



# God and Being: An Enquiry

*George Pattison*

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Western theology has long regarded "Being" as a category pre-eminently applicable to God, the supreme Being who is also the source of all existence. This idea was challenged in the later philosophy of Martin Heidegger and identified with the position he called "ontotheology." Heidegger's critique was repeated and radicalized in so-called postmodern thought, to the point that many theologians and philosophers of religion now want to talk instead of God as "beyond Being" or "without Being."

Against this background, *God and Being* attempts to look again at why the ideas of God and Being got associated in the first place and to investigate whether the critique of ontotheology really does require us to abandon this link. After exploring how this apparently abstract idea has informed Christian views of salvation and of the relationship between God and world, George Pattison examines how such categories as time, space, language, human relationships and embodiment affect our understanding of God and Being.

Pattison concludes that whilst Heidegger's critique has considerable force, it remains legitimate to speak of God as Being under certain restricted conditions. The most important of these is that God is better conceived in terms of purely possible Being rather than (as in classic Christian theology) "actual" Being. This leaves open possibilities of dialogue with, e.g., non-theistic religious traditions and with science that are foreclosed by traditional conceptions. Ultimately, however, all basic religious ideas must issue from and be seen to serve the requirements of embodied love.

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