

GOD IN CHRISTIANITY THE GOD REVEALED IN BIBLICAL HISTORY AND IN JESUS CHRIST

ARTICLE

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PRELIMINARIES

(1): Which Christianity?

“God” is a concept that can carry many different definitions. The purpose of this article is to succinctly articulate the Christian doctrine of the nature of God. Immediately we are presented with a challenge: Which Christian perspective within the Christian theological tradition is here to be represented? Famously, C.S. Lewis attempted in his own way to articulate the common core of Christian teaching that is shared across the major branches of Christianity—Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism—with a catch-all phrase, “mere Christianity.” One might say, “A bare-bones Christianity.” “Mere Christianity” aimed to set aside all the intramural debates between these branches. Lewis limited his presentation to only what was agreed by all. That is not exactly the aim of this article.

The scope of this article is not to represent all Christian denominations but to present in particular a Protestant Christian view of God—or rather, what Protestants believe to be a Biblical view of God. The reason for this caveat is not because there would be a significant amount of disagreement between Christians on such a foundational aspect of theology as the nature of God himself but because beneath the doctrinal differences, there is a more foundational difference between these branches of Christianity with respect to the source for one’s doctrinal beliefs. It is a difference on matters of authority and epistemology.

ABSTRACT

In this article, the grand picture of the God of Biblical Christianity will be presented. Some preliminary questions will be discussed about identifying the perspective that will be presented from within a Christian theological framework. Christian theology is fundamentally text-based as a religion. Hence, the discussion of a Christian perspective on interpretation is another essential preliminary that must be addressed at the outset. The Bible teaches that God is revealed and known through his own activity in the world, and as those events are recorded in the Biblical record. A four-part metanarrative of the Bible will be surveyed in order to elucidate the conception of God as revealed through his creation and his work of redemption, which culminates in the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

(2): Whose Interpretation?

Following the cry of the Renaissance with the slogan *ad fontes* (Latin for: ‘to the source’), the Protestant Reformation represented at its foundations a recovery and reaffirmation of the Bible—the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments—as the sole infallible and final authority for defining doctrine. This means that the source for this theological viewpoint draws upon the Bible first and foremost and not primarily upon subsequent creeds and confessions, which are themselves fallible—even if they have proved helpful—and they are only to be accepted to the extent that they accurately explicate Biblical teaching. Protestants regard the Bible as the *regula fide*, the rule of faith, to which all Christian teachers and church councils must submit themselves, and that it is the only infallible authority because it is itself uniquely the Word of God. In sum, the Bible is God’s revealing of himself to humanity through the written word.

Naturally, the next question arises, “According to whose interpretation?”

This is precisely the basis for the disagreement between the major branches of Christianity. It is why this needs to be clarified at the outset. Simply put, every single text—in fact, every verbal communication, whether written or spoken—requires the process of interpretation. A popular phrase is often employed as if any text is “open to interpretation.” This is a misleading notion. According to a Biblical or Christian perspective, verbal communication has an intrinsic meaning. That meaning must be deciphered by the reader or listener. Meaning is not imposed by the recipient, but is embedded and framed by the communicator through his mode of articulation—namely, through language, style, literary form, genre, and so on. In sum, the meaning of any sentence in any text is determined by the author's intent, not by the reader. In academia, there are various philosophies that regard textual meaning as reader-relative, determined not by the author but by the reader's responsiveness to the text.

Such a philosophy of language or hermeneutics is antithetical to the very foundations of Christian theology, which presupposes the objective meaning and comprehensibility of text. Among the most fundamental claims of the Bible is that God has spoken and that he has spoken through men in the written word so that humanity might know him and love him. The Apostle Peter wrote, “[N]o prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but *men spoke from God* as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21 ESV). Moreover, the Apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is *breathed out by God* and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). And as Jesus said to the Sadducees about the Biblical Scriptures, “have you not *read* what was *said* to you by God?” (Matthew 22:31b). As we see in these passages, the Biblical authors regarded the Scriptures as God speaking and informing us about himself as he guided the human authors.

We return to the question, “According to whose interpretation?”

Interpretation is the process whereby the reader of a text aims to discover the author's intended meaning. According to Protestant conviction, the truth is that ultimately, the responsibility for interpretation cannot be

deferred to another human authority—such as a religious teacher or institution. After all, every written and oral communication from a teacher or institution—such as an official theological treatise authored by the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church—itself requires interpretation by the reader. If another text is required to authoritatively interpret and explain the text of Scripture, then who should interpret the second text trying to authoritatively explain the first text? Should it require a third text to explain the second text? We would find ourselves facing an infinite regress. Meaning could never be known or communicated. The conviction of Protestants is that no priest, pastor, council, Pope, or any kind of religious authority possesses infallible authority to unerringly interpret the text of Scripture. It is not that religious leaders or institutions have no role or authority, but the responsibility to interpret ultimately falls upon the individual and upon the collective community, neither of which are infallible. All must strive to align and refine their comprehension of the text of Scripture, submitting themselves to the linguistic and historical evidence that points to the author's intended meaning. One must finally be convinced in his mind that he has grasped the meaning and must be open to scrutinizing his conclusions with evidence.

GOD IS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

So, who is God, according to the Bible? To begin to grapple with the answer to this question, we must grasp the larger picture of the Bible.

The Bible is not one book written at one point in time. The Bible is a library of sixty-six books written by approximately forty different human authors, roughly spanning from 1,440 BC to 90 AD. The Bible includes a wide array of documents in different literary genres—narrative prose, poetry in many forms, discourses, songs, law, treaty, parables, proverbs, other forms of wisdom literature, prophetic oracles, ancient biography, letters, and even highly symbolic apocalyptic literature. From this, we can see that the Bible is not a philosophical treatise. It is neither merely a rule book nor a book only concerned with moral instruction, although it does include some rules. Crucially, the Bible is not the product of human meditation or mystical experience. Nor does it claim to be the height of human learning or wisdom achievement. The Apostle Paul writes:

19 For it is written,
"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." [quoting Isaiah 29:14]

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:19-21)

Here, in particular, Paul is referring to the central message of the Bible, called the gospel, which he explains is not the product of human wisdom or insight. In fact, the message of the Bible, especially as it culminates in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, is counterintuitive to worldly wisdom. It defies human expectations about God.

In some non-Christian religious traditions, those religions' spiritual teachings or Scriptures may claim to be the product of an enlightened individual or group who expressed their enlightened insights about reality or the Divine. For example, Swami Achuthananda writes about the Vedas: "Hindus do not believe that the Vedas were conceived by a group of authors. Rather it is believed that the Vedic verses were communicated at higher states of meditation to the rishis (sages) of ancient India, whose names appear in the texts. [...] The Vedas symbolized not only the dawn of Hinduism, but also the pinnacle of Indian philosophy and human wisdom."

One might characterize Swamiji's concept of Hindu Scripture as the product of upward spiritual ascent or attainment, wherein someone through whatever spiritual or contemplative means attains a deep insight about the Divine or Ultimate Reality, whether in a meditative state of consciousness, or by some other means. In contrast, the Bible claims to be God's downward condescension, coming down to humanity to disclose himself to us. Furthermore, the Bible presents itself not as the product of an inward, personal spiritual discovery but as a record of events of God's public disclosure through interaction with people in history.

Among the variety of literary forms in the

Biblical corpus, the dominant form is narrative prose. The Bible is, first and foremost, a historical record. There is a general chronological trajectory that can be summarized in four major stages: (1) creation, (2) fall, (3) redemption, and (4) restoration.

(1 / 4) Creation

The Bible commences with creation: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). It says in the Psalms: "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made" (33:6a) and "he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (v.9). The Apostle John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). In these and other passages, the Bible teaches that God created the world. More literally, John 1:3 can be translated: "All things came into existence by him, and without him not one thing came into existence that has come into existence." The implication is that anything that exists contingently depends upon God's creative act and causal power.

Christian theologians explain this as the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (Latin for *out of nothing*). God spoke into existence things without any pre-existing matter or form. God did not refashion pre-existing substance or matter but created time, matter, and space themselves "in the beginning" (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1). In contrast, God is eternal—without beginning or end. Moses wrote: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Psalm 90:2). God says of himself in Isaiah: "Before me, no god was formed, nor shall there be after me" (Isaiah 43:10). The Bible is emphatic that there is only one God, and he is uniquely uncreated and uncaused. God exists by the necessity of his own nature. God is a necessary being. Theologians denominate this as the doctrine of divine *aseity*—necessary self-existence.

The Bible features humanity as the crown of his creation. On the sixth and final day of creation, the book of Genesis says:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping

thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

After finishing his creation, we read: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (1:31). From a Biblical perspective, the creation of the world was good. Nothing was wrong with creation. Matter and physical reality were also good, including an embodied human nature. All of this was according to God's good design. As for humanity being created in God's image, it must be emphasized that this does not mean a physical likeness, as if God were physical. As it says in the same passage, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters" (1:2b). Likewise, Jesus said: "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Clearly, from this, it can be seen that God is not physical or corporeal in his divine nature. The prophet Isaiah wrote sarcastically about the foolishness of those who would represent God with a physical idol:

To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? 19 An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. 20 He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. (Isaiah 40:18-20)

9 All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. [...] 12 The ironsmith takes a cutting tool and works it over the coals. He fashions it with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He becomes hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint. 13 The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. 14 He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar, and the rain nourishes it. 15 Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also, he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. 16 Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half, he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also, he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm; I have seen the fire!"

17 And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"

18 They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts so that they cannot understand. 19 No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" 20 He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:9, 12-20)

Isaiah mocked the irrational nature of worshipping idols. Furthermore, idolatry was forbidden by the second of the Ten Commandments: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:4-5).

Why such an emphasis on forbidding idolatry? Fundamentally, it is because idolatry confuses the Creator with creation. The Bible has a strict ontological differentiation between the Creator and creation. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. [...] 25 they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:22-23, 25). To worship the creation is to worship something created as if it were God when in reality, it is not God. The creation is not the Creator and never to be confused with him. Idolatry is a lie—a lie about the nature of God and a lie about the nature of the creature.

Returning to the concept of humanity being created in the image of God, it does not refer to a physical resemblance since God is not physical. Rather, it refers to humanity's unique role in resembling God's rule since God delegated responsibility to human beings to exercise "dominion" over the earth (cf. Genesis 1:26-28). As God's image-bearers, we also are created for a relationship with God, to know and to love him. This is why the Biblical narrative continues in

Genesis chapter 2 with God interacting with Adam and Eve and later with other figures like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David.

(2 / 4) Fall.

While humanity was created originally good and morally innocent, humanity rebelled against God by violating his command. The original command was given to Adam and Eve to refrain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God warned that the consequence of disobeying his command would bring about death (cf. Genesis 2:16-17). This implies that death did not exist prior to human sin. As Paul wrote, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Death is the consequence of sinning against the God who gives life.

The Bible teaches humanity’s original sin resulted in the corruption of the human condition and the breakdown of the created order (cf. Romans 8:19-23). King David wrote, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). This means that the human condition is now tainted and warped, bent with an orientation opposed to God. David also wrote: “The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one” (Psalm 14:2-3).

What was that original sin? In essence, it was a temptation by the serpent that they would be divine. The serpent said: “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). It was not merely that they would gain an awareness of morality as if they didn’t know the difference. Rather, the “knowing good and evil” was more of a position to be “like God” in defining good and evil. Essentially, human beings decided they did not want to submit to God’s moral order but wanted to impose their own order and act as morally autonomous agents.

(3 / 4) Redemption.

The word “redemption” in its Biblical usage means

deliverance through transaction. It is technically a reference to the emancipation of slaves through purchasing their manumission. In the Biblical narrative, there is nothing more emblematic of this than the event of the exodus, wherein the God of Israel redeemed Israel in the days of Moses from their slavery under the tyranny of the Egyptian Pharaoh. What is crucial to see is that this event represented not merely a miraculous intervention whereby God parted the Red Sea and brought down plagues in judgement upon the Egyptians. More than that, it shows the character of God. He is the kind of God who would act to deliver his people from tyrannical oppression and violence. At Mount Sinai, God spoke to Moses, saying, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery (Exodus 20:2).

Returning to the previous point about the fallen human condition, it is crucial to grasp the Biblical diagnosis of the human predicament. In its fallen state, humanity is corrupted by a hunger to give in to its selfish appetites and disobey God’s good and righteous laws. This has resulted in our spiritual separation from God and leaves us justly condemned for our sins. According to the Bible, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). As Jesus said, our default position apart from accepting God’s provision for our salvation is that we are “condemned already” (John 3:18).

The dilemma the Bible raises is: how can a God who is perfectly holy and just extend forgiveness to sinners who have violated his law? If God is perfect and just, and therefore perfectly just, then it would seem to violate his perfect justice were he to simply waive our responsibility for sin. If God is just, then he will hold people accountable for their wrongdoing. But if he holds people accountable, then we will all be condemned. Forgiveness and mercy would seem to violate God’s justice. And God cannot violate his own perfect nature, or else God would be less than perfect and would not be God.

As a caveat, one might wonder: But does not Christianity teach that God is omnipotent and can do anything? There can be a misunderstanding here. It is not that God being all-powerful means that he can do anything whatsoever; it is that God can do anything that is logically possible. So long as the possible state of affairs is not logically self-contradictory, then God has the power to bring it about. But were something to be logically self-contradictory, such as a square circle, then that is not something that God can actualize. That is not a limitation upon God’s power but

simply a meaningless concept because the very concept of it is contradictory. Likewise, the Bible also teaches that God cannot violate his own perfect character, for instance, “it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18), and it says, “for he cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). God cannot violate his own nature because he is perfect. If he did so, he would be able to be less than perfect and become imperfect. But it is more perfect to not be susceptible to degradation and imperfection. This is also why, in classical Christian thought, theologians have articulated the doctrine of divine immutability, that God cannot change.

Returning to the problem of the human condition, how can God forgive human sin while also upholding his justice? This is the key question that the Bible aims to resolve. And in the answer to the question, the Bible discloses God’s character in the way that he resolves the dilemma. In it, we see the perfect demonstration of God’s love in God’s act of self-giving and self-sacrifice. The Apostle John wrote, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Here, “the Word” refers to the Word of God, which existed eternally with God the Father and through whom the world was created. This was stated earlier in the quotation from John 1:1-3.

Later, John writes, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God entered his own creation. He took upon himself the form of a man, as Jesus Christ, and he came with the mission to offer himself as a substitute, to stand in our place and to pay the debt and penalty that we deserve for all of our sin. Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Here the title “Son of Man” was a reference to himself as the promised Messiah foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. Daniel 7:13-14). To give his life as a “ransom” meant that he would give up his own life as a payment in place of our sin. The Old Testament foretold this about the Messiah, written about 700 years prior to Jesus, by the prophet Isaiah:

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds, we are healed. [...] Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt [...] because he poured out his

soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:5, 10, 12).

According to the Bible, it was God’s plan to pay the debt for sinners, to provide the way for humanity to be reconciled to him, and to do that while upholding the standards of his justice. It is the cross that most fully reveals the character of God. The God of the Bible so values justice that there must be a price paid for all the evil and wrongdoing. God does not overlook sin. But God is supremely gracious; he paid the debt for us. The sinless one died for the sinner. He took upon himself the suffering that we deserve. The Apostle Paul wrote: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8). The Apostle John wrote:

[...] God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son [Jesus] into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:8b-10)

This is a picture of a God who, despite his transcendent majesty and perfect holiness, was willing to humble himself to rescue a lost and corrupt humanity, and not after humanity sought to amend its ways but a God who entered into the midst of its mess and rebellion. This message in the Bible is called the “gospel,” which means ‘good news.’ This message articulates a work of salvation that God himself accomplished, not that people achieve or attain. It is a striking parallel with the purpose of Biblical revelation. The Bible is God’s revealing of himself. All of it is at God’s initiation and his accomplishment. It is not the result of spiritual or philosophical or religious search by people; it is God’s rescue mission, as Jesus said of himself: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation from judgement and reconciliation with God are gifts to humanity. That means it is not earned or merited by

anyone's work. It was paid for on the cross and accomplished by Jesus. Among the last words of Jesus as he died upon the cross was the phrase he spoke, "It is finished" (John 19:30). As Paul expressed, salvation is a gift that is offered, and it is received by people as a choice by "faith." Faith simply means believing and trusting, which reinforces the notion that salvation is a gracious gift, "not a result of works"; it is trusting in the work of another, a Saviour.

(4 / 4) Restoration.

The final stage in the metanarrative of the Bible is about God bringing final restoration to the world. The gospel message of the cross did not signify the end of God's plan; it laid the foundation for restoring the cosmos by first resolving the deepest problem in the human heart. As explained earlier, human beings were created with the purpose of exercising a righteous and godly dominion over the earth, and that purpose had been frustrated through the corruption that came from humanity's moral rebellion against God, and resulted in death and condemnation. To restore the world fully, God needed to deal with the root problem, which was answered on the cross. The death of Jesus paid the penalty. But the Bible also teaches that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Jesus returned to life on the third day following his death.

The doctrine of the resurrection is a physical claim, not a spiritual claim. Jesus died and rose back to life with a restored and glorified bodily condition. Jesus' resurrection marked what the Apostle Paul called "the firstfruits" (1 Corinthians 15:23). By that, he meant Jesus' resurrection was the beginning and the proof of an eschatological event: "because [God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this, he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). The Bible teaches that at the end of human history, there is an appointed day of final judgement, whereupon all humanity in history will be raised from the dead and face God's judgement, which will determine their eternal destiny. As the prophet Daniel wrote, "Those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

One distinctive implication of this doctrine is that, according to the Bible, God's created order operates on a linear concept of time, having an absolute beginning in creation and having a definite trajectory in one direction without a cyclical repetition. In the New Testament, it is written, "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). This is incompatible with other worldview concepts of transmigration and reincarnation.

The vision for the ultimate future is a "new heaven and new earth," a cosmic created order set free from all its suffering and sinful corruption, with God fully reconciled to a renewed humanity restored from its previous fallen and corrupt condition. The Apostle John described this vision in the Book of Revelation:

1 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. ... 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1, 3-4)

As beautifully pictured in this eschatological scene of cosmic restoration, the Bible's teaching about the nature of God is that he is highly personal and desires a close and mutual relationship with humanity. God created humanity to know and freely love him. Humanity ruined their relationship with God, but God himself is the one at work in history and, culminating in the incarnation of Jesus, he is making all things new.

SOME THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As stated earlier, the Bible is not a philosophical treatise; it is primarily a grand narrative that articulates God's plan for humanity and records the history of God's work of redemption. Underlying all this is the claim that God is knowable, describable, and relatable. While the Bible presents God as transcendent and beyond our full comprehension, he is presented as one who can be known and accurately described. A helpful distinction is between apprehension and comprehension. God cannot be fully comprehended but can be truly apprehended. The truth

about God may be apprehended because God has disclosed himself in history and designed us in his image so that we might know him. This accords with Christianity as a scriptural religion since the medium of the written word is the vehicle for this knowledge.

Christian theology is fundamentally historical in nature, not based upon human reflection. Much of the historical evidence is objectively testable, whereas spiritual experiences are more subjective. This lends the claims of Christian theology to be the subject of scrutiny and rational evaluation. In fact, the Bible encourages and praises exercising discernment through testing its claims:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

“[T]est everything; hold fast what is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” (Isaiah 1:18)

CONCLUSION

Christian theology claims that God is known as he has revealed himself both in the created order and more fully in the Biblical Scriptures. Not everything is revealed about God through the created order, but it requires more direct and verbally explicit expression. Christian theology presupposes that text contains meaning that can be subjected to a process of objective exegesis. The Bible is primarily a historical record of God’s activity that fits into and lays out God’s plan of salvation for humanity. Our knowledge of God is most fully apprehended in the person of Jesus Christ, whose person embodied the culmination and epitomization of God’s redemptive work. Jesus reveals God to be one who loves humanity, even in its sinful corruption, so much that he was willing to humble himself and take upon himself the form of a man, as a servant, and freely giving up his life by

bearing the cost of our sin in order to fulfill the righteous requirements of his justice, and with the aim to extend forgiveness and reconciliation to everyone who would believe. Of this, Jesus, the author of the Book of Hebrews wrote:

“Jesus, the founder, and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

REFERENCES

1. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1952).
2. All citations from the Bible are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise specified.
3. Please note that all square brackets indicate an insertion not in the original text, and the triple dots represent a section in the text here being skipped.
4. Swami Achuthananda, *Many, Many, Many Gods of Hinduism*, (North Charleston, NC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), p.77-78, 80.
5. William Lane Craig writes, “Minimally, then, it may be said that God’s being eternal means that God exists without beginning or end” (in *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), p.14).
6. The word “propitiation” here means ‘the appeasement of God’s wrath.’ It is a technical term that explains the purpose of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. For further discussion of this subject see, Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Tyndale Press, 1965), pp.144-213; William Lane Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ: An Exegetical, Historical, and Philosophical Exploration*, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020).

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