

Lecture 12 – The Doctrine of God: Introduction (cont.); Classical Proofs for God’s Existence

“If God is covenant head, then he is exalted above his people; he is transcendent. If he is covenant head, then he is deeply involved with them; he is immanent.”

John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*

Key Terms

Transcendence, immanence, ontology, epistemology, Marcus Aurelius, apologists, natural theology, classical theism, syncretism, analogy, supererrogation, *via negativa*

Objectives

- *Clarify and explain how God relates to His world and to His people in covenant.
- *Consider “classical proofs” of God’s existence.
- *Consider implications of how God relates for Christian discipleship.

The Doctrine of God: Introduction (cont.)

IV. How Does God Relate in Covenant?

Transcendence and immanence

A. These are confusing terms.

1. Two major problems

- a. The facile assumption that transcendence and immanence belong to the same conceptual range, that each is the opposite of the other
- b. Confusion of the order of being (ontology) and the order of knowing (epistemology)

2. Transcendence in neo-orthodox and postmodernist thought

3. Immanence in pantheistic and Process philosophy

4. Both traditions deny covenantal relationship. Both impose atheism.

B. What then are we to make of the terms transcendence and immanence?

Transcendence can be used to refer to:

- ontological difference
- cognitive distance

Immanence can be used to refer to:

- ontological association
- moral proximity and personal intimacy

1. Transcendence: An ontological qualifier

2. Immanence: Term of proximity and relationship

C. Frame’s square of opposition

	Biblical	Unbiblical
Transcendence	1	3
Immanence	2	4

1. God is distinct from creation as its LORD. (biblical)

2. God is involved with creation as its LORD. (biblical)

3. God is infinitely removed from the world. (unbiblical)

4. God is identical to the world. (unbiblical)

V. Covenant Lordship and Covenant Presence

A. Transcendence does not entail unknowability.

B. Immanence does not entail identity.

C. The personal-covenantal implications of transcendence and immanence

Classical Proofs for God's Existence

I. An Historical Introduction to Classical Theism and Natural Theology

Marcus Aurelius

A. Early church apologists and the accommodation to Greek natural theology

Greek method for thinking about God: _____.

1. Supererrogation (the way of eminence)
2. The *via negativa*

B. Syncretism

II. Characteristics of Classical Theism (Thomism)

A. Ontological correspondence

B. Epistemological correspondence

1. The analogy of being (*analogia entis*), the Great Chain of Being

C. Distinction

1. Likeness is not sameness, analogy is not identity.
2. The mystical tradition (pantheism or deification)

D. God's acts are what God is.

Nature precedes function.

1. Affirmation: If God is the sovereign and transcendent Creator in such a manner that His creation is other than He is (the Creator/creation distinction), then His own person or nature cannot be open to being relativized by association with the creation.

E. Distinction between nature and works

1. Classical theism asks: What is God in-and-of-Himself?
2. Nature deals with what is essential. Works are accidental.

F. The doctrine of God is pursued primarily through natural theology (a study of God as He is in-and-of-Himself) rather than through biblical revelation.