

The Thiselton Companion to Christian Theology

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in view of the merits of Jesus Christ . . . kept free from all stain of original sin.” Sometimes it is claimed that Gen. 3:15 and Luke 1:28 support this. But Gen. 3:15 is hardly relevant to this issue, and Luke 1:28 describes Mary not as “full of grace,” as in the Vulgate, but as “favored one” (NRSV). This does not specify what the grace of God will bring, other than the birth of Jesus Christ. Traditions in some of the Church Fathers about Mary as a “new Eve” hardly provide a firm basis for the Roman interpretation. We note elsewhere that the term *Theotokos* related to Christology rather than directly to Mary. Neither Eastern Orthodox nor Protestant theologians generally endorse this doctrine explicitly. Bernard and Thomas Aquinas also did not seem to endorse this idea explicitly.

Immanence

Traditionally in Christian theology the immanence of God denotes God’s being or acting *within* humankind or *within* the world, in contrast to God’s transcendence, which denotes his being *beyond* or *above* humankind or the world. But this contrast alone is too simple. For in Christian theology God is both transcendent and immanent; the terms are complementary, not alternatives. Indeed, pantheism, not theism, regards God as entirely immanent in the world, without qualification. It is more accurate to regard God’s immanence as his animating and sustaining the world and humankind by his near presence, and God’s transcendence as denoting his otherness, holiness, and difference from the world and humankind. As immanent, God energizes the wills of human beings by his Holy Spirit; as transcendent he is never to be equated with the world, the “All,” or his creatures, and his Spirit is holy. Pantheism and Deism are exaggerations of only one side of this dialectic. Popular thought sometimes accuses liberalism of urging God’s immanence, and Karl Barth and others as urging his transcendence. But this would be a simplistic caricature, although one can see why such a caricature is sometimes drawn and that it is not entirely invalid. (*See also* Transcendence.)

Imminence of the End

This term is most likely to be used in connection with belief in the imminent return of Christ, or the imminent parousia of Christ. Most NT specialists, but not all, ascribe this belief to Jesus, Paul, and the earliest Christians. They often cite some well-worn NT texts. The most frequent in the Gospels is Mark 9:1: Jesus “said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.’” This is supplemented by Matt. 10:23, “You will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” G. B. Caird and others trace to J. Weiss and A. Schweitzer the “imminence” interpretation, that is, “the belief that the end was imminent” (*The Language and Imagery of the Bible* [London: Duckworth, 1980], 250). Caird argues, however, that there is considerable counterevidence against this view. According to Mark 13, Caird argues, “the Son of Man is to come only after a long series of warnings — wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution, the