

The Basics of our Belief

A Theological Primer

Devin Peterson

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Outline:

The Nature and Necessity of Theology

I. The Necessity of Theology

- a. Theology is important because God requires right doctrinal belief from those who desire right relationship with Him through Christ.
 - i. Belief in God's existence and Character
 - ii. Belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ
 - iii. Belief in the Humanity of Jesus Christ
 - iv. Belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- b. Theology is also important because it aids in the discernment of spiritual experience.
 - i. Truth will eventually affect our experience
- c. Theology is important because right belief will guard against deception.

II. The Nature of Theology

- a. Definition of Theology.

The most basic definition of Theology is, "The study or Science of God." However, this casts a rather cold and impersonal shadow on a discipline that is intended to draw us nearer to God.

- b. Etymology of Theology.

The word, "Theology," derives from two Greek words:

- i. θεός (Theos): "God."
- ii. λόγος (Logos): "Word," "Speech," or "Rational Expression."

c. Theology in a Narrow Sense.

When understanding theology in a narrow sense, it is referred to as “Theology Proper” – The study of God or the study of doctrines associated directly (and exclusively) to God.

d. Theology in a Broad Sense

In a broader sense, where as the term is primarily used, we should understand theology as consisting of many religious curiosities and topics, including:

- i. God (Theology Proper)
- ii. Christ (Christology)
- iii. The Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)
- iv. The Scriptures (Bibliology)
- v. Angels (Both holy and fallen) (Angelology)
- vi. Man (Anthropology)
- vii. Sin (Hamartiology)
- viii. Salvation (Soteriology)
- ix. The Church (Ecclesiology)
- x. Last Things (Eschatology)

e. Theology’s Primary Source Material.

The primary source material of Christian Theology comes from the Bible. Although this fact alone has caused many to question the validity of Christianity’s objectivity, theologians have (and have had) sound reasoning for this conviction:

- i. The Bible has been historically proven (by Christian and non-Christian historians alike) to be an authentic record.

- ii. These records are the best collection of Jesus' teachings that we have today.
- iii. Jesus also confirmed several sections of the Old Testament (the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets) thus confirming that they too could be beneficial in understanding His teachings.

Theology in a Narrow Sense: Theology Proper

I. Theism: Belief in God

- a. The Priority of Theism
- b. The Positive Assertion of Theism
- c. Evidence for Theism

III. The Problem of Evil

- a. Four Biblical Propositions
- b. Four Negative Options
- c. Theodicy

IV. God's Revelation to Man

- a. The Possibility of Revelation
- b. The Nature of Revelation
- c. The Content of Revelation
- d. God's General Revelation
 - i. The Venues of General Revelation

- ii. The Content of General Revelation
- iii. The Implications of General Revelation
- e. God's Special Revelation

V. The Attributes of God

- a. The Greatness of God
- b. The Goodness of God

VI. The Triune God

- a. God's Oneness: Monotheism
- b. God's Threeness
- c. God's Three-in-oneness

VII. God's Creation and Providence

- a. God's Creation
- b. God's Providence

CHRISTOLOGY

I. Pre-Existence

II. Divinity

III. Incarnation

IV. Independent Yet United

Pneumatology

- I. His Personality**
- II. His Divinity**

Bibliology

- I. Inspiration**
 - a. The Canon
- II. Inerrancy**
- III. Authority**
- IV. Illumination**

Angelology

- I. The Nature of Angels**
- II. The Hierarchy of Angels**
- III. Lucifer: The Morning Star**
- IV. Fallen Angels (Demons)**

The Necessity and Nature of Theology

The term theology can be a very intimidating concept to those who are unfamiliar with its nature. Thoughts of boring lectures, thick books, and deadening conversations often feel one's mind when this topic comes up. Theology, however, is not a study in the same way as biology or mathematics. Seasoned theologians would describe theology more as a necessary discipline that will inevitably affect the believer (and non-believer) whether they acknowledge it or not.

The Necessity of Theology

Many have said that worship is the most fundamental component of man's constitution. It would be impossible for man not to worship – for even if he rejects his role as a worshiper he will be found worshipping himself. While this tendency is inevitable in man's actions, it is equally identifiable in his pursuit of truth and wisdom. The notable theologian Augustus Strong explains: “The mind cannot endure confusion or apparent contradiction of known facts.”¹ This disposition on man's part is not a coincidental factor, but rather an intentional faculty given to him by his Creator. Truth is the breeding ground for the spiritual activity that is required in the process of regeneration.² That is to say, without Truth in proposition, we cannot hope to know the Giver of Truth in right relationship. What is more, failing to see the necessity in seeking truth will eventually cause one's practice to become misguided and ineffective. It must also be realized that denial of truth does not negate the consequences of that reality. God has made His truth very clear, and that truth itself asserts the necessity of seeking it.

¹ Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium and Commonplace-book Designed for the Use of Theological Students* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland Press, 1907),

² A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 111.

Right Belief Precedes Right Relationship

It has been argued by many that theology is simply not needed for right relationship with God. Some even go as far as to say that all theology is distracting and dividing and should not be a central part of Christian life. Both of these views reveal a lack of spiritual understanding. It should first be realized that everyone has a theology whether they choose to admit it or not—everyone has an opinion of God and His activities. Moreover, the entire course of world history has played out with one goal: to reveal God and His truth to man. This endeavor transpired over the course of 1,600 years and employed the inspired writers of 40 unique authors. While the central point of this revelation can be summed up by merely quoting a few key verses, it is the entirety of the revelation that delivers to the believer God's rule of faith. Since God went to such great lengths to deliver this message to mankind, it follows that man would be expected to steward right belief in God to be considered as having right relationship with God.³ Right belief in God can seem somewhat ambiguous if not properly defined. While belief in all of God's Truth is essential, several *pivotal* truths must be accepted first.

Belief in God's Existence and Character

The most crucial truth is that of the existence of God. All other religious belief revolves around this one central fact. If one chooses to reject this truth, he must construct a worldview that answers for the many mysteries of life. This will undoubtedly result in a very humanistic presupposition. While the mere fact of God's existence is necessary, and understanding of God's

³ This should not be understood as saying that this task was difficult for God, but rather that He saw the message as important enough to direct all human history toward the goal of its delivery.

character is equally important. The attributes of God reveal what He is like – a balanced and proper study of these attributes will allow for the effective construction of a Christian worldview.

Belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ

The orthodox view of Christ asserts that He is theanthropic (wholly God and wholly man). Through an event known as the Incarnation, God took on flesh and walked among us.⁴ Many theories have been presented that attempt to explain away the Divine nature of Jesus, but the Bible is explicitly clear on this point.⁵ There are many implications that one must consider when rejecting this truth, thus making belief in Christ's divinity of extreme vitality.

Belief in the Humanity of Jesus Christ

Alongside belief in Christ's divinity is Christ's humanity. If Jesus was not a real, living and breathing, human being he could not have served as a viable sacrifice for mankind. It was through His bleeding on the cross that He was able to pay the price for the sins of man. As is the case with the divine component of Christ, many have attempted to systemize frameworks that reject His humanity. However, Scripture bears witness to this fact - the genuine believer does too.⁶

⁴ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), John 1:1.

⁵ Ibid. Philippians 2:5-11.

⁶ Ibid.1 Timothy 2:5.

Belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There is little significance in the teachings of Jesus without acceptance of His Resurrection. None of what Jesus taught can be truly lived out without the power that can only be found in this monumental moment. The Resurrection is not a mythical occurrence that encourages us; it is a Historical event that actualizes the promises of God. Without this fundamental truth, the *believer* cannot hope to fulfill his God-given calling.

Right Belief Precedes Right Practice

Much of modern Christianity focuses on action and practice. The often-used adage, "actions speak louder than words" has become a mantra for today's activists and social entrepreneurs. This philosophy has found its way into the forefront of the Church. A drastic shift away from right belief (orthodoxy) toward right practice (orthopraxy) has created a very humanistic and *tolerant* culture among Christians and non-Christians alike.⁷ The entire first portion of the Bible (the Old Testament) is focused on God's expectations for man. Within these pages, 613 different *laws* were given that were necessary to be followed for one to be found in right standing with God. Where Christ came, He offered mankind the Gospel – not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it and create a way for man to meet God's requirements indeed.⁸ It has been misunderstood by many that this good news was intended to lessen God's requirements on man. Throughout the entire New Testament, the inspired writers still make it clear that God expects

⁷ Socially driven Christianity is not necessarily a bad thing. It does, however, have the tendency to accept sin for the sake of *love*. True love does not tolerate eternal consequences.

⁸ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996). Matthew 5:17

right practice. How can one hope to fulfill God's requirement of right practice without an accurate understanding of God's truth?

Right Belief Secures Against Deception

Today, more than any other era in history, truth seekers are overwhelmed with many world religions, cults, and movements.⁹ Each of these claims to be *the* path toward veracity. Considering the contradictory nature of these competing views, it is impossible for them all to be accurate representation of truth. It is important, for those who truly desire to possess God's Truth, to know what God has offered to man through revelation. Without a clear conviction to know and abide by these propositions, one will be swayed by any and every compelling idea. It is not abnormal for the truth of God to be difficult to understand. The great apologist C.S. Lewis once said, "Christianity is not something that we would have made up."¹⁰ He goes on to explain that religions that are fabricated by man tend to have ease to them. This can make them very compelling and easily to be deceptive. However, it is the difficulty of Christianity – the fact that it goes against human nature – that affirms its truth.

Theology is often looked at as a dull discipline that extinguishes the fire of true spirituality. On the contrary, theology is the kindle that keeps the spirit of man burning for the

⁹ There are approximately 33,000 denominational factions within the protestant form alone.

¹⁰ "C.S. Lewis: Christianity Is Not Anything We Would Have Made Up.," A Brick in the Valley, 2012, , accessed December 11, 2016, <http://chrisbrauns.com/2012/07/c-s-lewis-one-reason-he-believes/>.

right things. By studying God's truth, as presented in Scripture, the believer can trust that he is working out his salvation with fear and trembling.¹¹

The Nature of Theology

Definition of Theology

The most basic definition of Theology is, "The study or Science of God." However, this casts a rather cold and impersonal shadow on a discipline that is intended to draw us nearer to God. As was stated prior, theology is unlike other sciences in that the ultimate goal is not to toil over facts and figures – meaningless rhetoric – but rather to find a real and living God who loves the seeker and has provided a plan for his redemption. Other studies are intended to enable the student to understand the subject better; theology is meant to enable to student to better know the Subject. Of course, theology can be minimized to a tiresome practice that deadens the passion of the individual, but this is the fault of the theologian, not theology. The life of the disciple is found in the subject matter - once extracted it brings one face to face with its implications. All that is left at that point is rejection of the truth or acceptance of a full life.

Etymology of Theology

As will be quickly seen through studying the content of the Bible, much can be learned from identifying the original language and seeking its insights as the context for your study. The word, "Theology," derives from two Greek words: θεός (Theos) meaning God, and λόγος (Logos) meaning, "word," "speech," or "Rational expression."

¹¹ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).Philippians 2:12

θεός (Theos): "God."

Technically, the word θεός is not restricted to meaning the God of the Bible – Greek philosophers and poets used it in reference to the gods of Mount Olympus. Through the rise of the Catholic Church, the term Theology came to mean the study of the Christian God exclusively.

λόγος (Logos): "Word," "Speech," or "Rational Expression."

The word λόγος (transliterated as “ology”) is not uncommon in the English language. It has come to mean, to the English speaker, “the study of.” Once again, considering theology a study tends to minimize its efforts – nonetheless, this is the most basic understanding of the word.

Theology in a Narrow Sense

When understanding theology in a narrow sense, it is referred to as “Theology Proper” – The study of God or the study of doctrines associated directly (and exclusively) to God. There can be some confusion when using theology in a narrow sense and a broad sense. Simply stated, *theology proper* deals with topics directly related to God’s nature, character, and activities. That is to say, doctrines such as anthropology (the study of man) would not be a part of theology proper.

Theology in a Broad Sense

In a broader sense, whereas the term is primarily used, we should understand theology as consisting of many religious curiosities and topics. These subjects include theology proper; as

well it's components. It also includes all religious ideas that draw from theology proper but do not relate directly to it.

God (Theology Proper)

As was mentioned before, this is the study of God and doctrines that are exclusively related to Him. Topics may include theism, Providence, God's attributes, and revelation. This term is also generally used when referring to the study of the First Person of the Trinity – the Father – as He is typically primarily thought of when one thinks of God.

Christ (Christology)

The Study of the Second person of the Trinity focuses its attention on Jesus Christ: His nature, personality, and ministry. Christology is typically the most heavily considered doctrine by Christians, as He is the central figure of the Faith. This study encompasses His pre-existence, divinity, humanity, and unity with the other three persons of the God-head.

The Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

Study of the Third Person of the Trinity focuses on the Spirit of God as He relates to His counterparts in the Trinity as well as to the believer. The most ambiguous study within theology, pneumatology is a relatively recent doctrine in relationship to the others. That is because Scripture is not as explicit when referring to the Holy Spirit as it is with the Father and the Son.

The Scriptures (Bibliology)

While the Incarnation is the most complete form of God's revelation, the Bible is the most comprehensive form of all venues of revelation. This is because the Bible is a historical record that allows the modern day reader to observe the different forms of God's revelation as he flips through the pages of Scripture. Bibliology studies the inspiration of the Bible, the authority of the Bible, the inerrancy of the Bible, and the work of illumination, which is the work of the Holy Spirit emphasizing the truth of Scripture to the believer.

Angels (Both holy and fallen) (Angelology)

Angels are usually categorized among a plethora of other mythical creatures. However, unlike centaurs and nymphs, angels are mentioned – in relatively great detail – throughout the Bible. While belief in their existence may or may not seem to be of much consequence, the faithful student of theology will consider the full scope of truth as presented in Scripture. This is to say since the Bible teaches it, it must be considered. This study includes their nature, their work, and their relationship to the believer. In all three cases, this includes angels who are holy and angels who are fallen (demons).

Man (Anthropology)

Anthropology is a scientific study, which focuses on mankind. In a theological context, this study focuses on man – the creature – and his relationship to God – man the worshiper. The objective here is not to make man the subject, but rather to identify the God as the subject as He is reflected through man.

Sin (Hamartiology)

One would have little success studying the condition of man without acknowledgment of his rebellion against God – namely sin. Hamatology, the study of sin, focuses on the nature of sin and its effect on mankind.

Salvation (Soteriology)

The central theme of the Bible is one of salvation and redemption. Without this focus, the story of God's judgment would be quite bleak. The thread of salvation runs through the entire Bible. Those in the Old Testament looked forward to the redemptive work of Jesus, and those of the New Testament looked back and remembered it.

The Church (Ecclesiology)

What resulted from Jesus' ministry and sacrifice was a body of regenerated believers who took the world by storm. The Church is not a unitary building or local organization; it is an organism that encompasses all believers, both past, and present.¹² It is important for ecclesiology to be studied so that modern believers can see what it means to be the Church.

Last Things (Eschatology)

Finally, the Bible is full of prophetic and apocryphal writings that predict future events – some of which were fulfilled during the writing of the Bible; others are yet to come. Those which are in the future are the subject matter for eschatology.

¹² Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

Theology's Primary Source Material

The primary source material of Christian Theology comes from the Bible. Although this fact alone has caused many to question the validity of Christianity's objectivity, theologians have (and have had) sound reasoning for this conviction. The Bible has been historically proven (by Christian and non-Christian historians alike) to be an authentic record. This makes the content of theology as valid as any other historical document or collection. These records are also the best collection of Jesus' teachings that we have today. To the Christian, this makes them the most influential source available. Jesus also confirmed several sections of the Old Testament (the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets) thus confirming that they too could be beneficial in understanding His teachings. The Scripture itself confirms that it is inspired by God and useful for everything that we will experience in life.¹³ While there are some others sources used (i.e. other historical records and resources from related sciences), the Bible is the primary source.

Recommended Resources for Further Study:

Strong, Augustus Hopkins. Systematic Theology: A Compendium and Commonplace-book Designed for the Use of Theological Students. Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland Press, 1907.

Erickson, Millard J. Christian Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998.

Tozer, A. W. The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.

¹³ Ibid, II Timothy 3:16-17

Grenz, Stanley J., and Roger E. Olson. *Who Needs Theology?: An Invitation to the Study of God*. Downers Grove, IL, USA: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Theology in a Narrow Sense: Theology Proper

As was mentioned before, the term *theology* can mean different things to different people in different circumstances. The narrow sense of the term (theology proper) can be understood to mean the study of God or the study of doctrines associated directly (and exclusively) to God. Use of the term *narrow* can be somewhat misleading as the study of theology proper encompasses many components of God: His nature, characteristics, and activities.

Theism: Belief in God

Theism simply means, “belief in God.” The Theist is an individual who bases his life on the presupposition that there is a God and lives according to the implications that such a belief contributes to the world in which he lives. Conversely, an atheist is one who does not believe in God and lives his life with the implications of this worldview. Another opponent to theism is *agnosticism*, which derived from the Greek word “γνωστός” (gnostos) meaning known – agnosticism objects that knowledge of a deity cannot be confirmed or denied. While atheism and agnosticism have become prominent teachings in society today, they base their foundations on rather weak arguments that do not stand the test of logical consideration. Theism is a “first truth” meaning that it is universal (applicable to all cultures and periods of time), necessary (it must exist), independent (does not depend on being taught). This reality serves as an unshakable foundation for the theistic argument.

The Priority of Theism

Along with being a first truth, theism is also a rational intuition, innate knowledge, and a self-evident truth. There are only a small number of things in life that can be listed as “innate” or

instinctive. These are things that do not have to be taught and are natural responses to occurrences in life. Those who are honest with themselves will realize a fundamental knowledge of what is beyond them that is present and apparently at work in reality. Of course, this innate knowledge does not reveal enough about this Being to formulate a conclusion about who He is or what He wants, but it does demand a response on the observer to believe or not believe. Consequently, this ultimatum does not exclude the observer from the implications of this reality.

The Positive Assertion of Theism

One thing that makes theism unique to its opponents (namely atheism and agnosticism) is that it affirms what *is* rather than what *is not* (or what cannot be, regarding the agnostic belief that knowledge of God cannot be obtained). For the theist, unobtainable feats of knowledge are not necessary. However, for the opponents to theism, an omniscient individual is necessary to deny God's existence. How could someone, unless they possessed all knowledge, state that an omniscient being does not (or cannot) exist. This is an absurd claim – one that makes the argument for theism much more logical.

Evidence for Theism

Beyond the positiveness of theism lie four arguments that have been used for centuries to reinforce the claim.¹⁴ The first of these arguments is the cosmological argument that looks to creation (namely the universe) to prove the existence of an eternal creator. Secondly, the teleological argument looks to defend the existence of God by way of the intricacy of design in

¹⁴ These arguments were developed by the 13th century philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas.

the universe – design that confirms the existence of a designer. Many theists also use the anthropomorphical argument, which asserts the existence of man as clear proof of a *prototype*, which served as inspiration for mankind. Lastly, some have used the ontological argument, which offers that our conception of God is enough to prove that He exists.¹⁵ These four arguments have served as a fantastic framework by which many great thinkers have deduced that there must be an eternal Being present and at work around us.

The Problem of Evil

The problem of evil has been called the *Achilles heel* of Theism – it is the argument that requires the greatest amount of defense and explanation. This is the enigmatic question of, “how can an all-powerful, all-good, God coexist in a world where evil exists?” Anyone who has been faced with a tragic loss or unprovoked misfortune has asked this question in some form or another. Many skeptics have rejected theism for this very reason, and many Christians have turned from the Faith due to inability to rectify this paradox. While this seems to be an unanswerable question, many have attempted to *justify* God and offer an explanation.

Four Biblical Propositions

Those who are hindered by the problem of evil find the greatest amount of difficulty in the logical *impossibility* of a God who coexists with evil yet has the power and the will to stop it. That is to say, if God could stop evil, and if he wants to stop evil, why does evil still exist? Objectors to theism further assert that the Bible teaches these things (that God exists, that God is all-powerful, that God is all-good, and that evil exists) so the Bible must be illogical. Without further analysis, this objection is a difficult one to refute. In an attempt to resolve the problem,

¹⁵ The ontological argument was developed by 12th century philosopher and theologian Anselm of Canterbury.

several rather extreme approaches have been created. Unfortunately, each of these methods does more damage to theism than they do good.

Four Negative Options

Since objectors claim that the coexistence of the aforementioned proposition is illogical, many have attempted to "modify" the understanding of theism to bring about a sufficient response. The first proposition, the existence of God, is the target of most objectors (namely the atheists). This method concludes that God is the crux of the logical problem and must, therefore, be eliminated. Unfortunately, when we remove God from the equation, we also remove the other three presuppositions: if there is no God how can He be all-powerful or good; if there is no God to stand as the moral example for determining what is good and what is evil, how can we say that evil exists? While this does solve the initial problem, it creates more in the process. Another modification is to accept that God exists and that God is good but to reject that He is all-powerful. This paints a picture of a transcendent God who wants to put an end to evil but is unable to do so. The result of this conditioning is a philosophy known as *finitism*. These theories place God up against an equally powerful force that thwarts His righteous endeavors. Conversely, others choose to see God as being all-powerful, but not caring or good. The final attempt at modification is to deny that evil exists. This, however, results in a complicated worldview that will typically lead one to begin to deny reality itself, including God as a transcendent Being.

Theodicy

Each of the aforementioned methods does considerable damage to the theistic view, which is why atheism is a typical result of such thought. The theist also has an answer to the problem of evil: theodicy. Technically, any attempt to *justify* God in light of the problem of evil is a theodicy. However, most conservative theologians would argue that a true theodicy is one that tries to answer for God while honoring the Truth as God has revealed in – the truth found in Scripture. The theist’s answer to the problem of evil comes in the form of perspectives by which an individual is encouraged to view the world and events, which take places around them. The first perspective has to do with man’s Createdness. Distinct to man, as opposed to the counterpart created order, is being made in the “image and likeness” of God (Gen.1:27). One component of this is man’s *free will* – the ability to choose and act upon impulse. It would have been impossible for God to create humans, in His image and likeness, without granting this free will; not because He is incapable of this (in the way that dualism asserts) but because doing so would be a logical impossibility. The only way that man could truly be *free* is if consequences for his choices were also a reality. Consequences for man’s actions often result in what we observe as *evil*. It is also important to note that *evil* does not exist as a substance. This *denial* of evil's substantial existences is not the same as denying that evil exists at all. In life, several things are not substances within themselves, but simply the absence of something else (i.e. the absence of light is darkness). These things only *exist* because something else does not – evil is then the absence of good. Since God has granted man free will, as per the requirement for genuine humanity, man may choose to deny what he knows to be good, thus actualizing evil. The actions carried out by man often result in unfortunate circumstances for them and those around them. On a much larger scale, the introduction of evil to world and race by the first people (Gen. 3) has

created a world that is full of evil components: natural catastrophes, malicious actions, and a depraved nature in man (Rom. 1). The most important aspect of the theistic response is found in the act of redemption carried out by God through the Second Person of the Trinity: Jesus Christ. Even though it was man (all humankind) who has brought forth the reality of evil to the world, it was God who ultimately paid the price. Jesus Christ took on the full weight of sin and evil and paid the ultimate price of death. When the skeptic asks how an all-powerful, all-good, God can coexist with evil, it must be realized that God must exist in order for evil to be identified (He stands as the moral object by which we determine such a thing), He must be all-powerful in order to lay down his life and raise it up again (through Jesus Christ), and must be good in order to take the punishment that rightly belonged to mankind on Himself. In short, God's act of redemption answers the problem of evil.

God's Revelation to Man

Theism asserts that a transcendent Being created mankind and has providence over the events around us. As has been stated earlier, this is a very logical statement and one that rests on a sound foundation. However, this understating begs the question, "Can this Being truly be known?" If this Being is truly transcendent then it follows that any revelation of Himself would have to be initiated by Him – that is to say, no amount of searching would reveal Him unless He has made first contact. But has He? If so, in what way?

The Possibility of Revelation

Scripture indicates that God is both *incomprehensible* and *knowable*. At first glance, this would seem to be a contradiction. However, both truths have validity and an explanation for their coexistence. Evidence for God's incomprehensibility can be found in Job 11:7 and Isaiah 40:18.

The understanding that is drawn from the text is that God cannot be *fully* understood – there will always be dimensions of his infinite nature that cannot be grasped by a finite mind. God’s knowability can be better studied by looking at John 14:7; 17:3 and I John 5:20. In these verses, God is depicted as one who can be known – at least indirectly. The marriage of these two concepts conceives the idea that God can be known but not fully understood. This is appropriate considering the theistic idea that it would take an infinite mind to understand the infinite fully.

The Nature of Revelation

How would the infinite reveal Himself to the finite? Much of the answer lies within the question – He must reveal Himself. That is to say; this infinite Being would have to take the initiative if any conception on the part of the finite being is to be expected.

The Message of Revelation

Dr. Charles Ryrie said, “A full knowledge of God is both factual and personal.”¹⁶ This is why theology cannot be a cold study of pure facts and figures. God did not reveal his message to us simply so that man could understand Him (as one would theorems in mathematics) but so that he can know Him - knowing means to experience and enjoy. The beauty about God's revelation is that we study His revelation to better know Him. The more that we come to know Him, the more we want to know Him. Knowing Him in deeper ways inspires us to study so that we can know Him even deeper.

¹⁶ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systemic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 89.

God's General Revelation

There are two major types of revelation: general revelation and special revelation. The first is very vague and reveals just enough about God to hold us accountable if one chooses to reject this truth.¹⁷ Some theologians believe that general revelation alone is enough to lead unbelievers into salvation – this is a school of theological thought known as *natural theology*. While this may not be out of the realm of possibilities, it is certainly not the standard prescription. General revelation does have its value, however, in that it allows one to acknowledge God's existence by observing the created order.

The Venues of General Revelation

The created order consists of everything that exists since God is the creator of everything. God is revealed in everything. However, three venues are the most notable: nature, history, and human consciousness. King David, the Psalter, offers some of the most profound revelations of God through nature.¹⁸ He seemed to understand the concept that would become the foundation of Thomas Aquinas' cosmological argument – created order demands the presence of a creator. Much of the content in Scripture relates to historical events and key figures throughout world civilization. This is because God has chosen to reveal himself through history. This can be specifically seen in God's providence over Israel, as well as other nations mentioned in Scripture. Lastly, God can be seen in the intricacies of man's consciousness – specifically his moral and religious competencies. Regardless of where you go or who you speak with, you will find that all civilizations base their codes of conduct on a core set of *rules*. What is more, these

¹⁷ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), Romans 2.

¹⁸ *ibid*, Psalm 19.

rules tend to be the same throughout the world. That is because God has hardwired every human with a moral compass that tells them what to do in a given situation. People are also drawn to worship, which reveals that they are innately drawn toward something that should be worshiped.

God's Special Revelation

The second primary type of revelation is special revelation. This differs from general revelation in that it is directly given to specific people for a specific purpose. There is a unifying story throughout the pages of Scripture that indicates a particular message that has progressively unfolded through the centuries. This message began at the onset of creation and has found its completion within the revelatory ministry of Jesus Christ to the Apostle John.¹⁹ Throughout this unfolding narrative, God reveals his plan through covenantal promises, the giving of the law, his direct speech to the prophets, and lastly his impartation to the apostolic fathers. The crux of this unique message is that God created man, man rebelled against God, God presented a process for redemption, and He sees this plan to fulfillment at the end of time. The message is presently in the form of inspired Scriptures, known as the Bible. This book developed throughout the centuries and has been affirmed by Godly men as the only inerrant resource for determining the will of God.

¹⁹ *ibid*, Genesis 1:1; Revelation 22

The Attributes of God

Scripture not only reveals that God exists, but it also reveals what He is like – his attributes. A.W. Tozer describes God’s attributes as what He is rather than what He does.²⁰ That is to say, God not only loves, He is love.²¹ When God created man, He made him as the *imago Dei* (image of God). This means that some of God’s attributes can be observed as they are reflected (partially) through mankind. These attributes are known as communicable because they have been communicated to man from God (i.e. love, power, morality) Other attributes are considered non-communicable because there is no reflection of these in man (i.e. omnipresence, infinite, etc.) While revelation (both general and special) give us a foundational understanding of God attributes, it must also be understood that God is infinite. This means that God’s nature and composition cannot be fully understood by mankind. The observable attributes of God do not compare to His infinitude of characteristics that exist but cannot be understood.

The Greatness of God

Another way of organizing God attributes, one that makes them more relatable is to classify them as *Greatness Attributes* and *Goodness Attributes*. The greatness attributes distinguish God as a superior Being who is capable of feats far beyond human ability. God is omniscient, which means that He knows all true propositions. God is also omnipresent, which means that He is everywhere at one time. Lastly, God is omnipotent which means that God is all-powerful. While these are not the only attributes that can be considered *great*, they are the most

²⁰ ²⁰ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 111.

²¹ I John 4:8; It is impossible for God to be anything other than His attributes. Humans can only hope to reflect God attributes – we can only love, but God is love.

crucial in one's understanding of God as a transcendent Being. This does not, however, mean that God is without limitation – His limitations are self-imposed and intentional.

The Goodness of God

God's goodness attributes can be understood as those that correspond with His redemptive plan for man. As stated before, God is love - everything that God does to, for, or in us is the product of His love for us. God is also mercy; this means that He does not give us what we deserve. God is also Grace, meaning that God gives us what we do not deserve. Lastly, God is just – God holds mankind to certain standards and will justly judge based on each person's response to those standards. It is this final attribute that causes many to reject that idea that God is good. One implication of God's being the attributes mentioned is that He functions within every one of His attributes every time He responds to us. God is just, but He is equally loving, merciful, and gracious. This balance can be seen in His giving of the Law (an unachievable standard by human efforts) and also proving the Gospel (the good news that God has made a supernatural way for man to achieve that standard). Justice is sweet to the righteous but bitter to the wicked.

What God *Can't* Do

As was stated before, God is not without limitation, even in His omnipotence. In fact, it is His all power nature that allows Him to be limited - these are limits that He has put on Himself. Since God is Truth, He is incapable of contradicting Himself or His word – He cannot lie. Since God has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind in ways that are logical and reasonably sound, God

cannot do something that would consider illogical.²² God has also founded His relationship with mankind through covenantal agreement. This means that He is bound to man as man unites Himself to God. Lastly, since God's attributes are who He is, rather than just what He does, He cannot forsake His nature. God will always do what He always does.

The Triune God

Not only is God one with His attributes, but He is also one and three Persons. This belief (The Doctrine of the Trinity) is possibly the most challenging aspect of God's nature for believers to try and comprehend. It seems to be a contradiction of thought to think that God is one and also three, but a careful study of Scripture will reveal the Truth. The Trinity is not one of the Bible's explicit Truths – that is there is not direct reference to it. However, many areas of Scripture leave open very little possibility for this not to be a reality. Controversy over this topic is not new, and spans to as early as the third century A.D. Many views have been formulated with the attempt to disprove this doctrine, however, it has stood as the orthodox view of the Church for over 1,600 years. To systemize this teaching, one must study three separate truths and then connect them as one truth. The Proper Study of the monotheistic view of Judaism will reveal a clear understanding.

²² This means that God cannot create a triangle with no sides or a stone that even He cannot lift – not because He is incapable, but because these actions are logical impossibilities.

God's Oneness: Monotheism

In days when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the world had turned its back on God and began to worship false idols. Most (if not all) of these pagan religions were polytheistic²³ As God gave His special message to the Israelite people, God made one thing very clear: "Hear oh Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One."²⁴ This statement is known as the Jewish Shema and is one of the most fundamental beliefs of any God-fearing Jewish man or woman. What is interesting about this passage is that the word translated as *one* (The Hebrew word **אֶחָד** or *echad*) is often used to mean a unified oneness, rather than an independent oneness.²⁵ This same word is in Genesis 2:4 where God refers to the man and woman as being one flesh. This idea of two persons being understood as one union is a great point of reference for understanding God as one Being composed of more than one Person. While this is not enough to conclusively prove the tri-union of God, it is certainly sufficient to raise the question.

God's Threeness

Throughout Scripture, there is a significant amount of allusion toward the three-ness of God. One curious truth is that stated in I John 4:8, "...God is love." For this to be true, God must be more than one person since love implies affection directed toward another person. This would mean that God is at least two Persons. During the early ministry of Jesus, a much clearer

²³ The worship of more than one god.

²⁴ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996). Deut. 6:4

²⁵ "Trinity: Oneness in Unity Not in Number: Yachid vs. Echad," Trinity: Oneness in Unity Not in Number: Yachid vs. Echad, , accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.bible.ca/trinity/trinity-oneness-unity-yachid-vs-echad.htm>.

emphasis on the Threeness of God is given as He explains His role to the Father in Heaven and the Spirit that would soon indwell the believers. Some have interpreted these passages to mean that God is One, having manifested Himself in three modes: first the Father, then the Son, and finally as the Holy Spirit. However, Matthew of account of Christ's baptism refers to all three persons of the Trinity present and independent of each other.²⁶ Extremists tend to see this trichotomy as proof of tritheism – the existence of three gods. However, this would be polytheism and would reject the truth given in Deut. 6:4.²⁷ Reference to God's three-in-oneness is also readily available.

God's Three-in-oneness

Scripture clearly asserts the oneness of God as well as the threeness of God. There is also clear teaching of that each person of this tri-unity is unified and independent of its counterparts. Most importantly is Christ's assertion of His own deity, as well as His claim of the Father's divinity and individuality from Himself. Christ's apparent submission to the Father in Heaven can be better understood in light of Philippians 5:2-11. These verses indicate that Jesus is equal to the Father in nature, but willingly emptied Himself of that equality by taking on the nature of a servant. The implication is that both the Father and the Son are equally divine.²⁸ Once again, during Jesus ministry on Earth, it was stated that He would soon leave, but that He would send

²⁶ *ibid*, Matthew 28:19

²⁷ The most accurate theology is one that considers the entirety of Scripture.

²⁸ Christ's submission to the Father is completely voluntary and is for the purpose of man redemption.

another advocate.²⁹ Not only is this an explicit reference to individuality of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but it is also a clear teaching of the unity shared by the two persons. When studying the original language (Greek in this case), Jesus uses the word ἄλλος (állos - translated as another) to indicate that the one who would come would be different from Himself (in personality) but the same in nature.³⁰

God's Creation and Providence

Once the nature and attributes are understood, at least in a fundamental sense, one must acknowledge that God is not only the most powerful being in the universe, but that He is also the Creator and Sustainer of it. It is this understanding that allows the believer to go through their day-to-day life with a sense of peace and comfort. God as Creator always calls the individual into a particular place of accountability and submission to the One who gave him life.

God's Creation

While this subject has been the topic of heated debate every since Charles Darwin published his Origin of Species in 1859, the true Theist looks to the Bible for a validated theory. As seasoned theologians will point out, only two chapters of the Bible spend any substantial efforts on describing the Creation account.³¹ Even these two chapters do not give much detail

²⁹ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), John 14:16

³⁰ In Greek, when indicating “another but distinct in kind,” one would use the word ἕτερος (heteros) rather than ἄλλος.

³¹ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996). Genesis 1 & 2

concerning the occurrence. What can be inferred from study of the text is that God created everything that is specifically to his own design and plan. Immediately following the Creation account is that part that truly matters, - the fall of mankind. This is important because it tells of how the world became what it is today.

God's Providence

Also a topic of debate, God providence is clearly indicated in Scripture – the questions remains, to what extent. Many argue over the issue of *free-will* or predeterminism, but the truth is Scripture offers a great deal of information to support both views. It would seem that a balanced approach is necessary to understand God's providence. Clearly, man has a choice in some regard, but God also seems to control and determine elements of man's life. Scripture reveals that the best way to live out a life of righteous is to, “seek first the Kingdom of God.”³²

Recommended Resources for Further Study:

Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systemic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999.

Ashton, John F. In *Six Days: Why Fifty 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2001.

Evans, C. Stephen., and R. Zachary. Manis. *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.

³² *ibid.* Matthew 6:33

Christology

It is not abnormal for one to relate the concept of “God” exclusively to the first person of the Trinity the Father. This is why *Theology Proper* is often referred to as the study of the First Person of the Trinity. Of course, the Father is only one part of the Threefold Union. That is why Christology - the study of Christ - is referred to as the study of the Second Person.

Pre-existence

Many theories have been developed that attempted to discredit the doctrinal stance of that Church that Jesus Christ is divine. These methods try to focus on His humanity and nullify the implications of Him being God. One aspect of Jesus teaching, however, cannot be rectified in light of these accusations. Jesus clearly stated that He existed before Creation. Moreover, the Apostle John states that it was by Christ that all things were created – this would be impossible unless Christ existed before Creation³³ For many, this is enough to assert that Christ is divine. However, for many this is simply sufficient to believe that He is not merely human. Fortunately for the true believer, there is a lot of evidence within Scripture that proves His Divinity.

Divinity

While Christ never explicitly stated that He was God, He also never denied as much. What is more, Christ spoke with authority and practiced certain actives that are restricted to God Himself – forgiving sin, casting out demons, healing the sick, etc. When asked if He was God, His only

³³ *ibid*, John 8:58

reply was, "You said that I am."³⁴ A brief overview of Jesus' ministry will reveal that His entire focus was on glorifying His Father in Heaven. Not once is He seen bringing praise or credit to Himself. If the truth were that He was not God, then it would have been in accordance with His character to deny this accusation. Finally, one can conclude that Christ was in fact divine because of His statement in John 8:58 – "Before Abraham was, I am." Use of the term "I am" should not be misunderstood as an error in grammatical structure – it certainly was not by those who initially heard it. When Moses, at the burning bush, ask to whom he was speaking, God responded: "I am that I am."³⁵ While this is still not an explicit claim to deity from Jesus, it was certainly enough for the religious groups to attempt to stone Him for blasphemy."³⁶

The Incarnation

The topic of Christ's divinity always leads to the question, "How does an immaterial God become material?" – This is a valid question. John 4:24 states that "God is Spirit," meaning that He does not possess a body. Apparently, Jesus did possess a body since He lived and died in the physical environment of our world. The incarnation is best understood by looking at two popular passages of Scripture: John 1:1 and Philippians 5:2-11. The Apostle John explains that "the Word" – and term referring to Jesus – became flesh. This can be better understood by looking at Paul's letter to the Philippians. The Apostle Paul explains that Jesus possesses equality with God, but "emptied Himself of that Glory for the purpose. One cannot deny His own nature. Therefore

³⁴ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), Luke 23:3

³⁵ *ibid*, Exodus 3:14

³⁶ Blasphemy: the crime of assuming to oneself the rights or qualities of God.

Jesus remained God in nature but took on flesh and submitted Himself to the authority of the First Person of the Trinity – the Father. The physiological specifics that took place in this event are not disclosed in Scripture – we only know that Jesus was born, fully God and fully human, to a virgin named Mary.³⁷ It was this occurrence that Jesus was able to become the Savior that the world needed.

Humanity

The opposite extreme to denying the divinity of Christ is to deny His humanity – a theological approach of similar catastrophe. The implication of such a Savior with no humanity is a sacrifice not fit for the role. The sin for which Christ died did not belong to God, but to man. Therefore, the shedding of human blood was necessary for total atonement. It was vital that Jesus, being God, take on human flesh because only God could stand entirely innocent in the face of justice. Equally important was that He share DNA with the sinful race – Humanity. Beyond this necessity, the humanity of Christ is taught throughout Scripture. Jesus felt emotions that are exclusive to humanity (fatigue, hunger, thirst)³⁸ Most importantly Christ, in his humanity, died – impossible for God. However, the greatest aspect of Christ's ministry was that He was resurrected and lives today!

Independent Yet United

Christology is the study of the Second Person. It is of vital importance that Christ be examined within the context of the Trinity. The attributes of God, which can be understood by

³⁷ Ibid, Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38

³⁸ ibid, John 13:35; Mark 4:35; John 4:6-7

studying God's activities with man, apply to Christ in the same way that they do the Father. The Father and Son are separate Persons, but they are united as one Being and shared the same characteristics. Christ said, "If you have seen me you have seen then the father" to emphasize the dimensions of their union.³⁹

Recommended Resources for Further Study:

McDowell, Josh, and Bill Wilson. *He Walked among Us*. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1988.

Kereszty, Roch A., and J. Stephen. Maddux. *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*. New York: Alba House, 1991.

McGrath, Alister E. *Theology: The Basics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004.

³⁹ *ibid*, John 14:9

Pneumatology

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been one of the most controversial topics in Church history. For many centuries, the topic was not discussed with much certitude because Scripture is somewhat vague on its specific components. Even though it was in 381 A.D. that the Church formulated an orthodox view of the Third Person of the Trinity, it was not until the early 20th century that true worship directed toward the Holy Spirit was overtly seen as an acceptable practice. There are many reasons for this, most of which have come from a misunderstanding of who the Holy Spirit is.

His Personality

There has been much debate throughout the years to whether or not the Holy Spirit is thing or a Person. As the Spirit of God, as with the spirit of man, this would seem to be an extension of the Person of God rather than an individual personality. However, much of Scripture refers to the Spirit of God as having particular characteristics that would certainly cause the reader to believe that the Spirit is a “He” rather than an “it” (emotions, intellect, will).⁴⁰ It is also evident in Scripture that the Spirit is submitted to the Father, as is the case with the Son, and carries out the Will of the Father. That is to say, the two function as such a glorified union that it can be difficult to distinguish between them.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid, I Cor. 2:10 - 11

⁴¹ It is safe to say that this would probably be the case with the Father and Son if the Son were not the central figure of the Christian faith.

His Divinity

The idea of the Holy Spirit as being in submission to the Will of the Father has caused many to see Him as a Person, but without divinity. The Holy Spirit is never directly quoted in Scripture, as was Jesus, for Him to affirm or disaffirm his equality with God. Likewise, the Holy Spirit's actions are not emphasized in the same way that Christ's are for us to see divine functions. There are also no scriptures that explicitly state his deity. The deity of the Holy Spirit hinges on two main passages of Scripture: I Corinthians 2:11 and John 14:16. In the first, the Apostle Paul states, "No one knows the mind of God but the Spirit of God." This would indicate that the Holy Spirit possesses the same attributes (at least omniscience) as God. The other passage is a reference by Jesus to the coming of the Holy Spirit, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever--." Here Jesus uses the Greek word for *another* that means different but of like kind. If one acknowledges the deity of Christ, it follows that he would accept the divinity of the Holy Spirit

Recommended Resources for Further Study:

Menzies, William W., Stanley M. Horton, and William W. Menzies. Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective. Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1993.

Guthrie, Shirley C. Christian Doctrine. Louisville, Ken.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1994.

Erickson, Millard J. Christian Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998.

Bibliology

The Bible is the most readily available and authoritative form of God's revelation to man today - it is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God. Each of these terms adds to its uniqueness and set it apart from other religious texts. The Bible is a historical document that has been confirmed by Christian's and non-Christians alike as being authentic and trustworthy. For centuries, this collection of sixty-six books has served as the primary source material for understanding God and His teachings. It is through this book that we can accurately discern the will of God.

Inspiration

When theologians refer to the Bible as *inspired*, they mean that as certain men wrote they were carried along by the Holy Spirit in their writings.⁴² It was not the men who were inspired, but their writings. While none of their original works exist today, many copies are available. These copies are just as reliable as the originals since they date back to times very recent to the original writing. Over the millenniums, these copies have circulated the world and have been translated into many languages. Throughout this process, it can be trusted that the Bible that can be read today is just as inspired as the originals because the doctrine of Inspiration holds that this work of the Holy Spirit ensured their veracity.

The Canon

The writers of the sixty-six books wrote more than what has been considered canonical. However, their other writings were not inspired. Much of the canonization process entails

⁴² Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996). II Peter 1:21

content that is in congruence with other areas of Scripture, evidence of inspiration within the text, and credibly given to certain writings by other writers of inspired works.

Inerrancy

One implication of Scripture's inspiration is that it is inerrant. While some object to this truth, belief that Scripture is the word of God requires one to accept that it is, in fact, truthful, at least in the details that relate to man's redemption. Skeptics often raise question to areas of Scripture that seem to be lacking in accurate content, however, if one approaches Scripture believing that it is the Word of God, which can be trusted, then he will find God's truth to be trustworthy.

Authority

If it is accepted that Scripture is inspired and inerrant, then it follows that Scripture's authority will be accepted as well. Scripture's authority should be at the forefront of the believer's priorities. The reliability of any other source of revelation should be held up to the standard of Scripture. It is this resource that has stood the test of time and has been preserved in its original message.

Illumination

To some, it would seem that the Bible's inspired nature should be enough to captivate anyone who reads it, however, this is not so. Many people have read the Bible as they would any other form of ancient literature. Consequently, it has had a little impact spiritually as Homer's *Iliad* would have. For the believer, there is a particular work carried out by the Holy Spirit that

enlightens Him to the meaning of the text. The Holy Spirit's unique work of illumination enables the reader to glean wisdom and revelation from inspired Scripture. This is to confirm the Holy Spirit's chief job of leading the believer into conformity with the image of Christ.

Recommended Resources for Further Study:

Erickson, Millard J. Christian Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998.

Williams, Ernest S. Systematic Theology. Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub. House, 1953.

Mickelsen, A. Berkeley. Interpreting the Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.

Angelology

The diverse and extreme approaches to the doctrine of angelology have kept it as a very under-discussed topic. The reasoning for this was that some early theologians inappropriately exalted the creatures to a place of worship. Some even went as far as to attribute a sense of deity. However, as controversial of a topic, as it is, Scripture offers considerable detail on angels, which cannot be ignored.

The Nature of Angels

The nature of Angels is that they are created beings - created by God. They also possess personality (intelligence, will, emotion). Angels are unique to humans in that they have been created in a higher state.⁴³ It should be understood that Angels are Spiritual beings and do not possess a material body as do humans. That is why Scripture indicates that they are present, but they are not always visible. Erickson and Ryrie both suggest that angels also do not reproduce, or die – their numbers were set at the moment of their creation and will not change.

The Hierarchy of Angels

Angels are not a disorganized group, but rather they adhere to a very structured hierarchy. The Bible indicates three basic categories of angels: Archangels, cherubim, and seraphim.⁴⁴ Of the three angels who are mentioned by name in Scripture (Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer) only Michael is considered to be an Archangel. There is not a great deal of detail given in Scripture as to what each of these angels does, but it can be inferred that Michael carries out protection and

⁴³ Hebrews 2:7 explains that Jesus made himself lower than the Angels to take on human form.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Ezekiel 10:14; Isaiah 6:2.

military functions, Gabriel is the deliverer of God's messages, and Lucifer (although fallen) was once the chief facilitator of God's worship. While we do not know exactly what all of God's angels do, angels are referred to as aiding God's people through trials and persecution throughout scripture. They are ministering spirits that are ordained by God to see to the human race.

Lucifer: The Morning Star

Lucifer was probably the highest and most powerful of all the angels. Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 indicate that Lucifer's downfall was caused by his incessant pride. In his "I will" statements, Lucifer makes clear his desire to be worship "as the Most High." Because of this, he was cast down from heaven – becoming the adversary, or Satan. There is reason to believe that Revelation 12:4 is also in reference to this occurrence. In this story, two-thirds of the stars are wiped out of the Heaves by the Dragons tail.⁴⁵ Many theologians believe that this is referring to two-thirds of the Angels in Heaven being cast out from Heaven with Satan.

Fallen Angels (Demons)

As with Angels, demons are discussed in Scripture – making them necessary to be studied. Since they are fallen Angels, they possess the same nature as was discussed before. They also have a similar hierarchy. However, they operate as principalities that typically oversee extensive dominions.⁴⁶ Demons seem to have one job: to torment and deceive the believer. The believer should not be discouraged, however, because fallen angels – including the Devil – are subject to the authority of Jesus Christ.

⁴⁵ The Dragon is a reference to Satan in the Bible.

⁴⁶ Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), Ephesians 6:12.

Recommended Resources for Further Study:

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998.

Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systemic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999.

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