The Immanence & Transcendence of God

Systematic Theology

01.18.12
Why study the attributes of God?

- Means of making ourselves sound smart?
- Means of letting people speculate?

“The study of God’s nature should be seen as a means to a more accurate understanding of him and hence a closer personal relationship with him.”

- Millard J. Erickson,

Immanence & Transcendence defined:

**Immanence (God’s activity in creation)**

“God is present and active in his creation, and within the human race, even those members of it that do not believe in or obey him.” - Erickson, 76.

**Transcendence (God’s “otherness” contrasted with creation)**

“God is far “above” the creation in the sense that he is greater than the creation and he is independent of it.” - Grudem, 267.
False Views of God

When we examine these next views of God, think of how holding to these views would impact:

1) Your view of God
2) Your prayer walk with God
Pantheism

GOD (God is all and all is God)

Q: If this is true, what should be the goal of our existence?
A: “Lose yourself” and become one with the universe.

Result: Destroys both the personhood of God and humans.

Grudem, 269.
Mixing vat - persons ultimately lose their personhood
Pantheism means that everything is God and God is everything. “God is all and all is God.” Seneca said, “What is God? … He is all that you see and all that you do not see.” There are a number of different forms of pantheism: materialistic pantheism, held by David Strauss, which believes in the eternity of matter and that matter is the cause of all life; hylozoism, the modern form held by Leibniz, which holds that all matter has a principle of life or psychical properties; neutralism, which says that life is neutral, neither mind nor matter; idealism, which suggests that ultimate reality is really mind, either individual mind or infinite mind; philosophical mysticism, which is absolute monism, teaching that all reality is a unit.

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU
Dualism (Good god & Evil god in a cosmic battle)
“New Study Shows Trends in Tithing and Donating”

• Whether they believe in the principle of tithing or not, few Americans give away that much money. In 2007, the research revealed that just 5% of adults tithed.

• Not surprisingly, some population groups were more likely than others to have given away at least ten percent of their income. Among the most generous segments were evangelicals (24% of whom tithed); conservatives (12%); people who had prayed, read the Bible and attended a church service during the past week (12%); charismatic or Pentecostal Christians (11%); and registered Republicans (10%).

Deism

God as an “absentee landlord” who is too remote to be involved in the day-to-day events of His creation.

Deism

GOD

CREATION
Right theology, practical atheism

“What I ‘believe’
God of “Sunday Church”

“How I live”
Professing Christian, Practical Atheist

Any verses come to mind?
Immanence & Transcendence

GOD

CREATION
The Christian view is unique: God is separate from His creation but involved in it.
Immanence

- Colossians 1:17 “And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”
- Hebrews 1:3 “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”
Transcendence

• Isaiah 6:1-5 “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!””
Transcendence & Immanence

- Ephesians 4:6-8 “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. 8 Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”
Transcendence & Immanence

- Jeremiah 23:23-24 “Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.”
Importance of Immanence

1) God is not limited to only working through miracles
2) God can use non-Christians
3) God reveals Himself in nature - logic/order in the natural realm

Erickson, 77-78.
Importance of Transcendence:

1) God is not bound by the limitations of the creation
2) Human beings are not supreme but are given value from above
3) We can never raise ourselves to God’s level - discovery of God vs. Self-discovery/ Look to Christ vs. Look within
4) Reverence for God is necessary for a proper relationship with Him
Picture of Immanence & Transcendence

• Incarnation of Christ