Application

Modern theologians have not grounded their understanding of God in Scripture from the beginning, resulting in metaphysical, existential, and secular-historical approaches. While it may seem counterintuitive to consider how helpful their concept of God is, it does offer insight into how modern people perceive God and what arguments they tend to embrace. However, we can selectively examine their arguments through the lens of Scripture and, if they prove helpful, utilize them.

Knowledge of God

Finite humans cannot possess complete knowledge of the infinite God. However, humans are not completely ignorant of God. For, although God has not revealed everything, He has clearly revealed what is necessary for human salvation through the Bible. Therefore, even if humans claim that God is incomprehensible, they can never accept agnosticism. That is, they can possess partial knowledge within the scope permitted by God. This knowledge, though partial, is true and genuine.



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A complete understanding of God is impossible. In Luther's words, He is a "hidden God" (*deus absconditus*). The Scholastics also distinguished between nature (*quid*, God's essence) and attributes (*qualis*), arguing that while humans cannot know what God is like in His essential being, they can know His nature and essence when He reveals Himself in His divine attributes. In other words, there are limits to our understanding of who God truly is. "Can you search out the mysteries of God? Can you fathom the infinity of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7). Isaiah asks, "Is there anyone in the likeness of God? Or is there anything that resembles him?" (Isaiah 40:18). However, humans can recognize God. They can understand the revealed God (*deus revelatus*). We can have true knowledge of the true God by comparing it to the partial knowledge of God revealed through the Word he gave. Jesus said that those who possess eternal life know God. "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). The finite cannot grasp the infinite (*finitum non possit capere infinitum*). Calvin argues that God's divinity completely transcends all human senses, making it impossible for us to understand His essence. True knowledge of Him can only be gained through special revelation, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

Innate or Innate Knowledge

Humans' capacity for general knowledge of God develops spontaneously when they come into contact with revelation under normal circumstances. Knowledge of God can increase through the sanctifying activity of reason under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The seed of religion (*religionis semen*) planted in humans when they were created in the image of God gives rise to this knowledge under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Acquired Knowledge

This knowledge, derived from general and special revelation, arises as a result of a conscious and continuous pursuit of God's knowledge. It is acquired through a process of sense, reflection, argument, and discussion, and requires the voluntary inquiry and effort of the human will. Through God's self-revelation, we can possess true knowledge of God's existence.

The revealed definition of God:



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- Pure Spirit;
- Personal;
- Infinitely perfect;
- Completely united

Arguments for the Existence of God

1. Historically, there have been several types of arguments for God's existence. Thomas Aquinas's Five Ways, based on Aristotle's philosophy, is a particularly famous example. None of these arguments definitively prove God's existence. However, regenerate people can benefit from these arguments through special revelation, the Bible.
2. Ontological Argument - Since humans are imperfect and interconnected, something considered perfect, namely God, must exist.
3. Cosmological Argument - If we continue to investigate causes through the causal relationships of nature, we cannot help but acknowledge God as the first and ultimate cause.
4. Teleological Argument - Since nature possesses an order adapted to its purpose, God must exist as the designer of all of nature. This is called the natural theological argument..
5. Moral Argument - God can be considered the source of moral laws that forcefully demand our implementation.
6. Historical Argument - God is said to exist because all peoples possess a universal phenomenon of religiosity (the seed of religion), a feeling toward God that manifests through rituals such as worship and sacrifice.
7. Aesthetic Argument - It can be a truth in art, a method of proving the existence of God through beauty.
8. The Intelligent Design Argument - It asserts that God exists because all things came into existence according to God's intention, that is, the design of an intelligent being.



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9. The Analogy of Faith - This is the method by which we come to believe in God's existence through the work of the Holy Spirit, only when we accept the Bible as the Word of God.

God's Names

God reveals aspects of His character through various names.

1. Basic Old Testament Names

1) El, Elohim

"El" is the simplest name, meaning "the strong one," and represents God as a powerful being. Meanwhile, "Elohim" is the most universal name for God, and the plural form of this name's ending is a majestic plural, emphasizing that He is an object of absolute reverence, incomparable to any other pagan god..

2) Yahweh (Jehovah)

This proper noun, meaning "I Am," is used exclusively for God (Exodus 3:14). This name emphasizes God's self-existence, holiness, and eternal immutability. It is particularly used in the context of God's covenant with the Israelites..

3) Adonai

This name, meaning "Lord," is used for humans as well, but when used for God, it refers to the owner or ruler of all creation, including humans..

2. Compound Old Testament Names 1) Compounds of El

(1) El Shaddai - Almighty God (Genesis 17:1; 28:3).

(2) El Elon - Most High God (Genesis 14:19).

(3) El Olam - Everlasting God (Isaiah 40:28).

(4) El Roi - God Who Sees (Genesis 16:13).

2) Compounds of Yahweh

1. Yahweh-jireh - Yahweh provides (Gen. 22:14).

2. Yahweh-nissi - Yahweh is my banner (Ex. 17:15).

3. Yahweh-shalom - Yahweh is my peace (Judges 6:24).

4. Yahweh-rapha - Yahweh heals (Ex. 15:26).



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5. Yahweh-shammah - Yahweh is here (Ezek. 48:35).
6. Yahweh Tsidkenu – Yahweh, our Restorer (Jeremiah 23:6).
7. Yahweh Roi – Yahweh is my Shepherd (Psalm 23:1).
8. Yahweh Tsevaot – Yahweh Almighty (1 Samuel 1:3).
9. Yahweh Makeh – Yahweh who destroys (Ezekiel 7:8).
10. Yahweh El Gemulot – Yahweh is a God of vengeance (Jeremiah 51:56).
11. Yahweh Meqadishkem – God who sanctifies you (Exodus 31:13)).

3. New Testament Names

1) Theos (Θεός)

This is a translation of the Old Testament word "El" or "Elohim." However, while "El" or "Elohim" was primarily used in relation to Israel as a national religious community, this word is used in relation to individual believers.

2) Kyrios (Κύριος)

Meaning "Lord," it is identical to the Old Testament word "Adonai." In the New Testament, it is used more often for Jesus Christ than for the Father.

3) Pater (Πατέρα)

Meaning "father," it refers to God the Father, who provides spiritual and physical support to individual believers (Matthew 6:6; Romans 8:15).

Attributes of God

The attributes of God are God's unique qualities (characteristics) discussed in Christian theology. Many Reformed theologians distinguish between communicable attributes (characteristics humans can possess) and incommunicable attributes (characteristics humans cannot possess). Donald McLeod argues that this distinction is artificial and potentially flawed.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism lists the attributes of God as follows: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." The Westminster Larger Catechism states that God's attributes are incomprehensible, omnipresent, and omniscient. However, some criticize this view as unchristian.



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Incommunicable Attributes

Independence or Self-Existence

God exists on his own, without the need for any other created being. He is independent and self-existent.

Eternity

God's eternity concerns his existence beyond time. In Psalm 90:2, Wayne Grudem states that God has no beginning, no end, no successive moments of his existence. He sees all time qualitatively and vividly. However, God sees events in time and actions within time. The book of Revelation refers to him as the Alpha and the Omega. God's eternity is the concept of his infinity..

Immutability,

Infinity,

Omniscience,

Omnipresence,

Omnipotence



Shared Attributes

- God's knowledge
- God's wisdom
- God's goodness
- God's love
- God's holiness
- God's righteousness
- God's truthfulness
- God's sovereignty
- God's mercy - God's mercy is at the heart of Christianity. Exodus 34:5-6 states that Yahweh God is a God of mercy and grace.

God's Creation



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Korean theologian Dr. Seung-gu Lee asserts the following:

- **Creation**

From the perspective of the creeds and confessions of faith, it is explained as follows.

Those who presented the creeds of the ancient church and the confessions of faith during the Reformation can be said to have basically meant the following when they said they believed in creation: ① The triune God created heaven and earth and all things in them from nothing. ② He created by the Word. In explaining this, most church fathers and reformers said that the world was created through the Son. ③ God gave all creatures their existence, form, appearance, and various functions so that they might ultimately serve Him. ④ By connecting this with providence, God maintains and governs all things He created through His eternal providence and infinite power, so that they exist for the benefit of humanity and, in turn, enable humanity to serve Him. Up to this point, all who acknowledge creation would accept it. However, ancient creeds and Reformation confessions add one more: ⑤ Accepting this as the Bible says is truly believing in creation, while not accepting it as the Bible says is not truly accepting creation. This is because the preceding four were considered teachings on creation derived from the Bible.

The Implications of Accepting Creation

First, let's consider what those who accept ① through ④ above actually believe and assert.

First, those who truly accept creation in this sense must affirm that only God existed before God's creation. Those who believe in creation but also deny that there was such a thing as God's creation, or that it is theoretically possible but not practically possible, or that the Creator and the created world are both nature—for example, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*—cannot truly be considered to believe in divine creation. Therefore, it is said that the uncreated, triune God, who created the entire world, existed alone in trinitarian communion before creation, and that the triune God created heaven and earth and all that is in them according to His own decree and at the time He saw fit. This is the Christian theistic understanding of creation.

Traditional Western philosophical theism (classic theism) advocates not yet considering God as a Trinity. While some argue that this is true, some actually consider God as a Trinity, while others argue that we should abandon the



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concept of the Trinity altogether. A significant number of these advocates insist on leaving the concept of the Trinity out of the equation. Therefore, we call theism that clearly defines the Trinity from the outset "Christian theism."

Many today are cautious about this approach or consider it too premature. It must be emphasized first that such an approach leads to various misunderstandings about creation and ultimately distorts our understanding of God. Since we have already clearly established our belief in the Trinity, we must clearly define the Trinity's creation.

Although it's difficult to express in words due to the limitations of our language, we must say that there was a "before creation," a time when only the infinite and profound loving communion of the Triune God existed. To reject this is ultimately to reject the creation described in the Bible.

Therefore, when the Bible often refers to "heaven and earth" (天地), it doesn't simply mean heaven and earth, but heaven and earth and everything within them—the entire universe. To believe that God created everything at the time of creation is to acknowledge creation. Even time and space must be viewed as having been created at the very beginning. Otherwise, time and space would be outside of creation, existing before God's creation. Therefore, rather than the Kantian framework that regards this as a mere framework for our understanding and therefore as something that exists outside of things, and that we always think within the framework of time and space when we try to think, it would be better to maintain the Augustinian understanding that God created this world cum tempore (cum tempore). Truly acknowledging the triune God's creation ex nihilo (creatio ex nihilo) is the starting point of Christian faith in creation.

Second, while we've already discussed the creation of the Triune God, we must clearly define the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit in creation. To simplify this, we must remember that the Apostles' Creed states, "The Father Almighty created." This statement should not be interpreted as implying that the Father alone created. Scripture clearly states that the Son, along with the Father, participated in the creation process. For example, the Gospel of John states, "All things were made through him (i.e., the Logos, the Word, as John 1:1 speaks of), and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). Verse 10 also states, "The world was made through him." Paul also clearly states after mentioning Christ, "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16).



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The fact that the Holy Spirit also played a crucial role in creation is evident in the verse, "You send out your Spirit; they are created; you renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30). Furthermore, most people understand the "Spirit of God" (Genesis 1:2) mentioned in Genesis 1 as a connection between the Holy Spirit's reference to creation and His work in creation. Therefore, the Son, traditionally referred to as the Word, has been described as the objective principle of creation, while the Holy Spirit has been described as the subjective principle of creation.

Third, we must clearly understand that all things in this world were created to serve the Triune God, the Creator. God is the ultimate purpose. A famous verse worth mentioning here is, "From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:36). All things originated from the Lord, came into being on this earth through the Lord, and ultimately return to the Lord. Some misinterpret this passage, mistaking it for a form of pantheism or its modern counterpart, panentheism, and develop similar ideas. However, again, this is based on a misinterpretation. Everything in this world did not originally exist in itself; it came into being through God's creation. Thus, the contingency of all things in this world is emphasized in comparison to the necessity of God's existence. This does not mean that everything in this world came into existence by chance. Rather, it is a way of expressing, since ancient times, that God is a necessary being, whereas we exist by God's plan and creation, and are therefore not necessary beings. Furthermore, the statement that all things in this world exist for a short time and then return to God should not be interpreted to mean that they belong to God. God will remain God, and creation will remain creation. There is no such thing as creation entering and joining God. Therefore, we must not accept any form of panentheism.

In this world, beings with diverse forms, existences, and aspects are all acknowledged for their diversity, multiplicity, and uniqueness. However, humans, in particular, must be understood as beings who bear responsibility before God (this is where ethical discussions, which seek to understand our responsibilities in light of God's intention in creating us, become possible). And the fact that all things lead to God implies that they are ultimately judged and evaluated by God. So, after saying this, Paul adds, "To him be glory forever. Amen." Whether this world, including us, truly glorifies God is a testament to its proper functioning.

Fourth, to truly understand Christian creationism, one must acknowledge that God governs all things created. Deism, the belief that God created and then simply left things to follow the laws of nature, is difficult to accept as an



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acceptance of Christian creationism. Also, saying that providence is a process of creation and that there was no process of creation by God in the beginning is not Christian creationism.

Trinity

While the theological term "Trinity" does not exist in the Bible, the biblical basis for its meaning is abundant in both the Old and New Testaments. Theologically, the Trinity is defined as God being one in essence, yet existing as three persons (three hypostases, three persons)—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—equal in glory, authority, and power. The Trinity appears in various ways in the Old Testament, including in the plural form of God, as Jehovah and His Spirit, as God and Lord, and in Isaiah 53. The only place where each of the three persons of the Trinity appears in the New Testament is in 2 Corinthians 13:13, where the Trinity is clearly presented in the statement, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Of course, the term "Trinity" was used later in the church. Furthermore, most Christians, regardless of sect, defend the concept of the Trinity, asserting that it is indirectly implied in the Gospel of John and elsewhere (the frequent use of the expression "Father and Son are one"). The doctrine of the Trinity was first established as an official Christian doctrine when the Roman Catholic Church established it as orthodox doctrine at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 and the Council of Constantinople in 381.

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity began with the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ, the Son of God. Among Christian scriptures, the Gospel of John addresses the concept of the Trinity by explaining the preexistence of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit. In terms of ideological concepts, the early Christian context of Judaism, polytheism, and Gnosticism demanded a new explanation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent as the Son of God, who existed on earth, and who remains with Him after His crucifixion and resurrection—the Lord confessed by Christianity. In particular, the Gnostic emanation theory and the Marcionist dualism were events that shook Christology, necessitating a theological concept to resolve these issues. This new concept was commonly developed and logically systematized at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and the Council of Constantinople in 381, establishing the Trinity as the concept of the consubstantial nature of Jesus and the Father. Arius, who denied the Trinity by challenging the idea of "Son and Father of one substance" of the same



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essence, which had been accepted among the Church Fathers even before the Council of Nicaea, was excommunicated by the First Council of Nicaea.

God's Work

- Decree
- Predestination
- Creation
- Providence