

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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GOD THE ALMIGHTY CREATOR

Our English word *omnipotent* is derived directly from the Latin *omnipotentia*, which, as you can see, is formed by *omnis* (all) and *potential* (power), thus its meaning, “having all power or might.” In classical Christian theism, *omnipotence* is one of the attributes of God.¹ We find this attribute repeatedly underscored throughout the Scriptures. The book of Revelation, in particular, accents this attribute of God. “Allelulia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (KJV).² You may have encountered in a college class or elsewhere some smart aleck asking the question, “Can God make a rock so big He can’t move it?” Such questions contain obvious contradictions and are therefore strictly meaningless.³ The omnipotence of God is limited *only* by His essence or nature and not by anything external to Himself. “Thus,” notes Richard Muller, “the fact that God cannot do evil, cannot die, and cannot cease to be Father, Son, and Spirit, is not a limit on or a contradiction of His *omnipotentia*.”⁴ The opening verse of the Bible declares the omnipotence of God (Genesis 1:1). He is the almighty Creator of all things. The early church grasped the critical importance of this doctrine and this is reflected in the Apostles’ Creed. “The doctrine of creation,” writes Robert A. Morey, “was viewed as the beginning point of all theology.”⁵ “What, then, is the purpose of creation? It is *the glory of God and the manifestation of his perfections*, says Charles Hodge. Its purpose is to serve God’s pleasure. This is always true of created things. Inventors, human creators, build or make what they do in order to serve specific purposes they have in mind. Creations serve their creators. Inventions serve their inventors. Buildings serve their builders. So it is with God, *All things were created through him and for him*. (Col. 1:16). Why does God create? God creates to display his glory. *It is God’s good pleasure to bring the excellencies of his triune being into manifestation in his creatures, and so prepare glory and honour for himself in those creatures*, Bavinck notes. The whole world, says Bavinck, is but *a mirror in which he sees his excellencies at play*. God’s rational creatures are meant to contemplate the glory of God in his creation. The visible is to direct us to the Invisible One. *How clearly creation reveals the perfections of God!* Says à Brakel. All that is lovely, excellent, and desirable in creation is but a reflection of the same in God himself. Beauty in the world speaks to us of the greater beauty of its Maker. Power in creation points to the greater power of the Creator. *Accustom yourself to behold a creation in such a fashion that you may behold God in it*, counsels à Brakel. He directs us *in a godly frame of mind to go outdoors and life up [our] eyes on high to observe the immeasurable dimensions of the universe . . . as well as its enormous space, and consider*

*[ourselves] as grain[s] of sand surrounded by all this. Take in creation's beauty in the sky, among the trees, or along the seashore. Observe the diversity of colours, smells, tastes, sounds, and shapes. No education is required to discern what one may observe in, and learn from creation, á Brakel insists."*⁶

- I. **THE GOD MEN INVENT.** Wrong views of God and of our relationship to Him are the chief source of false religion and idolatry. God is not:
 - A. **A Limited Being.** This was one of the major problems that Paul saw in much of pagan religion (verse 24). Sadly, there are those today (within the ranks of Evangelicalism) who likewise embraced the teaching that God is a limited being."⁷
 - B. **A Remote Being.** God is not removed from us. He is not an absentee-landowner. Because He is a God that is near to us (verse 27), we are responsible and accountable to Him.
 - C. **An Abstract Concept.** God is not simply a force or a source of energy. He is a person and acts according to His nature.
- II. **THE GOD OF THE BIBLE.** The Apostle Paul declares to the Athenians that he serves the true and living God.
 - A. **He is Omnipotent.** He is a personal being distinct from creation. He is the Creator and preserver of all things.
 - B. **He is Omnipresent.** He is not far from any one of us, but is everywhere – beholding (Hebrews 4:13), directing (Ephesians 1:11) and controlling all things (Romans 8:28). We are dependent and responsible to Him. This is Paul's underlying promise. All that exists does so because God is the Creator. We are dependent on Him because we are His creatures and as believers we are dependent on Him in a special sense. Our spiritual life and continuance is not due to any law, nor is it innate⁸ – we are absolutely dependent upon Him for everything.

Matthew Barrett makes this helpful observation. "One distinction too important and too powerful to miss is the distinction between God's absolute and ordinate power. *Absolute* power refers to God's ability to do all things, including those things that are possible for God but that God, for any variety of reasons, chooses not to do. In the medieval era, theologians like Duns Scotus abused God's absolute power. So high did Scotus elevate God's *will* that God's ability to do anything meant he could even sin! God's power had become arbitrary; his will turned into *absolute indifference*. But others saw this abuse for what it was, arguing instead that God's will cannot be divorced from his moral nature (a point I stressed in chap. 5). Since God is simple, his will and nature are one, and since his nature is identical with all his perfections (holiness included), in no way can his will be set

over against any attribute. God's *ordinate* power, on the other hand, refers to those things that God has ordained, decreed, and willed to do. God's ordinate power is not another power in God but is part of his absolute power. It is only because he has the power to do anything and everything that he has the power to do those specific things he has ordained and willed to do."⁹

CONCLUSION: The doctrine of creation is rightly considered one of the pillars of Biblical Christianity, and this is one reason why it has been the focus of opposition down through the years. "Once God is no longer viewed as the Creator of the heaven and earth, then He is no longer the God who gives the world its existence. He becomes just one of many gods, all of whom derive their existence from the world!"¹⁰ "God," said VanTil, "is the Creator; the world is his creation. Over and over again in class he would draw two circles on the blackboard: a large circle representing God and a smaller circle below it representing the creation. The two were connected by lines representing providence and revelation, but VanTil emphasized the distinctness of the two circles from one another. He insisted that Christianity has a *two-circle* worldview, as opposed to secular thought, which has only *one-circle* thinking. Nonbiblical thought makes all reality equal: if there is a God, he is equal to the world. But for Christianity, God is the sovereign Creator and Lord; the world is in no sense equal to him."¹¹

ENDNOTES

¹ There are at the present time a number of theologians claiming the *Evangelical* label, but who have openly repudiated classical theism with its emphasis on God as being all-knowing (omniscient), all-powerful (omnipotent), all-present (omnipresent) and unchangeable (immutable). For a critical evaluation of this school of thought, see Robert B. Strimple, "What Does God Know?" in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, ed. J. H. Armstrong (Moody, 1996), pp. 139-154.

² The NIV Bible reads, "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns." The Greek word *pantokratōr* is the compound of *pas* (all) and *kratō* (power, might), thus the equivalent of omnipotent. This designation of God is used nine times in Revelation, cf. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22.

³ cf. A. J. Hoover's excellent little book, *Don't You Believe It! Poking Holes in Faulty Logic* (Moody, 1982), p. 17.

⁴ R. A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Baker, 1985), p. 208.

⁵ R. A. Morey, *Battle of the Gods: The Gathering Storm in Modern Evangelicalism* (Crown, 1989), p. 155. Not everyone has grasped this significance. O. Sydney Barr in his exposition of the Apostles' Creed makes no mention of the doctrine of creation and passes over the phrase, "Maker of heaven and earth," in quick fashion; cf. his *From the Apostles' Faith to the Apostles' Creed* (Oxford, 1964), p. 20.

⁶ T. L. Johnson, *The Identity and Attributes of God* (Banner of Truth Trust, 2019), p. 89.

⁷ Clark Pinnock, perhaps the most noted of the new breed of Process Evangelicals, declares outright, "I stand against classical theism." Cf. his essay in *Predestination and Freewill: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (IVP, 1986), and my review of this book in *The Westminster Theological Journal* (Vol. XLVIII, Fall 1986, No. 2), pp. 391-398. Pinnock's "god" is a very finite god who cannot know the future or control events as they unfold.

⁸ One of the most dreadful heresies of modern times is that spawned by the Word of Faith teachers (the health and wealth gospel that is promoted by Paul Crouch on TBN). These include Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Fred Price, Casey Treat, Jerry Savelle, et. Al., cf. Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity In Crisis* (Harvest House, 1993), and D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel: A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement* (Hendrickson, 1988), for documentation and refutation.

⁹ M. Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God* (Baker Books, 2019), p. 189.

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, p. 157.

¹¹ As cited by John Frame, *Cornelius VanTil: An Analysis of His Thought* (P&R, 1996), p. 53.