Theology Proper

God exist (cf. Exodus 3:14).[[1]](#endnote-2) I believe that God exists and that he rewards me because I seek him (cf. Heb. 11:6). I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.[[2]](#endnote-3) God is omnipotent,[[3]](#endnote-4) omniscient,[[4]](#endnote-5) and omnipresent. God is the Awesome God. God is the great I am. God does not change. God is altogether good.

Theology proper is the study of God and His attributes. God reveals his existence in all of creation (cf. Psalm 19). God is something than which nothing greater can be conceived.[[5]](#endnote-6) Theology[[6]](#endnote-7) is important, because what the church knows about God and Christianity is important.[[7]](#endnote-8) God makes Himself known through his revelation of Himself in His Word.[[8]](#endnote-9) I must turn to scripture and submit to it[[9]](#endnote-10) to learn about God.[[10]](#endnote-11) God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. God's holiness is as he wills, chooses, and exists.

I believe God's knowledge and essence are perfect. [[11]](#endnote-12) God is holy (cf. Lev 11:44). God wants us to respond to Him (through obedience and love). God is never alone. God exists as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God in three persons are one in essence (substance.) There is God, and everything else is not God. God has no rival nor equal. God has no teacher. The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. God created everything that exists.

God's choice to create is the reason why everything exists. In God dwells all that is needed. God was before time. God exist outside of time. God is the star of his story, as it is told in scripture. God is the author and a character in his creation story. It all belongs to God. Theology proper is learning about the living God, as made known through Jesus Christ, as he reveals truth about himself through scripture.[[12]](#endnote-13) God desires to love and be loved by his creation.

Christology

I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father. Through Jesus, all things were made. Jesus came down from heaven. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was conceived in the Virgin Mary, and was made man. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, Jesus the Christ.

Jesus is God in the flesh. For our sake, Jesus was crucified. He suffered death and was buried in a borrowed tomb. God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day as the all-powerful. Jesus is alive. Jesus conquered sin and death. Jesus restored the relationship between God and man by his redeeming work on the cross. Jesus lived a sinless life. Jesus died a guiltless death. Jesus chose to die to redeem man's relationship with God. Jesus laid down his life. Jesus is the only way to God. Jesus is the promised Messiah. Jesus, God the Son, is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead. Jesus' kingdom will have no end.

Christology is the part of theology concerned with the nature and work of Jesus, including the incarnation, the resurrection, and his human and divine natures and their relationship. Christian theology is non-competitive and divine transcendence. Jesus was both fully human and fully God. It is a mystery. Jesus made flesh is the incarnate Word of God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word took on flesh and became man. I believe Jesus Christ was that Word that the scripture refers to. Jesus Christ is the Good News of God. Jesus Christ is the focus, start, and continuation of understanding and a seeking after God. The gospel is the Word about Jesus Christ. The Son is the same substance as the Father. God's kingdom broke through to earth to redeem man from sin. I am holy because Christ is Holy.

Pneumatology

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is worshiped and glorified along with the Father and Son. The Holy Spirit spoke through the Prophets. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit inspired the Holy Scripture as the breath of God. The Holy Spirit is God.

Pneumatology is the study of the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the seal of my relationship with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells the redeemed as the promised helper and comforter. The Holy Spirit is God, fully divine. He exalts Christ. He convicts people of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls people to the Savior and effects regeneration.

At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. The receiving or indwelling of the Spirit occurs at the moment of Salvation. The filling of the Spirit is an ongoing process in the Christian life.

The Holy Spirit is a person with a mind and emotions. The Holy Spirit is Jesus' "replacement" on earth (John 14:16-26). The Holy Spirit is received at Salvation (Rom. 8:9) and is the permanent possession of every believer in Christ (Eph. 1:13-14). Through the Holy Spirit, we come to know God's love for us "because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). The Holy Spirit is not a mystical force. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit freely gives gifts to believers according to his will.

Theological Anthropology

 I believe God created Humans male and female. God said that his creation is good. Gender is part of the goodness of God's creation. Man was created Imago Dei. In the beginning, Humans were created sinless. However, God gave the humans the freedom of choice. By his free choice, Man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. God made all peoples. The first man, Adam's choice to sin, brought sin into the world for all people.

Through the temptation of Satan, Man broke the command of God and fell from his original sinless state. Because of Adman's sin, all future humans inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring Human Beings into His holy fellowship and enable Human Beings to fulfill the creative purpose of God. All of humanity is born in sin and shaped in iniquity because of the original sin of Adam.

The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created Man and woman in His own image and in that Christ died for Man and woman; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. We are created in God's image. Theological Anthropology is the study of man, his creation, make-up, innocence, and fall.

The image of God refers to the immaterial part of man. It is that which sets man apart from the animal world, fits him for the "dominion" God intended (Genesis 1:28), and enables him to commune with his Maker. It is a likeness mentally, morally, and socially. When we accept that sacrifice and receive it as our own, our natures are transformed by God, who creates in us a completely new person (2 Cor. 5:17). It is this new person who can relate to Him as we should, as His adored children. Adam was our "federal head," or representative in Eden. When he fell, we fell. We inherit his human nature and also his sin.

Hamartiology

I believe all have sinned and fallen short of God's grace. God gave man the ability to sin. God cannot be blamed for sin. God is not the author of sin. God is holy. God is not responsible for evil. God does not tempt people to sin (cf. James 1:13). Adam was the first of all human beings. Adam was the Federal Head. Adam chose to sin. All people share the experience of sin and evil. Sin perverts and affects the world. It is impossible to escape sin and evil. Sin is estrangement from God.

Hamartiology is the study of sin, its nature, derivation, and classifications. The result of Adam's choice to sin brought death into the world for all of mankind. Man's choice to sin was his choice. The choice to sin was not outside of man's will. Sin is breaking God's law (I John 3:4). Sin is the choice to disobey God. Some sin involves the body. Other sins involve the mind (Eph. 2:3). Sin can be a thought, Word, or action. Sin can be habitual (Heb. 12:1). Some sin is committed against self. Some sin is committed against others. Some sin is unto death (John 5:16-17). Sin is rebellion against God and impacts our relationship with God.

Some sins deserve punishment on earth at different levels of punishment. Some sins are crimes which deserve consequences on earth. Willful sin is worse than sin committed from ignorance. I believe the sin of knowingly giving credit to Satan that one knows is only due to God is called blasphemy against the Holy Spirit God (Matt 12:31-32). I believe it is sin to reject one's profession of faith in Christ and the gospel (Heb. 6). No one can be blamed for a person's choice to sin. Sin is not part of God's creation.

I believe that sin nature brings the wrath of God (Eph. 2:3). Since Adam's choice to sin, all humans are born with a sin nature. All are born sinful by nature, guilty, and condemned (Rom 3:23). Christ was not born of man and, therefore, not born in sin.

Soteriology

 I believe the confession and belief in Jesus Christ as Lord saves me from the penalty of sin. I believe I am no longer separated from God because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ when he died an innocent death on the cross. The blood that Jesus shed was the atonement that was necessary for my sin debt. Jesus destroyed sin's power by dying a sinless death. Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose again to life with all power over sin and death. I believe anyone who confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord and believes in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead to life is saved. Jesus is alive. Salvation is for anyone who believes the truth of Jesus as Lord, born of a virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, crucified a sinless death, buried, and raised to life by God. Soteriology is the study of God's plan and work of Salvation for mankind.

 Salvation is saving from God's righteous judgment (Rom 4:1-11). Salvation relates to the person and work of Jesus Christ. There is no other way to be saved than by Jesus Christ. I believe I am made right with God by faith alone (Rom 5:1). Salvation is a gift. Christ is my sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). The work of Christ on the cross is the only atonement for sin (Rom 3: 21-26). The resurrected Christ secures my justification (Rom 4:25). Christ's redemptive work on the cross raises me to a new spiritual life (Eph. 2:5-7), and it is my guarantee for future resurrection (I Cor. 15:20-23).

 Jesus' redemptive work on the cross is the way to Salvation. God provided Salvation through the person and work of His Son because he is holy. God's holiness and love manifest in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Through the work of Salvation, man can be restored to God through Jesus. Jesus Christ is the spotless lamb. I believe that in Christ, I am made right with God—Salvation from sin's penalty through the work of Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiology

I believe that the church is the gathering of baptized believers. The believers minister to one another, worship God, serve one another, and minister the gospel to unbelievers. The New Testament church is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant agreement in faith and fellowship of the gospel. The church observes two ordinances of Christ: Baptism and communion. Christ and his laws govern the church. The church exercises the gifts, rights, and privileges given to them by the Word. The church works to share the gospel everywhere, even to the end of the earth. The church and its congregation are under the Lordship of Christ. The members of the church are responsible and accountable to Christ. The offices of the church are pastors and deacons. The church is the body of Christ. The local church, in the New Testament, met in homes (Rom. 16:5) for worship (I Cor. 11:18), fellowship (Acts 2:45-46), instruction (Acts 2:42), ministry (Acts 132), and winning the lost (Acts 2:47). Christ is the head of the church (Col 1:18; Eph. 1:22). The Church universal is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33). Jesus Christ is the focus of the church's worship.

 Jesus said he would build his church (Matt 16:18). Baptism is water immersion, a sign of one's new orientation to the coming rule of God. My belief in Jesus shapes my understanding of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is about unity and union with Christ and other baptized believers. Christian Baptism is the total immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior. The believer is raised to life with Christ. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience. The baptized believers of the church partake of the bread and the wine, memorializing the death of the Redeemer and in anticipation of his return. The church experiences the presence of Christ in worship.

Eschatology

At the end of all things, the universe bows down to Jesus Christ as the Lord and God of all (Phil 2:10-11). Jesus will come again one day (Titus 2:14). All of creation will behold the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:5). Eschatology is the study of prophesy and last things. Christ-followers should put away all sin in anticipation of his return (I John 3:3). Everybody will physically die (Heb. 9:27) in the flesh. The soul lives on after physical death in the flesh (Matt 10:28). The soul is the immaterial nature of a person. Death is the separation of the soul and body at the end of physical life (James 2:26). When believers die, they are at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).

There are two eternal destinies for all beings: Heaven and Hell. There is an eternal place for believers that is with the Lord. Jesus himself is preparing the place. There is a place where all beings not in Christ will dwell for all eternity (Matt 23:15). Hell is eternal damnation from the presence of God. The Final judgment will involve all beings not in Christ damned to Hell. All in Christ will be rewarded for their life's work. The righteous will live forever in Heaven with the Lord in their resurrected and glorified bodies. The unrighteous will live forever in Hell. Hell is the place of everlasting punishment for the unrighteous.

I believe God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to an end. Jesus Christ will return to earth in person, glorified. At the return of Christ, the dead will be raised. The raised to life will receive their glorified bodies when the Lord returns. All souls will live forever in resurrected bodies in either heaven or Hell (Matt 8:11; Mark 9:43, 44, 47, 48). No one knows the time of Christ's return.

1. **END NOTES:**

 A. J. Conyers, *A Basic Christian Theology* (Nashville, Tenn: B&H Academic, 1995), 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. This statement is a part of the Nicene Creed. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. [Gordon, Bruce. John Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion: a Biography. Princeton University Press, 2016.] However, John Calvin’s declaration of God’s omnipotence is debated by those who argue that saying God is omnipotent implies that God is complicit in the evil in the world. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. St. Thomas Aquinas ascribed vast knowledge to God. Thomas Aquinas taught God's presence is to be understood in terms of God's power, knowledge and essence (Summa Theologiae I, q.14). Wierenga, Edward, "Omniscience", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/omniscience/>.itation} [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. This is taken from St. Anselm’s work Pros logion. Oppy, Graham, "Ontological Arguments", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/ontological-arguments/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. “Christian theology began after the last disciple and apostle died.  Theology is the first century apostles’ explanation and proclamation of the good news of salvation brought by Christ and the church’s reflection on this matter. Irenaeus, late 2nd century bishop was the first to attempt to set forth a complete account of Christian theology.  Irenaeus was also called the “First Christian Systematic Theologian.” Also in the 2nd Century was a group of Christian thinkers known as apologist defenders of their Christian theology in its 2nd century infancy that they often integrated it with a Greek philosophical perspective. Theology began with the challenges posed to Christian teachings by cultist who presented themselves within the church as truer or higher Christians than the leading heirs of the apostles.  Formal theological reflection came as a result of the confusion and chaos brought on by the cultist.” Olson, Roger E. Story of Christian Theology. IVP Academic, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. Stanley Hauerwas, *Work of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan ; Cambridge, U.K: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 106. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. The question for the existence of God is argued using two lines of thought, an argument that proceeds from the logical necessity of the idea itself (a priori), and an argument that begins with the consequence of a certain reality and agues back to its logical necessity (a posteriori). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. “People are capable of infinite self-deception therefore must turn to scripture and submit to it to interpret it.” , Hays, Richard B. “Salvation by Trust? Reading the Bible Faithfully.” The Christian Century (1902), vol. 114, no. 7, 1997, p. 218–. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. Ambrose, the fourth century Bishop of Milan said, "As in Paradise, God walks in the Holy Scriptures, seeking man." [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. John Webster, “Principles of Systematic Theology,” *Int. J. Syst. Theol. IJST* 11.1 (2009): 56–71, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2400.2008.00423.x. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. WEBSTER, “Principles of Systematic Theology.” [↑](#endnote-ref-13)