

Calvin, John. John Calvin (1509–1564) was born in Noyon, Picardy, France, but became the Reformer of Geneva, Switzerland. A humanist scholar in Paris when he was drawn to Reformation principles, he based much of his theological thought on the writings of Augustine. In addition to his systemization of theology, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Reformer John Calvin was a pioneer Protestant exegete of the Bible. *Calvin's Commentaries on Holy Scripture* are still widely used commentaries. Through Geneva Academy, Calvin and his colleagues also pioneered in evangelism training, Protestant scholarship, and a full-orbed Christian living ethic.

Apologetics of John Calvin. The followers of John Calvin are not united in their interpretation of his apologetic approach. Their number includes classical apologists and presuppositionalists (*see* CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS ; PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS).

The presuppositionalists, with roots in Herman Dooyeweerd are headed by Cornelius Van Til and such of his followers as Greg Bahnsen and John Frame. The classical apologists follow B. B. Warfield's understanding of Calvin and are represented by Kenneth Kantzer, John Gerstner, and R. C. Sproul (see Kantzer). Calvin would have identified with classical apologists.

Calvin's Roots in Classical Apologetics. Contrary to the presuppositional view, Calvin's view of the use of human reason in the proclamation of the Gospel did not differ significantly from great thinkers before him. As Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Calvin believed that the general revelation of God is manifest in nature and ingrained in the hearts of all men (*see* REVELATION, GENERAL).

The Innate Sense of Deity. "That there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute," Calvin said in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.3.1. He contended that "there is no nation so barbarous, no race so brutish, as not to be imbued with the conviction that there is a God" (ibid.). This "sense of Deity is so naturally engraven on the human heart, in the fact, that the very reprobate are forced to acknowledge it" (ibid., 1.4.4).

God's Existence and the Soul's Immortality. In Part One of *Institutes* , Calvin views "the invisible and incomprehensible essence of God, to a certain extent, made visible in his works" and "proofs of the soul's immortality " (ibid., 1.5.1–2). For "on each of his [God's] works his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull

and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse" (ibid.). Calvin did not formally elaborate these, as did Aquinas, but he would likely have accepted the teleological argument, the cosmological argument, and even the moral argument. The first two can be seen in his emphasis on design and causality and the last from his belief in a natural moral law. Commenting on Romans 1:20–21 , Calvin concludes that Paul "plainly testifies here, that God has presented to the minds of all the means of knowing him, having so manifested himself by his works, that they must necessarily see what of themselves they seek not to know—that there is some God" (Calvin, 2).

Natural Law . For Calvin this innate knowledge of God includes knowledge of his righteous law. He held that, since "the Gentiles have the righteousness of the law naturally engraved on their minds, we certainly cannot say that they are altogether blind as to the rule of life" (*Institutes*, 1.2.22). He calls this moral awareness "natural law" that is "sufficient for their righteous condemnation" but not for salvation (ibid.). By this natural law "the judgment of conscience" is able to distinguish between the just from the unjust (*New Testament Commentaries*, 48). God's righteous nature "is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse" (*Institutes*, 1.5.1).

Not only is natural law clear, but it is also specific. There "is imprinted on their hearts a discrimination and judgment, by which they distinguish between justice and injustice, honesty and dishonesty." According to Calvin, even peoples with no knowledge of God's Word "prove their knowledge . . . that adultery, theft, and murder are evils, and honesty is to be esteemed" (*New Testament Commentaries*, 48). God has left proof of himself for all people in both creation and conscience.

Since a natural moral law implies a Moral Law Giver, Calvin would have agreed with what later became known as the moral argument for God's existence. Indeed, his acceptance of natural law places him squarely in the tradition of the classical apologetics of Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas.

The Evidence for Inspiration of Scripture. Calvin repeatedly spoke of "proofs" of the Bible's inspiration. These included the unity of Scripture, its majesty, its prophecies, and its miraculous confirmation. Calvin wrote: "We shall see . . . that the volume of sacred Scripture very far surpasses all other writings. Nay, if we look at it with clear eyes and unbiased judgment, it will forthwith present itself with a divine majesty which will subdue our presumptuous opposition, and force us to do it homage" (*Institutes*, 1.7.4). In the light of the evidence, even unbelievers "will be compelled to confess that the Scripture exhibits clear evidence of its being spoken by God and, consequently, of its containing his heavenly doctrine (ibid.).

The Vitiating Effects of Depravity. Calvin was quick to point out that depravity obscures this natural revelation of God. Calvin wrote: "Your idea of His [God's] nature is not clear unless you acknowledge Him to be the origin and foundation of all goodness. Hence, would arise both confidence in Him and a desire of cleaving to Him, did not the depravity of the human mind lead it away from the proper course of investigation" (ibid., 1.11.2).

The Role of the Holy Spirit. Calvin believed that complete certainty of God and the truth of Scripture comes only by the Holy Spirit. He wrote: “Our faith in doctrine is not established until we have a perfect conviction that God is its author. Hence, the highest proof of Scripture is uniformly taken from the character of him whose word it is. . . . Our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from a higher source than human conjecture, judgments, or reasons; namely, the secret testimony of the Spirit” (ibid., 1.7.1; cf. 1.8.1) (*see* HOLY SPIRIT, ROLE IN APOLOGETICS).

But it is important to remember, as R. C. Sproul points out, that “the *testimonium* is not placed over reason as a form of mystical subjectivism. Rather, it goes beyond and transcends reason” (Sproul, 341). In Calvin’s own words, “But I answer that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit on the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit” (ibid.)

God working through the objective evidence, provides subjective certainty that the Bible is the Word of God (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR).

Conclusion. Although John Calvin was, by virtue of his place in history, preoccupied primarily with the disputes over authority, soteriology and ecclesiology, nevertheless, the outline of his approach to apologetics seems clear. He falls into the general category of classical apologetics. This is evident both from his belief that “proofs” for God are available to the unregenerate mind and from his stress on general revelation and natural law (*see* LAW, NATURE AND KINDS OF).

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Camus, Albert. Albert Camus (1913–1960) was a French novelist and essayist whose primary contributions were made during and after World War II. *The Stranger*, his first novel, and *The Myth of Sisyphus* (both 1942) were followed after the war by *The Plague* (1947) and *The Rebel* (1951). His last major work, *The Fall*, appeared in 1956, and in 1957 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. He died in an automobile accident.

Views of God and Life. Camus was part of a small movement of French atheists (*see* ATHEISM) associated with existentialism and particularly with Jean-Paul Sartre. He began as a nihilist (*see* NIHILISM), believing that in view of life’s absurdities, the only serious

philosophical question was suicide. He gradually moved to a more humanistic position (*see* HUMANISM, SECULAR).

In view of the denial of God, Camus, like other atheists, was left with no anchor for moral absolutes. Nonetheless, he espoused a moralistic humanism, speaking out strongly about what he regarded as moral evils, including war and capital punishment. Even his moral protest against theism belies basic moral values. The freedom of the individual was paramount; the value he placed on human life left him opposed to suicide.

Camus argued forcefully that theism is antihumanitarian, in view of the intolerable suffering inflicted on humankind (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF). In *The Plague* the dilemma he sets before theism is described through a story of a plague caused by rats. His reasoning can be stated:

One must either join the doctor and fight the plague or join the priest and not fight the plague.

Not to join the doctor and fight the plague is antihumanitarian.

To fight the plague is to fight against God, who sent it.

Therefore, if humanitarianism is right, theism is wrong.

Evaluation. Positives in Camus’s Thought. From the beginning in *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus incisively penetrated the absurdity of a life lived apart from God. In his earlier nihilistic moods he saw the futility of suicide. His humanitarian philosophy demonstrated a deeply moral concern about the plight of humanity. On his journey into existentialism, he came to see the failure of his earlier nihilism. He also moved toward an understanding of what Christians call human depravity. Throughout his life, Camus reflected a deep need for God.

Negative Dimensions. The argument from evil against theism wrongly assumes that God is the author of all evil in the world. No responsibility is assigned to human beings for their sinful actions in inflicting suffering on themselves (*see* FREE WILL). The Bible makes it clear that the rebellion of Adam and Eve and their descendants causes evil and death (Rom. 5:12). All of nature is infected by the fall (Romans 8).

Also, Camus assumes that it is inconsistent with Christian belief in the sovereignty of God for Christians to have compassion for those who suffer. Both in principle and in practice, Christianity has offered more respite to the sufferer at every level than has non-Christian philosophy. Even agnostic Bertrand Russell acknowledged that what the world needed was Christian love and compassion (Russell, 579). Only in Christianity has something been done through the death and resurrection of Christ to stop the plague of sin (Rom. 4:25 ; 1 Cor. 15:1–4).

Like many other atheists, Camus revealed a longing for God (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). He wrote, “for anyone who is alone, with God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful” (*The Fall*, 33). He added elsewhere, “Nothing can discourage the appetite for divinity in the heart of man” (*The Rebel*, 147).

The novelist's sense of moral right and wrong should have led him to posit a Moral Law Giver whose presence alone accounts for the eradicable moral conviction that some injustices are absolutely wrong (*see* MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD). As the former Oxford atheist, C. S. Lewis, asked himself, "Just how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line." He adds, "What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust. . . . Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own," he concludes. "But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies." Thus, "in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist—in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless—I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense" (Lewis, 45, 46).

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Canaanites, Slaughter of the. When the Israelites reached the Canaanite city of Jericho at the beginning of their invasion of the land of promise, Joshua and his soldiers "utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword" (Josh. 6:21). Bible critics charge that such ruthless destruction of innocent life and property cannot be morally justified. It seems contrary to God's command not to kill innocent human beings (see Exod. 20:13).

Reasons for Destruction. Defenses of the actions of ancient Israel fall into three categories: (1) a challenge of the presumption of moral innocence; (2) delineation of implications from the unique theocratic nature of the command, and (3) examination of the conditions under which it was executed.

Scripture makes it very clear that Canaanites were far from "innocent." The description of their sins in Leviticus 18 is vivid: "The land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its

iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants" (vs. 25). They were cancerously immoral, "defiled" with every kind of "abomination," including child sacrifice (vss. 21 , 24 , 26).

God had given the people of Palestine over 400 years to repent of their wickedness. The people of that land had every opportunity to turn from their wickedness. According to Genesis 15:16 , God told Abraham that his descendants would return to inherit this land, but not yet, for the iniquity of the people was not yet full. This prophetic statement indicated that God would not destroy the people of the land until their guilt merited complete destruction in judgment.

In this, Joshua and the people of Israel were not acting according to their own initiative. The destruction of Jericho was carried out by the army of Israel as the instrument of judgment upon the sins of these people by the righteous Judge of all the earth. No other nation before or since has possessed this special relation to God or this mandate (cf. Exod. 19:5 ; Deut. 4:8 ; Ps. 147:20 ; Rom. 3:1–2). Consequently, anyone who would question the justification of this act is questioning God's justice.

God is sovereign over all life and has the right to take what he gives. Job declared "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21). Moses recorded God's words: "See now that I myself am he! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. 32:39). Human beings do not create life, and they do not have the right to take it (Exod. 20:13), except under guidelines laid by the one who owns all human life.

God permits life taking in self-defense (Exod. 22:2), in capital punishment (Gen. 9:6), and in just war (cf. Gen. 14:14–20). And when there is a theocratic command to do so, as in the case of Israel and the Canaanites, its moral justification is vouchsafed by God's sovereignty.

As for the killing of the children as part of this command, it should be noted that, given the cancerous state of the society into which they were born, they could not avoid its fatal pollution. If children who die before the age of accountability go to heaven (*see* INFANTS, SALVATION OF), this was an act of God's mercy to take them into his holy presence from this unholy environment. Ultimately, however, the primary argument throughout Scripture is that God is sovereign over life (Deut. 32:39 ; Job 1:21). He can order its end according to his will, and his people can have utter confidence that God's actions are for good.

Conclusion. In the case of the Canaanites, it was necessary in establishing a holy nation and priesthood to exterminate the godlessness of the city and its people. If anything had remained, except that which was taken into the treasure house of the Lord, there would have always been the threat of heathen influence to pull the people away from the pure worship of the Lord. As the subsequent history of Israel shows, that is what happened.

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Canonicity. See BIBLE, CANONICITY OF .

Carnell, Edward John. Edward John Carnell (1919–1967) was a pioneer apologist of the evangelical renaissance after World War II. A founding faculty member at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1948, he served as president from 1955–1959. He suffered from depression and life-long insomnia which occasioned his confessed addiction to barbiturates. He tragically died of an overdose of sleeping pills, whether accidental or intentional, at the early age of forty-eight.

Carnell wrote eight books, most of which deal with apologetics: *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (1948); *The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr* (1951); *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (1952); *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic* (1957); *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (1959); *The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life* (1960); and *The Burden of Søren Kierkegaard* (1965). Articles and reviews also touch on apologetics. Of special note is the three-part article, “How Every Christian Can Defend His Faith” in *Moody Monthly* (January, February, March 1950).

The influences that molded Carnell’s thought are summarized by one of his foremost disciples, Gordon Lewis: “At Wheaton College in the classes of Gordon H. Clark, Carnell found the test of noncontradiction (see FIRST PRINCIPLES). The test of fitness to empirical fact was championed by Edgar S. Brightman at Boston University where Carnell earned his Ph.D.” Finally, the requirement of relevance to personal experience became prominent during Carnell’s Th.D. research at Harvard University in the study of Søren Kierkegaard and Reinhold Niebuhr” (Lewis, *Testing Christianity’s Truth Claims*, 176).

Carnell’s Apologetic. Carnell was hypothetical or presuppositional (see PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS) in his approach, in contrast to a classical apologetic method.

Carnell defined apologetics as “that branch of Christian theology which has the task of defending the faith.” He added, “There is no ‘official’ or ‘normative’ approach to apologetics.” Instead, “The approach is governed by the climate of the times. This means, as it were, that an apologist must play it by ear” (*Kingdom of Love*, 6).

Looking back over his own apologetic efforts, he wrote, “In my own books on apologetics I have consistently tried to build on some useful point of contact between the gospel and culture.” For example, “In *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, the appeal was to the law of noncontradiction; in *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion* it was to values, and in *Christian Commitment* it was to the judicial sentiment. In this book [*The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life*] I am appealing to the law of love” (ibid., 6).

Rejecting Classical Arguments. Like other presuppositionalists, Carnell rejected the validity of traditional theistic arguments (see GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). In this he follows many of the arguments of skeptics, such as David Hume, and agnostics (see AGNOSTICISM), such as Immanuel Kant.

The basic problems with theistic arguments. The fundamental reason Carnell rejects theistic reasoning is its starting point. It begins in experience and ends in skepticism (*An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 126f.). In fact, Carnell lists seven objections:

1. Empiricism ends in skepticism. “If all the mind has to work with are sense-perceptions as reports to the mind of what is going on in the external world, knowledge can never rise to the universal and the necessary, for from flux only flux can come” (ibid., 129).
2. The principle of economy eliminates the Christian God. Hume set the pace for empiricists by insisting that the cause be proportionate to the effect, but not necessarily greater. An infinite effect dictates an infinite cause, but a finite effect need not.
3. The fallacy of impartation. Even “granted that a cause *may* have more perfections than are seen in the effect, . . . the finite universe does *not require* for its explanation the existence of an infinite cause.”
4. Fallacy of one God. How can we be assured that the God proved in the first argument is the same Deity as the moral Governor? Since none need be infinite, for the effect is finite, there is room for thousands of gods.
5. Fallacy of anticipation. Thomas Aquinas used the same arguments as did Aristotle, but came out with the differing conclusion of a personal God. Was this not because Thomas *already* had heart-experience of the true God?
6. Predicament of commitment. Once we are committed to an empirical position, how can we show that what we have demonstrated is the Father of Jesus Christ? The data of nature are satisfied by Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover, so why move on to the Trinity?
7. Nonempirical presuppositions. “To prove God’s existence from the flux found in nature requires concepts that cannot be found in nature. . . . To know the cause one must first know the uncaused. . . . Thus empirical arguments are successful only if one begins with concepts that are significant when God is already known, for he alone is unmoved, uncaused, noncontingent, perfect, and absolute” (ibid., 133–34). Even “a chip on the statue or a flaw on the canvas makes the artist inferior. . . . In short, the universe evinces too much evil in it to bear the weight of the teleological argument” (ibid., 139).

At best, empirical theistic arguments have only “nuisance value,” showing that empiricism is insufficient and pointing to something else beyond the empirical (ibid., 152).

Rejection of Other “Tests for Truth.” Carnell reviews and discards other tests for truth.

1. *Instincts* “cannot be a test for truth, since they cannot distinguish between what is legitimately natural to the species and what is acquired. Only the mind can do that.”
2. *Custom* is an inadequate test because “customs can be good or bad, true or false. Something beyond and outside of custom, therefore, must test the validity of customs themselves.”
3. *Tradition* , a more normative body of customs handed down by a group from early times, is insufficient. “There are in existence so many traditions, so conflicting in essentials, that only in a madhouse could all be justified.”
4. *Consensus gentium* , or the “consent of the nations,” fails as a test for truth. All once believed that the world was the center of the universe. “A proposition must be true to be worthy of the belief of all, but it does not follow that what is believed by all is true.”
5. *Feeling* is insufficient, for “without reason to guide it, feeling is irresponsible.”
6. *Sense perception* is at best “a source for truth, not its definition or test. Our senses often deceive us.”
7. *Intuition* cannot test truth, since we cannot detect false intuitions, of which there are many.”
8. *Correspondence* of an idea to reality cannot be a test. “If reality is extra-ideational, then how can we compare our idea of the mind with it?”
9. *Pragmatism* is inadequate, for on a purely pragmatic ground there is no way to distinguish between materialism’s and theism’s opposing views of the highest ultimate (whether material or spiritual reality). Further, a pragmatist has no right, according to his theory, to expect his theory to be verified by future experience, since he has no basis on which to believe in the regularity of the world.

Carnell argues all deductive proofs to be inadequate, because “reality cannot be connected by formal logic alone. . . . Logical truth cannot pass into material truth until the facts of life are introduced into the picture.” And inductive proofs are invalid tests for truth, for they cannot rise above probability. “A premise is demonstrated only when it is the necessary implication of a self-evident premise or when its contradiction is shown to be false” (*Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 48–53, 105).

The Necessity of Innate Ideas. One alternative to empiricism, then, is a kind of “Christian rationalism.” Augustine taught that “the mind by natural endowment from the Creator enjoys immediate apprehension of those standards which make our search for the true, the good, and the beautiful meaningful.” For “to speak meaningfully of the true, the good, and the beautiful, . . . we must have criteria; but criteria that are universal and necessary must be found other than in the flux of sense perception.” Otherwise, “how do we know that a thing must be coherent to be true, if the soul, by nature, is not in possession of the conviction?” And “how is it that we are able

confidently to say that what is good today will be good tomorrow, unless we lodge our theory of the good in something outside the process of history?” In brief, “how can we know what the character of all reality is, so as to act wisely unless God tells us?” (*ibid.*, 152–57).

Carnell believes the laws of logic to be innate evidence for God (*see* LOGIC). People have an inborn sense of the rules for right thinking. Therefore, the rules must be innate. Apart from the God revealed in Scripture, it would be meaningless to say that murder is wrong today, so it will be wrong tomorrow. That we can make such a statement is a verification that an Author of our moral nature exists.

There also is a knowledge of God through nature. The world is regular; it shows proof of a God who makes things that are coherent. We can make sense of our existence, and we should not be able to, except by this presupposition or hypothesis.

A Presuppositional Basis for All Knowledge. A second alternative to empiricism confirms the first. The second entails an existential analysis of what makes human life meaningful (*see* Lewis, “Three Sides to Every Story”).

All thought involves assumptions (*ibid.*, 91, 95). Carnell recognizes that “It may be asked why we make assumptions at all. Why not stay with the facts? The answer to this is *very easy* indeed! We make assumptions because we must make assumptions to think at all. The best assumptions are those which can account for the totality of reality” (*ibid.*, 94). Thus, like the scientific method we must begin with a “hypothesis” and then proceed to test it (*ibid.*, 89f.).

The Christian hypothesis is the best presupposition. “The Christian assumes both God and the Scriptures” (*ibid.*, 101). Actually, “God is the Christian’s only major premise, but this God is known through the Scriptures” (*ibid.*).

As to the charge of circular reasoning, Carnell answers frankly, “The Christian begs the question by assuming the truth of God’s existence to establish that very existence. Indeed! This is true for establishing the validity of any ultimate. The truth of the law of [non]contradiction” must be assumed to prove the validity of that axiom (*see* FIRST PRINCIPLES). Nature must be assumed to prove nature” (*ibid.*). Actually, “strict demonstration of a first postulate is impossible, as Aristotle pointed out, for it leads either to infinite regress or to circular reasoning” (*ibid.*, 102).

This is not to say that some hypotheses are not better informed than others.

The Inadequacy of Tests for Truth. “The truth is a quality of that judgment or proposition which, when followed out into the total witness of facts in our experience, does not disappoint our expectations” (*Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 45). Truth is what corresponds to God’s mind. It is thinking God’s thoughts after him (*ibid.*, 47).

The inadequacy of deductive tests for truth. Carnell rejects both strictly deductive and inductive arguments as ways to establish the truth of Christianity. In their place he favors a presuppositional approach. Deductive proofs are rejected because “When one demonstrates a

proposition, he shows that it is the necessary conclusion of a premise which is already known to be true. . . . One can easily detect that pure demonstration is operative only within a system of formal symbols, as in logic and mathematics” (ibid., 104).

The inadequacy of inductive tests for truth. Inductive reasoning (see INDUCTIVE METHOD) is rejected as an adequate test for the truth of Christianity for “here one cannot rise above probability” (ibid., 105). No real proof is possible with a probability argument, since the opposite is always possible.

The inadequacy of general revelation. While some appeal is made to general revelation (see REVELATION, GENERAL) as a point of contact, Carnell argues that it is an inadequate basis for knowing the truth about God. Carnell agreed with Calvin that general revelation “ought not only excite us to the worship of God, but likewise to awaken and arouse us to the hope of future life. But, notwithstanding the clear representations given by God in the mirror of his works . . . such is our stupidity, that, always inattentive to these obvious testimonies we derive no advantage from them.” We must then make recourse to special revelation (*Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 159–72).

The need for special revelation. Since general revelation is inadequate, there is a need to presuppose the truth of special revelation. Therefore, the appeal to special revelation in Scripture is—like any other hypothesis—verifiable if its resulting system is horizontally self-consistent and vertically conforms to reality.

Carnell stresses that trading natural for special revelation does not divide Christian epistemology. There is a single major premise, that God who has revealed himself in Scripture exists. This premise strengthens the faith of one who believes, “for faith is a resting of the soul in the sufficiency of the evidence.” The Bible is needed to give us more evidence. For “truth” is systematically constructed meaning, and if the Bible fulfills this standard, it is just as true as Lambert’s law of transmission. Any hypothesis is verified when it smoothly interprets life (ibid., 175).

Carnell defends both the fact and necessity of special revelation. No philosophical argument proves revelation cannot take place, for “one can know whether God has revealed Himself or not only after examining all the facts of reality, for any one fact overlooked may be the very revelation itself. . . . To track God down, therefore, one must at least be everywhere at the same time, which is to say, he must be God Himself.” In essence, “if a man says there is no God, he simply makes himself God, and thus revelation is made actual. If he says there is a God, the only way he can know this is by God’s having revealed Himself.” For “the fundamental reason why we need a special revelation is to answer the question, What must I do to be saved? Happiness is our first interest, but this happiness cannot be ours until we know just how God is going to dispose of us at the end of history” (ibid., 175–78).

The Systematic-Consistency Test. Two tests help us evaluate the truth of a worldview: First, it must be logically consistent; second, it must explain all the relevant facts. These join as one criteria called “systematic consistency.” “Accept that revelation which, when examined, yields a system of thought which is horizontally self-consistent and which vertically fits the facts of

history.” The Bible is not arbitrarily accepted as the Word of God. To elect any other position would ignore the facts (ibid., 190).

The Negative Test: Noncontradiction. The basic rational test for truth is the law of noncontradiction. It is an innate necessity for human thought and life. Without the law of noncontradiction, neither sensation nor truth nor speech are possible (ibid., 161–63). This law of thought is epistemologically prior to all knowing (ibid., 164f.). Carnell’s defense of the law of noncontradiction is what Cornelius Van Til called a “transcendental argument.”

The Positive Test: Factual Fit. In addition to “horizontal self-consistency,” Carnell’s second test for truth was that the system *vertical fits the facts* (ibid., 108–9). Self-consistency is only a starting point. Without it, truth is absent, without something more, truth is truncated (ibid., 109). As Lewis put it: “A mere formal consistency without factual adequacy is empty and irrelevant. On the other hand, an experiential relevance without consistency ends in chaos and meaninglessness” (*Testing Christianity’s Truth Claims*, 206).

The “facts” included external experience, such as historical facts, and internal experience, such as personal, subjective peace of heart (Introduction, 109–13). Carnell’s “facts” include ethical, existential, psychological, and value matters.

Values are part of the factual fit. Carnell was convinced that no other worldview can satisfy the human quest for personal fellowship. No other provides meaningful standards of love and forgiveness (Lewis, *Testing Christianity’s Truth Claims*, 218). Carnell devotes *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion* to this thesis. Lewis noted, “Edward Carnell sought to show that Christianity is not only *true*, but most *desirable* for each individual person” (*Testing Christianity’s Truth Claims*, 210, emphasis added).

Carnell wrote *Christian Commitment* and *The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life* to make the case that Christianity alone provides a value-satisfaction system. As stated in Francis Schaeffer’s existential authenticity, one can live by Christian principles without hypocrisy.

In *Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life*, Carnell argued the unconventional thesis that Freudian psychotherapy provides the model for doing an apologetic of love, since it relates trust and love to happiness. He declared: “I believe that if Christian apologists would rally their wits and make better use of love as a point of contact, great things might be accomplished for the defense of the faith” (*Kingdom of Love*, 10). He added that he had not appreciated the apologetic significance of love until he read Sigmund Freud. “The more I reflected on the relationship between patient and analyst, the more convinced I became that psychotherapy has unwittingly created a new base for Christian apologetics. Christianity has always defended love as the law of life” (ibid., 6). Love is unconditional acceptance. It is always kind and truthful, and it seeks nothing but kindness and truth in return. “If man is made in the image of God (as Scripture says he is), then conservatives ought to welcome any evidence which helps establish a vital connection between the healing power of the gospel and man as a creature who is plagued by anxiety and estrangement. A divorce between common and special grace is an offense to both culture and the gospel” (ibid., 9).

Defenders of Carnell recognize that this values approach has limits. Gordon Lewis asks: “Is the psychological apologetic sufficient by itself, however, to support Christianity’s truth-claims?” He answers his own question in the negative: Experientially, the truth of love answers problems, but from a theoretical viewpoint, “a religion might alleviate people’s anxieties with counterfeit promises. In fact, that is what some of Christianity’s cultic deviations do” (*Testing Christianity’s Truth Claims*, 252).

Ethics is part of factual fit. Christianity alone can resolve the individual’s moral predicament. No other religion can give a consistent answer to the question: How can a sinner be just before God? Lewis sums up Carnell’s test(s) for truth: “In sum, Carnell’s apologetic finds the Christian hypothesis true because, without contradiction, it accounts for more empirical evidence . . . , axiological evidence . . . , psychological evidence . . . , ethical evidence . . . , with fewer difficulties than any other hypothesis” (ibid., 282).

Probability and Moral Certainty. Carnell is aware that his method does not yield absolute rational certainty. He willingly settles for high-probability rational confidence if it accompanies a moral certainty that goes beyond reasonable doubt (*Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 113f.).

The Point of Contact: The Image of God. Unlike Van Til, Carnell believed that the natural human was capable of understanding some truths about God. He disliked “vague homilies on the ‘noetic effects of sin’ ” (*Christian Commitment*, 198). Among other things, the image of God provides both innate moral principles and the very idea of God. Citing John Calvin with approval, Carnell wrote, “One certainly ought not to find it strange that God, in creating me, placed this idea (God) with me to be like the mark of the workman imprinted on his work” (*Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 160).

Evaluation. Contributions of Carnell’s Apologetics. The stress on the law of noncontradiction. Carnell correctly emphasized the importance of the law of noncontradiction as a negative test for rationality (*see* LOGIC). He understood its transcendental importance and never wavered from using it, in spite of the fact that he added other dimensions to his overall criteria for the truth of a worldview.

The demand for factual fit. Unlike the rational presuppositionalism of Clark, Carnell’s apologetic took into account the need to be comprehensive in any adequate test for truth. Logical consistency offers only a negative test for falsity. Positively, it shows only that a system *could be* true, not that it *is true* . To demonstrate truth, a worldview must touch base with reality.

The rejection of factual sufficiency. Carnell recognized that ultimate, metaphysical truth does not reside in facts as such. Facts alone are insufficient. Only fact understood in the consistent context of an entire worldview can be the basis for ultimate truth. Unless the “stuff” of experience is structured by a meaning-model, it is not possible to speak of the meaningfulness of that system. One must presuppose or hypothesize a metaphysical model of the universe before it is even possible to make ultimate truth claims. One can, of course, understand facts in an everyday sense. Believer and unbeliever may share common ground in understanding of what a

dozen roses are. But that the ultimate meaning of those roses is to glorify the theistic God is known only by those who hold a theistic presupposition.

The need for a worldview framework. Carnell correctly saw the need for a world and life view, that is, with what in German is called a *Weltanschauung* . Merely one dimension of the truth question is not enough. Worldview truths must cover all that is in the world. To single out the rational element, the empirical element, or the existential element alone is inadequate. Carnell saw clearly the need to test the truth of the entire Christian system. He integrated the three basic elements in this test: the rational, the empirical, and the existential.

The contextual validity of systematic coherence. Granted a theistic framework, systematic consistency is a sufficient method for determining the truth. That is, within a theistic worldview, the position that most consistently explains all the relevant facts is true. This is why Christianity meets the test and Judaism does not, since the former accounts for all the predictive prophecy (*see* PROPHECY AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE) about the Messiah, and the latter does not. Likewise, Islam does not account for the theistic evidence that Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead three days later. Christianity does. Hence, both Judaism and Islam fail on the test of comprehensiveness.

The need for existential relevance. Carnell saw what few apologists are willing to admit, that a true *Weltanschauung* must be relevant to life. It was not fully stressed in *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* . But by the time he wrote *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic* , existential relevance was important to Carnell’s comprehensive test for the truth of his system.

Difficulties in Carnell’s Apologetics. Carnell’s apologetic is not without its faults, some of them crucial defects.

Innate epistemology. Carnell evidently draws on Augustine for his belief in innate ideas. While this is not a fatal criticism of his system, it is worth noting that belief in innate ideas is unfounded (*see* HUME, DAVID) and unnecessary. The same data can be accounted for by simply positing an innate *capacity* without innate *ideas* . Both Kant and Aquinas demonstrated how this could be done—Aquinas without ending in agnosticism.

Rejection of theistic arguments. While Carnell rejects the validity of traditional theistic arguments, he uses a theistic argument of his own. Following Augustine and Rene Descartes , Carnell argues that total skepticism is self-refuting. If the skeptic is doubting, then he is thinking. And if he thinks then he must exist (*cogito ergo sum*). But Carnell argues that this gives not only a knowledge of self, but “the *cogito* provides us with a knowledge of God. Knowing what truth is, we know what God is, *for God is truth* . ” He adds, “Proof for God is parallel to proof for logic; logic must be used to prove logic” (ibid., 158–59). So while Carnell rejects traditional theistic arguments he offers a “proof” of his own—one that is the same as his proof for the validity of the laws of logic. Indeed, this can be put in the same form as what Van Til called a transcendental argument. So the question is not whether one can prove God, but rather which kind of proof works. Carnell, then, is not really a presuppositionalist but a rational theist—offering a proof for God’s existence.

Carnell, of course, believes that this kind of argument avoids the flux of sense experience because it has an interior starting point in the self, not an external one in nature. Yet, when commenting on Romans 1:20 he admits that “the heavens [external nature] declare the glory of God, for they constantly remind us that God exists. The limited perfection of nature is a reminder of absolute perfection; the mutability of nature is a reminder that there is absolute immutability.” He even admits that his factual test for truth is the external world, for by “*fitting the facts* we mean being *true to nature*” (*Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 109). He hastens to say, “this is not a formal demonstration of God’s existence; it is simply a proof by coherence” (ibid., 169–70). But regardless of what it is called, it is still a rational “proof” for God’s existence that can be made from external nature, which is what the traditional theistic arguments rejected by Carnell purport to accomplish.

Inconsistent use of probability. Carnell is also inconsistent in his use of probability. Carnell chastises apologetic approaches that begin with empirical and historical probabilities. Empirical argumentation is rejected as an adequate test for the truth of Christianity for “here one cannot rise above probability” (ibid., 105). He insists that no real proof is possible with a probability argument, since the opposite is always possible. However, when defending against the charge that his view only yields probability on even crucial matters like the resurrection of Christ, he responds by claiming that probability is sufficient. For “No historical event, however recent, can be demonstrated beyond a degree of probability. So it would be inappropriate to expect verification of Christ’s resurrection, for example, to rise to the point of logical necessity” (ibid., 198). But one cannot have it both ways. If probability is never a proof, then no matter how high the probability Carnell would have no proof of the resurrection (cf. Acts 1:3).

A methodological category mistake. Carnell explicitly treats the testing of the truth claims of Christianity like the testing of a scientific “hypothesis” (*An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 101). But, as Etienne Gilson has brilliantly demonstrated, this is a methodological category mistake. Borrowing a method from geometry, or mathematics, or science is not the way to do metaphysics. Each discipline has its own appropriate method. And what works in science, for example, does not necessarily work in metaphysics.

Arguing in a vicious circle. The use of facts to test the truth of the worldview, which in turn gives meaning to these facts, is a vicious circle. When testing worldviews, one cannot presuppose the truth of a given context or framework, for that is precisely what is being tested. But Carnell’s apologetic method of systematic consistency cannot be a test for the context (or model) by which the very facts, to which he appeals, are given meaning.

Factual fit is inadequate to test a worldview because “fit” is determined for the facts by the overall pattern of the worldview. A fact’s meaning is not found in its bare facticity but by the way it is modeled or incorporated by a worldview. Carnell says, “a fact is any unit of being which is capable of bearing meaning, but it is the meaning, not the fact, which is the knowledge” (*Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 92). If so, then it seems clear that the same data (say, the resurrection of Christ) can be interpreted alternately as an anomaly (from a naturalistic perspective), a supernormal magical event (from a pantheistic view), or a supernatural act of God (from a theistic worldview). Incompatible worldviews inevitably color the same data to mean different things. By not using theistic arguments to establish an overall world view context for

the facts of experience, Carnell is not able to avoid this criticism (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST). For example, some ancient languages that did not divide letters into words left the reader to decide from the context. No appeal to the bare facts alone can solve the problem; only a context, model, or framework from outside can do it. And when one framework fits as well as another, then there is no way to adjudicate the problem by appealing to differing models that each in its own way accounts for all the facts. Or, differing systems may account equally well for an equal number of facts, while having difficulty with others.

Systematic coherence offers no way to know whether the model fits the facts best because the facts are prefitted to the model to give meaning to the whole from the very beginning. The fact of the resurrection of Christ is already a theistic “interpfact” and as such it will naturally fit better into a theistic scheme of things than into a naturalistic worldview. However, if one speaks merely about the anomalous or unusual event of a resuscitated corpse in the framework of a naturalistic worldview, the bare fact also fits the framework.

Conflict of multiple criteria for testing truth. A system that has many criteria for testing truth, as did Carnell’s, has a problem with what to do when the criteria yield conflicting results. No criteria is offered by Carnell to adjudicate such conflicts. What happens, for example, if the love criterion conflicts with the law of noncontradiction? What happens when the facts seem to support a position that conflicts with another central tenet of one’s system?

The “leaky bucket” fallacy. Systematic coherence is a form of the “leaky bucket” argument. It says, in effect, that empiricism is not an adequate test for truth, existentialism is not an adequate test for truth, and rationalism is not an adequate test for truth. However, if one leaky bucket does not hold the water, then two or three leaky buckets will not do the job either. Just adding together inadequate solutions does not make an adequate solution, unless there is some way to correct the inadequacy of one test.

But the problem with logical coherence as a test for truth is not corrected by appeal to facts. This logical argument does not fail simply because it provides no factual referents for thought, but because in its strong form it provides no rationally inescapable arguments, and in the weak form it is only a test for the possibility of a system’s truth. The law of noncontradiction can show only that a system is wrong if it has contradictions in its central tenets. But several systems may be internally noncontradictory. Likewise, there may be many worldviews that account for all the data of experience as they interpret it. Pantheism, for example, has no necessary internal logical contradictions, and it can account for all the facts as interpreted through its worldview lenses. Only if one superimposes nonpantheistic lenses on it does it fail to do so. One who steps inside another worldview may find that its major tenets are consistent, that it accounts for all the facts of experience as interpreted through its framework, and that it is existentially relevant to those within that lifestyle.

Only a negative test for truth. Systematic consistency only tests for the falsity, not the truth, of a worldview. More than one view may be both consistent and adequate. However, those that are not both consistent and adequate will be determined to be false. Carnell’s view would at best eliminate only false worldviews (or, aspects of worldviews). It cannot establish one worldview as uniquely true.

It is noteworthy that Frederick Ferre, who uses a similar method, recognized that even nontheistic worldviews may carry equal or even greater weight than the Christian model when tested by his criteria. If Western theists admit this, then surely the sophisticated Hindu or Buddhist could design a combinational test for truth to vindicate his worldview.

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Causality, Principle of. The principle of causality is a *first principle*. All first principles are self-evident or reducible to the self-evident. But not everything self-evident in itself appears to

be self-evident to everyone. The principle of causality (*see* FIRST PRINCIPLES) fits that category and so must be unpacked.

Statement of the Principle of Causality. The principle of causality may be stated in various ways, some more easily accepted than others. For example, it may be stated:

1. Every effect has a cause.

This form is clearly self-evident, and it is analytic, in that the predicate is reducible to its subject. Other ways to state the principle are not analytic, nor so self-evident:

2. Every contingent being is caused by another.

3. Every limited being is caused by another.

4. Every thing that comes to be is caused by another.

5. Nonbeing cannot cause being.

Sometimes the principle is stated in other ways than these, but each form is reducible to one or more of these statements. For example, “Every thing that begins has a cause” is the same as “Everything that comes to be is caused by another.” Also, “Every dependent being is caused by another” is the same as “Every contingent being is caused by another.”

Defense of the Principle. An Undeniable Truth. If the principle of causality is stated, “Every effect has a cause,” then it is undeniable.

In this form the principle of causality is analytically self-evident, since by an “effect” is meant what is caused and by a “cause” is meant what produces the effect. Hence, the predicate is reducible to the subject. It is like saying, “Every triangle has three sides.” However, there is a difficulty with stating the principle in this way for a theist who wishes to use it to prove the existence of God (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). It simply shifts the burden of the proof back on the theist, who must show that contingent, finite, and/or temporal beings are effects. While this can be done, it is not so useful as to use the form, “Nonbeing cannot produce being.” But the question remains as to whether this form is self-evident or undeniable.

All of the ways to defend the nonanalytic forms of the principle of causality (forms 2–4) require explanation of what is meant by the terms of the statement. The following are examples:

The nature of being and nonbeing. Statement 5 can be defended by defining terms. “Nonbeing cannot cause being” because only being can cause something to exist. Nonbeing is nothing; it does not exist. And what does not exist has no power to produce anything. Only what exists can cause existence, since the very concept of “cause” implies that some existing thing has the power to effect another. From absolutely nothing comes absolutely nothing. Or it can be more popularly phrased, “Nothing comes from nothing; nothing ever could.”

The nature of contingency. All contingent beings need a cause, for a contingent being is something that exists but that might, under other circumstances, not exist. Since it has the possibility not to exist, it does not account for its own existence. In itself, there is no reason why it exists. Once it was nonbeing, but nonbeing cannot cause anything. Being can only be caused by being. Only something can produce something.

Observe that both of the above defenses (being/nonbeing and contingency) depend on the principle that “Nonbeing cannot cause being” or “Nothing cannot cause something.” Many philosophers hold that this principle is known to be true intuitively and is self-evident. But if someone does not accept this as self-evident, the statement can be defended in two ways:

First, inherent in the concept *produce* or *cause* is the implication that something that existed brought into being whatever is produced or caused. The alternative is to define nothing as something or a nonbeing as a being, which is nonsense. This argument should be distinguished from David Hume’s point that it is not absurd to say that *nothing can be followed by something*. Hume himself denies that *something can be caused by nothing*: “I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that something could arise without a cause” (Hume, *The Letters of David Hume*, 1:187).

Theists readily accept Hume’s statement. For example, a state in which there was no world was followed by a state in which a world existed (after God created it). That is, nothing (no world) followed by something (a world). There is no inherent contradiction in saying that nothing can be followed by something. The problem arises in saying that nothing can *produce or cause* something.

The importance of its truth begins to surface when it is stated another way: *If there were ever absolutely nothing (including God), then there would always be absolutely nothing (including God).*

Second, everything that comes to be must have a cause. If it came to be, it is not a *Necessary Being*, which by its nature *must always exist*. What comes to be is a *contingent being*, which by nature is capable of either existing or not existing. Something separate from the contingent being has to determine that it comes into existence. So, everything that came to be must be caused, since there must be some efficient action which causes it to pass from a state of potentiality (potency) to a state of actuality (act). For, Aquinas noted, no potency for being can actualize itself. To actualize itself means it would have previously been in a state of actuality, and to be actualized means it would have been in a state of potentiality. It cannot be both at the same time. That would violate the principle of noncontradiction. Hence, one cannot deny the principle of causality without violating the principle of noncontradiction.

First Principles and God’s Existence. Given that something exists (which is undeniable) by causality (and the principle of analogy) the existence of God can be demonstrated (*see COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT*). In each case, of course, the burden of proof falls on the minor premise, not the premise which is the principle of causality.

Everything That Comes to Be Has a Cause. Using this statement of the principle of causality, the existence of a First Cause can be demonstrated as follows:

Everything that comes to be is caused by another.

The universe came to be.

Therefore, the universe was caused by another.

Of course, one must show that the universe came to be. This the theist does by science and philosophy (*see BIG BANG ; KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT*).

Another way to prove the existence of God uses a different statement of the principle of causality:

Every contingent being is caused by another.

The universe is contingent in its being.

Therefore, the universe is caused by another.

Here too, the burden of proof is on showing that the universe as a whole is contingent. This is generally done by showing that the universe as a whole could, or did, come into being, so it is contingent. Likewise, the universe could cease to exist. It must have a cause to account for why it exists, rather than does not exist.

Of course, if one desires to show that this cause of the universe is intelligent or moral, then the principle of analogy must be used to show that effects resemble their efficient cause (*see ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF ; FIRST PRINCIPLES*). For example:

Effects resemble their causes in their being.

The universe manifests intelligent design in its being.

Therefore, the universe has an intelligent Designer.

Objections. Most answers to objections leveled against the principle of causality are implied in what has been stated.

There Is No Need for a Cause. Some atheists (*see ATHEISM*) argue that there is no need for a cause. They insist that there is nothing incoherent about something coming into existence from nothing. This is contrary to reality as it is known and lived and to the scientific enterprise, which seeks a causal explanation. It is counterintuitive to believe that things just pop into and out of existence. Those who hold such a position must also face the fact that something that does not even exist has no power to do anything.

If Everything Is Caused, So Is God. This objection is based on a misunderstanding. The principle of causality does not affirm that *everything* has a cause. It only asserts that everything *that has a beginning* (and so is finite) needs a cause. For example, if the universe had no beginning, then it does not need a cause of its beginning. Likewise, if God had no beginning, then neither does he need a cause. Only what has a beginning needs a cause. But few people argue that the universe had no beginning. Ultimately the universe needs a Cause that does not have a beginning, for the universe cannot spring into being out of nothing.

The Principle of Causality Does Not Apply to Reality. Some critics insist that the principle of causality belongs in the realm of logic but does not apply to reality (*see* REALISM). This is self-defeating. One cannot consistently affirm that the laws of thought cannot be affirmed regarding reality. It is inconsistent to think about reality that it cannot be thought about. Since the principle of causality is a fundamental principle of reason (*see* FOUNDATIONALISM), it must apply to reality. Otherwise, one ends in a self-defeating position that what is known about reality cannot be known. The principle of causality is a principle about reality. When it says “Nonbeing cannot produce being,” *being* means what is real and *nonbeing* what is not real.

There Is No Need for a Here-and-Now Cause. Some critics argue that even if there may have once been a cause of the beginning of the universe, there does not need to be one now. Either such a Cause has gone out of existence, or else it may still be in existence but is not required for continually sustaining the universe.

The theistic God demonstrated by the cosmological argument cannot have caused the universe and then subsequently ceased to exist. The theistic God is a Necessary Being, and a Necessary Being cannot cease to be. If it exists, it must by its very nature exist necessarily. A Necessary Being cannot exist in a contingent mode any more than a triangle can exist in a five-sided mode.

A Necessary Being must continue to cause its contingent being(s). A contingent being must remain contingent as long as it exists, since it can never become a Necessary Being. But this is the only other alternative for a contingent being other than going out of existence or remaining a contingent being. But if a contingent being is always contingent, then it always needs a Necessary Being on which it depends for its existence. Since no contingent being holds itself in existence, it must have a Necessary Being to hold it from going into nonexistence—at all times.

The hidden assumption in positing a former Necessary Being who no longer exists is that simultaneous causality does not make sense. But there is no contradiction in saying that an effect is being effected at the very instant it is being caused. This is clearly the case in the relationship between the premises (cause) and the conclusion (effect) in a syllogism. Cause and effect are simultaneous, for the instant one takes away the premise(s) the conclusion does not follow. Likewise, the causal relation between one’s face and the image in the mirror is simultaneous.

What clouds the understanding is the confusion of an *effect* with an *after-effect*. For example, when the ball is thrown, it continues to move after the thrower is no longer throwing it. The clock continues to run after it is wound. However, in these and similar examples, the after-effect is also being directly and simultaneously effected by some cause, after the original cause is gone.

The force of inertia keeps the baseball moving; the forces of tension and reaction keep the spring moving the clock. If any of these forces would go out of existence, the after-effect would stop dead. If inertia ceased the very instant after the ball left my hand, the ball would instantly stop in midair. Likewise, the clock would stop ticking the instant the physical laws effecting it were no longer operative. Every so-called after-effect is only an effect of some simultaneous cause(s).

There are no existential after-effects. Whatever is, exists in the here-and-now. And whatever is being caused to exist right now must have something causing it to exist right now. A basic distinction will help illustrate the point. The artist is not the cause of the being of a painting; he is only the cause of the becoming (or coming to be) of the painting. The painting continues to be after the artist takes his hands away from the canvas. The father does not cause the *being* of the son, but only causes the son’s *becoming*, for when the father dies the son continues to live.

Finite beings clearly need a cause, not only of their becoming, but also of their here-and-now being. For at every moment of their existence they are dependent for existence on another. They never cease to be limited, finite, contingent beings. And, as such, they demand a cause for every moment of their existence. It does not matter whether we are referring to John Doe at moment one, two, or three of his existence. He is still existing, he has a received existence, and therefore he is receiving existence from something outside himself.

Part of the problem would be removed if we did not talk of exist-*ence* as though the whole package were received at once, but of exist-*ing*, a moment-by-moment process. The word *being* may be even more misleading in this regard. No one receives his whole being at once, nor even the next instant of it. Each creature has a present “being.” Existence comes a moment at a time. But at each moment of dependent being there must be some independent Being who gives that moment of being. In this respect, the distinction between the Latin *esse* (to be) and *ens* (being, thing) is helpful. God is pure *Esse* and our present *esse* (to-be-ness) is dependent on him. Pure Existence must existentialize our potentiality for existence; otherwise we would not exist. God as pure Actuality is actualizing everything that is actual. Hence, it is the present actuality of all that is actual that demands a causal ground.

Quantum Physics Shows that Subatomic Events Are Uncaused. Heisenberg’s principle of uncertainty (*see* INDETERMINACY, PRINCIPLE OF) is a principle of quantum mechanics which states that “the position and speed of a particle cannot be simultaneously known with complete certainty. According to this view, for example, it is possible to predict accurately what fraction of uranium atoms will radioactively disintegrate over the next hour, but it is impossible to predict *which* atoms will do so” (ibid.). It is reasoned that if some events are unpredictable they must be uncaused.

However, this conclusion does not follow for several reasons discussed in the article Indeterminacy, Principle of. First, Heisenberg’s principle is not a principle of *uncausality* but a principle of *unpredictability*. Second, it is only the position of a particular particle that cannot be predicted, not the overall pattern. Third, since the subatomic realm cannot be “observed” without bombarding it, the scientist cannot be sure what it is really like. Not all physicists agree with Heisenberg. Einstein’s response was, “God does not play dice with the universe.”

Conclusion. There are other negative arguments about the principle of causality (*see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR), but they do not deny the principle of causality as such. For example, the argument that there may be an infinite number of causes does not deny the principle of causality; it assumes it. The principle of causality itself is as sound as any first principle. Without it neither science in particular nor rational thought in general would be possible. All natural knowledge about the external world depends on a causal connection between it and our minds.

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Celsus. Celsus was a second-century pagan philosopher. His *The True Doctrine* (or *Discourse*) is the oldest known writing attacking the Christian faith (ca. 178). It is known through Origen's eight-book reply, *Contra Celsum* , which preserves most of Celsus' discourse. No other copies are extant.

Origen depicts Celsus' beliefs as a combination of a Platonic view (*see* PLATO) of God and Greek polytheism . The result was an unknown God who set his various demons over human experience. True religion is demonstrated by concentrating on God and propitiating cultic demons. Worship is due to the emperor by celebrating public feasts, holding public office, and joining the army (see Douglas, 206).

Celsus presents himself as a detached pagan observer with no strong feelings about religion. He praises Christianity for its Logos doctrine and high morals, but he objects strongly to its exclusivity. He criticizes much of biblical history for its miracle claims and expresses repugnance to the doctrines of the incarnation and crucifixion. He also objects to Christian nonconformity, which he believed tended to undermine the Roman government. His charges boiled down to religious superstition, intolerance, and political nonconformity.

The charges were answered by Origen. Celsus failed to appreciate the historical evidence (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF) and the philosophical justification of biblical miracles (*see* Miracle; MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST). He also failed to understand the evidence supporting the deity of Christ (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF) and the uniqueness of Christianity (*see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ; WORLD RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY).

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Certainty/Certitude. *Certainty* is the confidence that something is true. Sometimes certainty is distinguished from *certitude* . Certainty is objective, but certitude is subjective. A first principle or self-evident statement is objectively certain, whether a person is sure about it or not. Certitude involves a knower's assent to that which is certain; it is a subjective acceptance of what is objectively so. In common usage the terms are employed interchangeably. The difference is that certainty exists where there is objective reasons or evidence that are commensurate to the degree of certainty claimed. With certitude, however, there need not be a commensurate degree of objective reasons or evidence for the degree one possesses.

Kinds of Certainty. Certainty falls into categories of logical, moral, practical, and spiritual.

Logical Certainty. Logical certainty is found largely in mathematics and pure logic. This kind of certainty is involved where the opposite would be a contradiction. Something is certain in this sense when there is no logical possibility it could be false. Since mathematics is reducible to logic it fits into this category. It is found in statements such as $5 + 4 = 9$. It is also found in

tautologies or statements that are true by definition: All circles are round, and no triangle is a square.

Metaphysical Certainty. There are, however, some other things of which we can be absolutely certain that are not statements empty of content. For example, I know for certain that I exist. This is undeniably so, since I cannot deny my existence without existing to make the denial. First principles can also be known for certain, since the subject and predicate say the same thing: “Being exists”; “Nonbeing is not Being.” “Nonbeing cannot produce Being” is also certain, since *produce* implies an existing producer.

Moral Certainty. Moral certainty exists where the evidence is so great that the mind lacks any reason to veto the will to believe it is so. One rests in a moral certainty with complete confidence. Of course, there is a logical possibility that things of which we are morally certain are false. However, the evidence is so great there is no reason to believe it is false. In legal terms this is what is meant by “beyond all reasonable doubt.”

Practical Certainty (High Probability). Practical certainty is not as strong as moral certainty. Persons claim to be “certain” about things they believe have a high probability of truth. One may be certain she had breakfast today, without being able to prove it mathematically or metaphysically. It is true unless something changed her perception, so that she was deluded into thinking she ate breakfast. It is possible to be wrong about these matters.

Spiritual (Supernatural) Certainty. If we grant the theist God’s existence, he could give supernatural assurance that something is true. Likewise, if God speaks directly to a person (for example, Abraham in Genesis 22), then that person could have a spiritual certainty that transcends other kinds of certainty, because it comes directly from God. Those *who have direct mystical experiences* of God (*see* MYSTICISM), such as Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 12, have this kind of certainty. It would be greater than any other kind of certainty, since an omniscient being is its guarantor and omniscience cannot be wrong. As to how or whether such assurance actually exists apart from a supernatural act is a moot point among theologians, although many classical apologists and others argue that it does (*see* HOLY SPIRIT, ROLE IN APOLOGETICS).

Certainty and Assent. Certainty is always accompanied by assent. That is, the mind always assents to propositions that are certain, *if it properly understands them*. However, not all assent is accompanied by certitude. In everyday life, one frequently assents to something as being only probable and not necessary. In business affairs there is usually no absolute certainty; one must assent based on varying degrees of probability. This is virtually always the case in inductive reasoning, since the reasoner is moving from particular to general and is not sure about all the particulars. A complete induction would be an exception, since every particular is known. For instance, “There are three and only three marbles in my right hand” can be known with moral certainty. Though it is possible the person has not seen or counted correctly, the probability of correctness is high enough for the proposition to be morally certain (*see* INDUCTIVE METHOD).

A person can possess intellectual certainty about a proposition, yet lack subjective or emotional certitude. That is the common experience with doubt. There is emotional fear, despite

rational verification. A person might have moral certainty that God exists and still feel his absence.

Subjective certitude often works in the opposite direction as well. A feeling of conviction so overpowers rational analysis as to move the will to assent with little or no evidence.

Certainty and Error. Subjective certitude is one way in which it is possible to have moral certainty and/or certitude about the truth of some thing that is objectively false. The will to believe may overpower the lack of evidence, so that one has tenacity of belief without the veracity of it. Reasons for error include defective senses or mental processes, incomplete consciousness, the drive of the will, and the need to act in the absence of compelling evidence.

One cannot be wrong about first principles or self-evident propositions. Once the mind understands them it is compelled to assent to them. There is no freedom not to assent to a self-evident truth. While this natural inclination to the truth is an unconscious drive, it would seem that, properly speaking, the assent to certitude is conscious. One can only be certain who understands that the truth is a first principle or reducible to it. This degree of analysis requires awareness. Only when one understands the principle and the truth becomes unmistakably clear is assent necessary and certitude guaranteed.

Certitude Involves a Repose. Since certitude involves a conscious assent to the certainty of the truth for which a human being has an unconscious appetite, the possession of this truth by the intellect is the reward of certitude. In the presence of such truths, nothing in the world could deprive the intellect of this possession. The reward of the hunger for truth is certitude which one consciously enjoys who perceives the certainty and necessity of the truth he or she has possessed.

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Chance. The concept of *chance* has evolved in meaning. *Chance* for Aristotle and other classical philosophers was merely the fortuitous intersection of two or more lines of causality. In modern times, however, the term has taken on two different meanings. Some regard chance as the lack of

any cause. As Mortimer Adler put it, some take chance to mean “that which happens totally without cause—the absolute spontaneous or fortuitous” (cited in Sproul, xv).

Others view chance as a real cause itself, only a blind, rather than an intelligent, cause. Naturalists and materialists often speak this way. For example, since David Hume, the teleological argument has been countered with the alternative that the universe resulted from chance, not from intelligent design. Although Hume himself did not do so, some have taken this to mean that the universe was caused by chance, instead of by God.

Chance and Theism. *Chance*, conceived either as the lack of a cause or as a cause in itself, is incompatible with theism. As long as chance rules, Arthur Koestler noted, “God is an anachronism” (cited in Sproul, 3). The existence of chance tips God off his cosmic throne. God and chance are mutually exclusive. If chance exists, God is not in complete control of the universe. There cannot even exist an intelligent Designer.

The Nature of Chance. Definition of the word *chance* depends partly on the worldview agenda of the one doing the defining. Two usages are commonly confused when speaking about the origin of things: chance as a mathematical probability and chance as a real cause. The first is merely abstract. When rolling a dice the chances are one in six that the number six will come out on top. The odds are one in thirty-six that two dice will both come up six and one in 216 that three sixes will be thrown on three dice. These are abstract mathematical probabilities. But chance did not cause those three dice to turn up sixes. What did it was the force of throwing them, their starting position in the hand, the angle of the toss, how they deflected off objects in their way, and other results of inertia. Chance had nothing to do with it. As Sproul put it, “chance has no power to do anything. It is cosmically, totally, consummately impotent” (Sproul, 6).

Lest one think we have loaded the dice by citing a theist, hear the words of Hume: “Chance, when strictly examined, is a mere negative word, and means not any real power which has anywhere a being.” He added, “Though there be no such thing as *Chance* in the world; our ignorance of the real cause of any event has the same influence on the understanding, and begets a like species of belief or opinion” (Hume, Sect 6).

Attributing Causal Power to Chance. Herbert Jaki in *God and the Cosmologists* has an insightful chapter titled “Loaded Dice.” He refers to Pierre Delbert who said, “Chance appears today as a law, the most general of all laws” (Delbert, 238).

This is magic, not science. Scientific laws deal with the regular, not the irregular (as chance is). Also, the laws of physics do not cause anything; they simply describe the way things happen regularly in the world as the result of physical causes. Likewise, the laws of mathematics do not cause anything. They simply insist that if I put five pennies in my empty right pocket and then put seven more, then I must have twelve pennies there. The laws of math never put one penny in anyone’s pocket.

The basic fallacy of making chance into a causal power was stated well by Sproul. “1. Chance is not an entity. 2. Nonentities have no power because they have no being. 3. To say that something happens or is caused by *chance* is to suggest attributing instrumental power to

nothing” (Sproul, 13). But it is absurd to claim that nothing produced something. Nothing does not even exist and, hence, has no power to cause anything (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF).

Intelligent Cause(s) and “Chance” Results. Not all chance events occur from natural phenomena. Intelligent causes can juxtapose as “chance” encounters. Two scientists, working independently from different approaches, make the same discovery. One rational being buries a treasure in the earth. Another finds it by chance while digging the foundation for a house.

What appears to be a random mixture is not necessarily without rational purpose. There is a rational purpose behind the designing of a random mixture of number sequences in a lottery drawing. There is a rational purpose for the random mixture of carbon dioxide we exhale into the surrounding air; otherwise we would rebreathe it and die of oxygen deprivation. In this sense, God the designer and chance randomness are not incompatible concepts. However, to speak of a chance cause is meaningless.

Conclusion. Strictly speaking, there can be no chance cause or origin of the universe and life. Every event has an adequate cause. The choices are either intelligent causes or nonintelligent causes, either a natural cause or a non-natural cause. The only way we can know which is by the kind of effect produced (*see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF). Since the universe manifests intelligent design, it is reasonable to posit an intelligent cause (*see* TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). The apparent chance or randomness (like the lottery or the mixture of air molecules) may be part of the overall intelligent design.

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Chesterton, Gilbert K. Gilbert K. Chesterton (1874–1936) was a brilliant and witty English essayist and poet, to whom C. S. Lewis acknowledged his debt. Chesterton abandoned training in art for journalism and in 1922 the Church of England for Roman Catholicism. His religious works include *Heretics* (1905), *Orthodoxy* (1908), *The Everlasting Man* (1925), and *Avowals and Denials* (1934). His *Autobiography* (1936) provides many insights into the religious scene from 1895 to 1936.

Views. *God.* Chesterton defended orthodox Catholicism, and his writings are filled with witty apologetic arguments for the Christian faith. In *Orthodoxy*, he declared that “There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy” (106). Anyone could fall into religious fads, from gnosticism to Christian Science, “but to have avoided them all has been one whirling

adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect" (ibid., 107).

Chesterton was critical of nontheistic worldviews. He called atheism "the most daring of all dogmas. . . . It is the assertion of a universal negative; for a man to say there is no God in the universe is like saying that there are no insects in any of the stars" (*Five Types* , 59). He criticized pantheism for being unable to inspire moral action. "For pantheism implies in its nature that one thing is as good as another; whereas action implies in its nature that one thing is greatly preferable to another" (*Orthodoxy* , 143). Even paganism is better than pantheism, he added. "Paganism is free to imagine divinities, while pantheism is forced to pretend, in a priggish way, that all things are equally divine" (*Catholic Church and Conversion* , 89).

Chesterton distilled the difference between Christianity and Buddhism to the insightful observation: "The Christian pities men because they are dying, and the Buddhist pities them because they are living. The Christian is sorry for what damages the life of a man; but the Buddhist is sorry for him because he is alive" (*Generally Speaking* , 115–16).

In his vivid personal testimony, Chesterton confessed: "I had always believed that the world involved magic; now I thought perhaps it involved a magician. . . . This world of ours has some purpose; and if there is a purpose, there is a person. I had always felt life first as a story; and if there is a story there is a storyteller" (*Orthodoxy* , 61).

Miracles. Chesterton held that God actively intervenes in the world. He defined *miracle* as "the swift control of matter by mind" (ibid., 137). The reality of miracles was central to Chesterton's apologetic defense. He insisted that miracles must be confirmed by evidence, just as other events of history. "My belief that miracles have happened in human history is not a mystical belief at all; I believe in them upon human evidence as I do the discovery of America" (ibid., 161). "A conspiracy of facts" forces this admission on the mind. The witnesses were not mystical dreamers, but fishermen, farmers, and others who were "coarse and cautious" (ibid., 163). Denials of miracles on the other hand, are not based on evidence at all, but on philosophical commitment. "There is only one reason an intelligent person doesn't believe in miracles. He or she believes in materialism" (*St. Francis of Assisi* , 204). Believers accept miracles because they have evidence for them. Disbelievers deny them because they have a doctrine against them.

Creation. Creation to Chesterton was the "greatest of all revolutions" (*Chaucer* , 27). He does not seem to have denied the possibility of creation through evolution (see EVOLUTION, THEISTIC), but he also recognized the deficiencies of evolution as a theory of origins (see EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL). Even if the theory were true, "evolution as explanation, as an ultimate philosophy of the cause of living things, is still faced with the problem of producing rabbits out of an empty hat; a process commonly involving some hint of design" (ibid., 172). Chesterton declared that the suggestion that evolution produced the human mind, "is like telling a man who asks who rolled a cab-wheel over his leg that evolution rolled it. To state the process is scarcely to state the agent" (*Handful of Authors* , 97–98). Further, "it is absurd for the evolutionist to complain that it is unthinkable for an admittedly unthinkable God to make

everything out of nothing (see CREATION, VIEWS OF), and then pretend that it is more thinkable that nothing should turn itself into anything" (*Saint Thomas Aquinas* , 173).

Sin. Chesterton also affirmed the fall of Adam and original sin. It is bad enough that we are trapped in a bad world, he said, but we have misused a good world. Evil is the wrong use of will, and so things can be righted only through the right use of will. "Every other creed except that one is some form of surrender to fate" (*The Thing* , 226). Chesterton described the effects of the fall by saying that the doctrine of original sin is "the doctrine of the equality of men." For now all are fools (*Heretics* , 165–66).

Evaluation. Chesterton was a witty, brilliant defender of Christian Faith in general and Roman Catholic faith in particular. He is among the great intellectual Catholic apologists of the twentieth century. His approach is more literary than logical in form, but it is rational and penetrating.

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Christ, Death of. The death of Christ is the necessary prerequisite to his resurrection (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR), which is the crowning proof of Jesus' claim to be God (*see* APOLOGETICS, ARGUMENT OF). Further, Islam, one of the chief opponents of Christianity, denies that Jesus died on the cross (McDowell, 47f.). Many skeptics (*see* AGNOSTICISM) challenge the reality of Christ's death.

Evidence for Christ's Death. There is overwhelming historical and factual evidence that Jesus died on the cross and rose again on the third day (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). The evidence for Christ's death is greater than that for almost any other event in the ancient world. The historicity of the Gospel records has been confirmed by a multitude of New Testament Manuscripts and contemporary eyewitnesses (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ; NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS, RELIABILITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF).

Alternative Explanations. Skeptics and Muslims choose from among various versions of the theory that Jesus did not die on the cross. One is that a drug put Jesus in a coma-like state, so that he later revived in the tomb. The clear witness of Matthew's narrative is that he refused even the drug customarily offered to the victim before crucifixion to help deaden pain (27:34). He accepted only vinegar later (vs. 48) to quench his thirst.

If the Bible has any credibility whatsoever, its New Testament authors all say specifically or speak from the necessary implication that they believed Christ died on the cross (cf. Rom. 5:8 ; 1 Cor. 15:3 ; 1 Thess. 4:14). Neither fainting nor swooning nor being drugged would have produced the vigorous victor over death described in the resurrection appearances. The evidence that Christ actually died on the cross is overwhelming:

A Death Predicted. The Old Testament predicted (*see* PROPHECY AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE) that the Messiah would die (Ps. 22:16 ; Isa. 53:5–10 ; Dan. 9:26 ; Zech. 12:10). Jesus fulfilled this and nearly 100 other Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah (see, for example, Matt. 4:14 ; 5:17–18 ; 8:17 ; John 4:25–26 ; 5:39).

Jesus predicted many times during his ministry that he was going to die and rise again (Matt. 12:40 ; Mark 8:31 ; John 2:19–21 ; 10:10–11). One of the more explicit is Matthew 17:22–23 : “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.”

All predictions of his resurrection in the Old Testament (cf. Ps. 2:7 ; 16:10), and New Testament (cf. Matt. 12:40 ; 17:22–23 ; John 2:19–21) assume that he would die (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR).

Death by Crucifixion. Jesus' injuries made death unavoidable. He had no sleep the night before he was crucified; he was beaten and whipped, and he collapsed while carrying his cross. This prelude to the crucifixion alone was life-draining.

The nature of the crucifixion assures death. For a description of one crucified man whose bones have been uncovered, see ARCHAEOLOGY, NEW TESTAMENT . Jesus hung on the cross from 9 in the morning until just before sunset (Mark 15:25 , 33). He bled from gashes in his hands

and feet and from the thorns that pierced his scalp. These wounds would have drained away much blood over more than six hours. Plus, crucifixion demands that one constantly pull up by the hands and push on the injured feet in order to breathe. This caused excruciating pain from the nails. A day of this would kill someone in good health (see Tzaferis).

Beyond these injuries, Jesus' side was pierced with a spear. From this wound flowed a mixture of blood and water (John 19:34), a proof that physical death had occurred. This detail alone, and its confirmation by modern medical experts, strongly validates the claim that this narrative is an eyewitness account. An article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (21 March 1986) concluded:

Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right rib, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge. [1463]

Jesus said he was dying when he declared on the cross, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). And when “he had said this, he breathed his last” (vs. 46). John renders this, “he gave up his spirit” (John 19:30). His death cry was heard by those who stood nearby (Luke 23:47–49).

The Roman soldiers, accustomed to crucifixion and death, pronounced Jesus dead. Although it was a common practice to break the legs of the victim to speed death (so that the person could no longer breathe), they did not believe it necessary to break Jesus' legs (John 19:33).

Pilate double-checked to make sure Jesus was dead before he gave the corpse to Joseph to be buried. “Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph” (Mark 15:44–45).

Jesus was wrapped in about 100 pounds of cloth and spices and placed in a sealed tomb for three days (Matt. 27:60 ; John 19:39–40). If he was not dead by then, the lack of food, water, and medical treatment would have finished him.

References to the Crucifixion. The article ARCHAEOLOGY, NEW TESTAMENT includes accounts by several non-Christian historians and writers from the first and second centuries who recorded the death of Christ as indisputable fact. Among these are the Talmud and Jewish historian of the time of Christ, Josephus, and the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 55?–117).

According to Julius Africanus (ca. 221), the first-century Samaritan-born historian, Thallus (ca. 52), “when discussing the darkness which fell upon the land *during the crucifixion of Christ*,” spoke of it as an eclipse (Bruce, 113, emphasis added). The second-century Greek writer, Lucian, speaks of Christ as “ *the man who was crucified in Palestine* because he introduced a new cult into the world.” He calls him the “ *crucified sophist*” (Geisler, 323). The “letter of Mara

Bar-Serapion” (ca. A.D. 73), housed in the British Museum, speaks of Christ’s death, asking: “What advantage did the Jews gain from *executing their wise King?*” (Bruce, 114). Finally, there was the Roman writer, Phlegon, who spoke of Christ’s death and resurrection in his *Chronicles*, saying, “Jesus, while alive, was of no assistance to himself, but that *he arose after death, and exhibited the marks of his punishment, and showed how his hands had been pierced by nails*” (Phlegon, *Chronicles*, cited by Origen, 4:455). Phlegon even mentioned “the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place” (ibid., 445).

The earliest Christian writers after the time of Christ affirmed his death on the cross by crucifixion. Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John, repeatedly affirmed the death of Christ, speaking, for example, of “our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death” (Polycarp, 33). Ignatius (30–107), a friend of Polycarp, wrote, “And he really suffered and died, and rose again.” Otherwise, he adds, all his apostles who suffered for this belief, died in vain. “But, (in truth) none of these sufferings were in vain; for *the Lord was really crucified* by the ungodly” (Ignatius, 107). In *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, Justin Martyr noted that Jews of his day believed that “Jesus [was] a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified” (Martyr, 253).

This unbroken testimony from the Old Testament to the early Church Fathers, including believer and unbeliever, Jew and Gentile, is overwhelming evidence that Jesus suffered and died on the cross.

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Christ, Deity of. Central to Christianity is the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that is, God manifest in human flesh. The evidence for this is as follows:

1. Truth about reality is knowable (*see* TRUTH, NATURE OF ; AGNOSTICISM).
2. Opposites cannot both be true (*see* PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS ; LOGIC).
3. God exists (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR).
4. Miracles are possible (*see* MIRACLE).
5. A miracle is an act of God to confirm the truth of God claimed by a messenger of God (*see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ; MIRACLES AS CONFIRMATION OF TRUTH).
6. The New Testament documents are reliable (*see* NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS, RELIABILITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF).
7. In the New Testament Jesus claimed to be God.
8. Jesus proved to be God by an unprecedented convergence of miracles (*see* MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE).
9. Therefore, Jesus was God in human flesh.

Since the first six points are treated in the materials noted, this article will stress points five and six.

Jesus’ Claim to Be God. Jesus claimed to be God, both directly and by necessary implication from what he said and did.

Jesus Claimed to Be Yahweh. *Yahweh* (*YHWH* ; sometimes appearing in English translations as “Jehovah” or in small capital letters as “LORD”) is the special name given by God for himself in the Old Testament. It is the name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14 , when God said, “I AM WHO I AM.” Other titles for God may be used of humans, such as *Adonai* (“Lord”) in Gen. 18:12 , or false gods, such as *elohim* (“gods”) in Deut. 6:14 . *Yahweh* , however, only refers to the one true God. No other person or thing was to be worshiped or served (Exod. 20:5), and his name and glory were not to be given to another. Isaiah wrote, “This is what the L ORD says. . . . I am the first, and I am the last; apart from me there is no God” (Isa. 44:6) and, “I am the L ORD ; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another, or my praise to idols” (42:8).

Jesus claimed to be *Yahweh* . He prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). But *Yahweh* of the Old Testament said, “my glory will I not give to another” (Isa. 42:8). Jesus also declared, “I am the first and the last” (Rev. 1:17)—precisely the words used by Jehovah in Isaiah 42:8 . He said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11), but the Old Testament said, “ *Yahweh* is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). Further, Jesus claimed to be the judge of all people (Matt. 25:31f .; John

5:27f.), but Joel quotes Jehovah as saying, “for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side” (Joel 3:12). Likewise, Jesus spoke of himself as the “bridegroom” (Matt. 25:1) while the Old Testament identifies Jehovah in this way (Isa. 62:5; Hos. 2:16). While the Psalmist declares, “The LORD is my light” (Ps. 27:1), Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

Perhaps the strongest claim Jesus made to be *Yahweh* is in John 8:58, where he says, “Before Abraham was, I am.” This statement claims not only existence before Abraham, but equality with the “I AM” of Exodus 3:14. The Jews around him clearly understood his meaning and picked up stones to kill him for blaspheming (cf. John 8:58 and 10:31–33). The same claim is made in Mark 14:62 and John 18:5–6.

Jesus Claimed to Be Equal with God. Jesus claimed to be equal with God in other ways. One was by claiming for himself the prerogatives of God. He said to a paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5–11). The scribes correctly responded, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” So, to prove that his claim was not an empty boast he healed the man, offering direct proof that what he had said about forgiving sins was true also.

Another prerogative Jesus claimed was the power to raise and judge the dead: “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live . . . and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:25, 29). He removed all doubt about his meaning when he added, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it” (John 5:21). But the Old Testament clearly taught that only God was the giver of life (Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6) and the one to raise the dead (Ps. 2:7) and the only judge (Deut. 32:35; Joel 3:12). Jesus boldly assumed for himself powers that only God has.

Jesus also claimed that he should be honored as God. He said that all men should “honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him” (John 5:23). The Jews listening knew that no one should claim to be equal with God in this way, and again they reached for stones (John 5:18).

Jesus Claimed to Be Messiah-God. Even the *Qur’an* recognizes that Jesus was the Messiah (sura 5:17, 75). But the Old Testament teaches that the coming Messiah would be God himself. So when Jesus claimed to be that Messiah, he was also claiming to be God. For example, the prophet Isaiah (in 9:6) calls the Messiah, “Mighty God.” The psalmist wrote of Messiah, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever” (Ps. 45:6; cf. Heb. 1:8). Psalm 110:1 records a conversation between the Father and the Son: “The LORD (*Yahweh*) says to my Lord (*Adonai*): ‘Sit at my right hand.’” Jesus applied this passage to himself in Matthew 22:43–44. In the great messianic prophecy of Daniel 7, the Son of Man is called the “Ancient of Days” (vs. 22), a phrase used twice in the same passage of God the Father (vss. 9, 13). Jesus also said he was the Messiah at his trial before the high priest. When asked, “Are you the Christ [Greek for “Messiah”], the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus responded, “I am. . . . And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” At this, the high priest tore his robe and said, “Why do we need any more witnesses? . . . You have heard

the blasphemy!” (Mark 14:61–64). There was no doubt that in claiming to be Messiah, Jesus also claimed to be God (see also Matt. 26:54; Luke 24:27).

Jesus Claimed to Be God by Accepting Worship. The Old Testament forbids worshiping anyone other than God (Exod. 20:1–4; Deut. 5:6–9). The New Testament agrees, showing that humans refused worship (Acts 14:15), as did angels (Rev. 22:8–9). But Jesus accepted worship on numerous occasions, showing he claimed to be God. A healed leper worshiped him (Matt. 8:2), and a ruler knelt before him with a request (Matt. 9:18). After he stilled the storm, “those who were in the boat worshiped him saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’” (Matt. 14:33). A group of Canaanite women (Matt. 15:25), the mother of James and John (Matt. 20:20), the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:6), all worshiped Jesus without one word of rebuke. The disciples worshiped him after his resurrection (Matt. 28:17). Thomas saw the risen Christ and cried out, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). This could only be allowed by a person who seriously considered himself to be God. Not only did Jesus accept this worship due to God alone without rebuking those who gave it, but he even commended those who acknowledged his deity (John 20:29; Matt. 16:17).

Jesus Claimed to Have Equal Authority with God. Jesus also put his words on a par with God’s. “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago. . . . But I tell you . . .” (Matt. 5:21, 22) is repeated over and over again. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . .” (Matt. 28:18–19). God had given the Ten Commandments to Moses, but Jesus said, “A new commandment I give you: Love one another” (John 13:34). Jesus said, “until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law” (Matt. 5:18), but later Jesus said of his words, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matt. 24:35). Speaking of those who reject him, Jesus said, “that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day” (John 12:48). There is no question that Jesus expected his words to have equal authority with God’s declarations in the Old Testament.

Jesus Claimed to Be God by Requesting Prayer in His Name. Jesus not only asked people to believe in him and obey his commandments, but he asked them to pray in his name. “And I will do whatever you ask in my name. . . . You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:13–14). “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you” (John 15:7). Jesus even insisted, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). In response to this, the disciples not only prayed in Jesus’ name (1 Cor. 5:4), but prayed to Christ (Acts 7:59). Jesus certainly intended that his name be invoked both before God and as God in prayer.

In view of these clear ways in which Jesus claimed to be God, any unbiased observer of the Gospels should recognize that Jesus of Nazareth did claim to be God in human flesh. He claimed to be identical to *Yahweh* of the Old Testament.

Alleged Counter-claims of Christ. In spite of these repeated claims to be God, some critics take certain statements of Jesus as denials of deity. Two such incidents are commonly used: In one, a rich young ruler came to Jesus and addressed him as “Good teacher.” But Jesus rebuked

him, saying, “Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone” (Mark 10:17–18 ; see Mark 10:17–27 ; cf. parallels Matt. 19:16–30 ; Luke 18:18–30).

Notice, however, that Jesus did not deny that he was God; he asked the young man to examine the implications of what he said. Jesus was saying, “Do you realize what you are saying when you call me good? Are you really saying that I am God?” Of course, the man did not realize the implications of either his statements or what the law was really saying, so Jesus was forcing him into a very uncomfortable dilemma. Either Jesus was good and God, or he was evil and human, for each human is evil and does not deserve eternal life.

The second supposed counter-example is found in John 14:28 , where Jesus said, “My Father is greater than I.” How can the Father be greater if Jesus is equal to God? The answer is that, as a man, Jesus subordinated himself to the Father and accepted limitations inherent with humanity. So, *as man* the Father was greater. Further, in the economy of salvation, the Father holds a higher office than does the Son. Jesus proceeded from the Father as a prophet who brought God’s words and a high priest who interceded for his people. In nature of being as God, Jesus and the Father are equals (John 1:1 ; 8:58 ; 10:30). An earthly father is equally human with his son, but holds a higher office. So the Father and Son in the Trinity are equal *in essence* but different *in function* . In like manner, we speak of the president of a nation as being greater in dignity of office, but not in character.

Jesus cannot be said to have considered himself less than God by nature. This summary helps us understand the differences:

Jesus and the Father as God

Jesus Is Equal . . .	Jesus Is Subordinate . . .
in his divine nature.	in his human nature.
in his divine essence.	in his human function.
in his divine attributes.	in his human office.
in his divine character.	in his human position.

Jesus’ Claim to Be God. In addition to Jesus’ claim about himself, his disciples also acknowledged his claim to deity. This they manifested in many ways, including the following:

Disciples Attributed the Titles of Deity to Christ. In agreement with their Master, Jesus’ Apostles called him “the first and the last” (Rev. 1:17 ; 2:8 ; 22:13), “the true light” (John 1:9), their “rock” or “stone” (1 Cor. 10:4 ; 1 Peter 2:6–8 ; cf. Pss. 18:2 ; 95:1), the “bridegroom” (Eph. 5:28–33 ; Rev. 21:2), “the chief shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4), and “the great shepherd” (Heb. 13:20). The Old Testament role of “redeemer” (Ps. 130:7 ; Hos. 13:14) is given to Jesus in the New Testament (Titus 2:13 ; Rev. 5:9). He is seen as the forgiver of sins (Acts 5:31 ; Col. 3:13 ; cf. Ps. 130:4 ; Jer. 31:34) and “savior of the world” (John 4:42 ; cf. Isa. 43:3). The apostles also taught of him, “Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead” (2 Tim. 4:1). All of these titles are unique to Jehovah in the Old Testament but are given to Jesus in the New.

Disciples Considered Jesus the Messiah-God. The New Testament opens with a passage concluding that Jesus is Immanuel (God with us), which refers to the messianic prediction of Isaiah 7:14 . The very title “Christ” carries the same meaning as the Hebrew appellation *Messiah* (“anointed”). In Zechariah 12:10 , Jehovah says, “They will look on me, the one they have pierced.” But the New Testament writers apply this passage to Jesus’ crucifixion (John 19:37 ; Rev. 1:7). Paul interprets Isaiah 45:22–23 (“For I am God, and there is no other. . . . Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear”) as applying to Jesus: “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11). Paul says that all created beings will call Jesus both *Messiah* (Christ) and *Yahweh* (Lord).

Disciples Attributed the Powers of God to Jesus. Works and authority that are God’s alone are attributed to Jesus by his disciples. He is said to raise the dead (John 5:21 ; 11:38–44) and to forgive sins (Acts 5:31 ; 13:38). He is said to have been the primary agent in creating (John 1:2 ; Col. 1:16) and sustaining (Col. 1:17) the universe.

Disciples Associated Jesus’ Name with God’s. His followers used Jesus’ name as the agent for answering and the recipient of prayer (Acts 7:59 ; 1 Cor. 5:4). Often in prayers or benedictions, Jesus’ name is used alongside God’s, as in, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:3 ; Eph. 1:2). The name of Jesus appears with equal status to God’s in the so-called trinitarian formulas: Jesus commanded to baptize “in the name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). This association is made at the end of 2 Corinthians (13:14): “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Disciples Called Jesus God. Thomas saw Jesus’ wounds and cried, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). Paul calls Jesus the one in whom “all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form” (Col. 2:9). In Titus, Jesus is “our great God and Savior” (2:13), and the writer to the Hebrews says of him, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever” (Heb. 1:8). Paul says that before Christ existed in the form of man, which clearly refers to being really human, he existed in the “form of God” (Phil. 2:5–8). The parallel phrases suggest that if Jesus was fully human, then he was also fully God. A similar phrase, “the image of God,” refers in Colossians 1:15 to the manifestation of God. This description is strengthened in Hebrews where it says, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (1:3).

The prologue to John’s Gospel states categorically, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word [Jesus] was God*” (John 1:1).

Disciples Considered Jesus Superior to Angels. The disciples did not simply believe that Christ was more than a man; they believed him to be greater than any created being, including angels. Paul says Jesus is “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come” (Eph. 1:21). The demons submitted to his command (Matt. 8:32). Angels that refused the worship of humans are seen worshiping him (Rev. 22:8–9). The author of Hebrews presents a complete argument for Christ’s superiority over angels, saying, “For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are

my Son; today I have become your Father'? . . . And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him' " (Heb. 1:5–6).

Disciples' Alleged Counter-claims to Jesus' Deity. Critics offer texts to argue that Jesus' disciples did not believe he was God. They need to be briefly examined in context. Jehovah's Witnesses use John 1:1 to show that Jesus was " a god," not " the God," because no definite article *the* appears in the Greek. This misunderstands both the language and the verse. In Greek, the definite article is normally used to stress "the individual," and when it is not present the reference is to "the nature" of the one denoted. Thus, the verse can be rendered, "And the Word was of the nature of God." In the context of the following verses and the rest of John (for example, 1:3 ; 8:58 ; 10:30 ; 20:28) it is impossible that John 1:1 suggests that Jesus is anything less than divine. The rest of the New Testament joins John in forthrightly proclaiming that Jesus is God (for example, in Colossians 1:15–16 and Titus 2:13).

Further, some New Testament texts use the definite article and clearly refer to Christ as "the God." It does not matter whether John used the definite article in 1:1 . He and other writers of Scripture considered Jesus as God, not "a god" (see Heb. 1:8).

Critics also use Colossians 1:15 , where Paul classifies Christ as "firstborn of all creation." This seems to imply that Christ is a creature, the first creature as the universe was made. This interpretation likewise is contrary to the context, for Paul in Colossians 1:16 has just said that Christ "created all things" and he is about to say that "the fullness of the Godhead" is in him (2:9). The term *firstborn* frequently refers to a position of preeminence in the family which it clearly does in this context (cf. 1:18). Christ is heir of all things, creator and owner. He is before all things.

The same applies to Revelation 3:14 , another verse used to deny Christ's deity. John refers to Christ as the "beginning of the creation of God." This sounds as if Christ was the first created being. Here, though, the meaning is that Christ is the *Beginner* of God's creation, not the *beginning* in God's creation. The same Greek word for *beginning* is used of God the Father in Revelation 21:6–7 : "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning* and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and *I will be his God* and he will be my son."

Force of the Testimony. There is manifold testimony from Jesus and from those who knew him best that Jesus claimed to be God and that his followers believed that he was. Whether this was the case, there can be no doubt that this is what they believed. As C. S. Lewis observed, when confronted with the boldness of Christ's claims, we are faced with distinct alternatives.

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish things that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would rather be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. [Lewis, 55–56]

Evidence That Jesus Is God. To say that Jesus and his disciples claimed that he was God in human flesh does not in itself prove that he is God. The real question is whether there is any good reason to believe the claims. To support his claims to deity, Jesus showed supernatural power and authority that is unique in human history.

Fulfilled Messianic Prophecies. There were dozens of predictive prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah (*see* PROPHECY AS PROOF FOR BIBLE). Consider the following predictions, made centuries in advance, that Jesus would be:

1. born of a woman (Gen. 3:15 ; cf. Gal. 4:4).
2. born of a virgin (Isa 7:14 ; cf. Matt. 1:21f .) (*see* VIRGIN BIRTH).
3. cut off (would die) 483 years after the declaration to reconstruct the temple in 444 B.C . (Dan. 9:24f . ; this was fulfilled to the year. See Hoehner, 115–38).
4. The seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3 and 22:18 ; cf. Matt. 1:1 and Gal. 3:16).
5. of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10 ; cf. Luke 3:23 , 33 and Heb. 7:14).
6. a descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:12f . ; cf. Matt. 1:1).
7. born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 ; cf. Matt. 2:1 and Luke 2:4–7).
8. anointed by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11:2 ; cf. Matt. 3:16–17).
9. heralded by a messenger (Isa. 40:3 and Mal. 3:1 ; cf. Matt. 3:1–2).
10. a worker of miracles (Isa. 35:5–6 ; cf. Matt. 9:35 ; *see* MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE).
11. cleanser of the temple (Mal. 3:1 ; cf. Matt. 21:12f .).
12. rejected by Jews (Ps. 118:22 ; cf. 1 Peter 2:7).
13. die a humiliating death (Ps. 22 and Isa. 53 ; cf. Matt. 27:31f .). His death would involve:
 - enduring rejection by his own people (Isa. 53:3 ; cf. John 1:10–11 ; 7:5 , 48).
 - standing silence before his accusers (Isa. 53:7 ; cf. Matt. 27:12–19).
 - being mocked (Ps. 22:7–8 ; cf. Matt. 27:31).
 - having hands and feet pierced (Ps. 22:16 ; cf. Luke 23:33).
 - being crucified with thieves (Isa. 53:12 ; cf. Mark 15:27–28).

praying for his persecutors (Isa. 53:12 ; cf. Luke 23:34).

the piercing of his side (Zech. 12:10 ; cf. John 19:34).

burial in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9 ; cf. Matt. 27:57–60).

the casting of lots for his garments (Ps. 22:18 ; cf. John 19:23–24).

14. being raised from the dead (Ps. 2:7 and 16:10 ; cf. Acts 2:31 and Mark 16:6).

15. ascending into heaven (Ps. 68:18 ; cf. Acts 1:9).

16. sitting at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1 ; cf. Heb. 1:3).

These prophecies were written hundreds of years before Christ was born. They are too precise to have been based on reading trends of the times or just intelligent guesses, like “prophecies” in a supermarket tabloid.

They are also more precise than the so-called prophecies of Muhammad in the *Qur'an* (*see QUR'AN ALLEGED DIVINE ORIGIN OF*). Even the most liberal critics admit that the prophetic books were completed at least 400 years before Christ and the Book of Daniel no later than 165 B.C. (*see DANIEL, DATING OF*). There is good evidence to date these books much earlier (some Psalms and early prophets to the eighth and ninth centuries B.C.). But any reasonable dating places these writings long before Jesus lived. It is humanly impossible to make clear, repeated and accurate predictions 200 years in the future. The fulfillment of these prophecies in a theistic universe is miraculous and points to a divine confirmation of Jesus as the Messiah.

Some have suggested that there is a natural explanation for what only seem to be supernatural predictions here. One explanation is that the prophecies were accidentally fulfilled in Jesus. He happened to be in the right place at the right time. But what are we to say about the prophecies involving miracles? “He just happened to make the blind man see?” “He just happened to be resurrected from the dead?” These hardly seem to be chance events. If a God is in control of the universe, then chance is ruled out. Further, it is unlikely that these events would have converged in the life of one man. The probability of sixteen predictions being fulfilled in one man has been calculated at 1 in 1045. If we go to forty-eight predictions, the probability is 1 in 10157. It is almost impossible to conceive of a number that big (Stoner, 108).

But it is not just a logical improbability that rules out this theory; it is the moral implausibility of an all-powerful and all-knowing God letting things get out of control so that all his plans for prophetic fulfillment are ruined by someone who just happened to be in the right place at the right time. God cannot lie, nor can he break a promise (Heb. 6:18). So we must conclude that he did not allow his prophetic promises to be thwarted by chance. All the evidence points to Jesus as the divinely appointed fulfillment of the messianic prophecies. He was God's man, confirmed by God's signs. If God made the predictions to be fulfilled in the life of Christ, he would not allow them to be fulfilled in the life of any other. The God of truth would not allow a lie to be confirmed as true (*see MIRACLES AS CONFIRMATION OF TRUTH*).

A Miraculous and Sinless Life. The very nature of Christ's life demonstrates his claim to deity. To live a truly sinless life would be a momentous accomplishment, but to claim to be God and offer a sinless life as evidence is another matter. Muhammad did not (*see MUHAMMAD, CHARACTER OF*). Nor did Buddha nor any other religious leader (*see CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF*). Some of Jesus' enemies brought false accusations against him, but the verdict of Pilate at his trial has been the verdict of history: “I find no basis for a charge against this man” (Luke 23:4). A soldier at the cross agreed, saying, “Surely this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47), and the thief on the cross next to Jesus said, “this man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:41). But the real test is what those who were closest to Jesus said of his character. His disciples had lived and worked with him for three years at close range, yet their opinions of him were not diminished. Peter called Christ, “a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:19) and added, “no deceit was found in his mouth” (2:22). John called him, “Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1 ; cf. 3:7). Paul expressed the unanimous belief of the early church that Christ “had no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21), and the writer of Hebrews says that he was tempted as a man, “yet was without sin” (4:15). Jesus himself once challenged his accusers, “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?” (John 8:46), but no one was able to find him guilty of anything. He forbid retaliation (Matt. 5:38–42). Unlike Muhammad, he never used the sword to spread his message (Matt. 26:52). This being the case, the impeccable character of Christ gives a double testimony to the truth of his claim. It provides supporting evidence as he suggested, but it also assures us that he was not lying when he said that he was God.

Beyond the moral aspects of his life, the miraculous nature of his ministry is a divine confirmation. Jesus performed an unprecedented display of miracles. He turned water to wine (John 2:7f.), walked on water (Matt. 14:25), multiplied bread (John 6:11f.), opened the eyes of the blind (John 9:7f.), made the lame to walk (Mark 2:3f.), cast out demons (Mark 3:11f.), healed the multitudes of all kinds of sickness (Matt. 9:35), including leprosy (Mark 1:40–42), and even raised the dead to life on several occasions (John 11:43–44 ; Luke 7:11–15 ; Mark 5:35f.). When asked if he was the Messiah, he used his miracles as evidence to support the claim saying, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised” (Matt. 11:4–5). This special outpouring of miracles was a special sign that Messiah had come (*see Isa. 35:5–6*). The Jewish leader Nicodemus even said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2). To a first-century Jew, miracles such as Christ performed were clear indications of God's approval of the performer's message (*see MIRACLES AS CONFIRMATION OF TRUTH*). But in Jesus' case, part of that message was that he was God in human flesh. Thus, his miracles verify his claim to be true deity.

The Resurrection. Nothing like the resurrection of Christ is claimed by any other religion, and no other miracle has as much historical confirmation. Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day in the same physical body, though transformed, in which he died. In this resurrected physical body he appeared to more than 500 disciples on at least one of twelve different occasions over a forty-day period and conversed with them (Acts 1:3 ; 1 Cor. 15:3–6 ; *see RESURRECTION, ORDER OF EVENTS*). The nature, extent, and times of, these appearances remove any doubt that Jesus indeed rose from the dead in the numerically same body of flesh and bones in which he died. During each appearance he was seen and heard with the natural senses of the

observer. On at least four occasions he was touched or offered himself to be touched. At least twice he definitely was touched with physical hands. Four times Jesus ate physical food with his disciples. Four times they saw his empty tomb, and twice he showed them his crucifixion scars. He literally exhausted the ways it is possible to prove that he rose bodily from the grave. No event in the ancient world has more eyewitness verification than does the resurrection of Jesus (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR).

What is more amazing about the resurrection is the fact that both the Old Testament and Jesus predicted that he would rise from the dead. This highlights the evidential value of the resurrection of Christ in a unique way.

Old Testament prediction of the resurrection. Jewish prophets predicted the resurrection in specific statements and by logical deduction. The apostles applied specific Old Testament texts to the resurrection of Christ (Ps. 2:7 ; cf. Heb. 1:5 and Acts 13:33). Peter says that, since we know that David died and was buried, he must have been speaking of the Christ when he said, “you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay” (Ps. 16:8–11 , quoted in Acts 2:25–31). No doubt Paul used this and similar passages in the Jewish synagogues when “he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead” (Acts 17:2–3).

Also, the Old Testament teaches the resurrection by logical deduction. There is clear teaching that the Messiah was to die (cf. Ps. 22 ; Isa. 53) and equally evident teaching that he is to have an enduring political reign from Jerusalem (Isa. 9:6 ; Dan. 2:44 ; Zech. 13:1). There is no viable way to reconcile these two teachings unless the Messiah who dies is raised from the dead to reign forever. There is no indication in the Old Testament of two Messiahs, one suffering and one reigning, as some Jewish scholars have suggested. References to the Messiah are always in the singular (cf. Isa. 9:6 ; 53:1f . ; Dan. 9:26). No second Messiah is ever designated.

Yet Jesus had begun no reign when he died. Only by his resurrection could the prophecies of a Messianic kingdom be fulfilled.

Jesus’ prediction of his resurrection. On several occasions Jesus also predicted his resurrection from the dead. In the earliest part of his ministry, he said, “Destroy this temple, [of my body] and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19 , 21). In Matthew 12:40 , he said, “as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and nights in the heart of the earth.” To those who had seen his miracles and stubbornly would not believe, he said, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matt. 12:39 ; 16:4). After Peter’s confession, “he then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things . . . and that he must be killed and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31). This became a central part of his teaching from that point until his death (Matt. 27:63 ; Mark 14:59). Further, Jesus taught that he would raise himself from the dead, saying of his life, “I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again” (John 10:18).

Philosopher of science Karl Popper argued that, whenever a “risky prediction” is fulfilled, it counts as confirmation of the theory that predicted it. If so, then the fulfillment of Jesus’

prediction of his own resurrection is confirmation of his claim to be God. For what could be riskier than predicting your own resurrection? If a person will not accept these lines of evidence as support of Christ’s truth claim, then he has a bias that will not accept anything as evidence.

Summary. Jesus claimed to be God and proved it by a convergence of three unprecedented sets of miracles: fulfilled prophecy, a miraculous life, and his resurrection from the dead. This unique convergence of supernatural events confirms his claims to be God in human flesh. It also answers David Hume ’s objection that, since all miracles have similar claims, their proof claims are mutually canceling. Not all religions have like miracle claims. Only in Christianity does its leader claim to prove to be God by a convergence of unique supernatural events such as Jesus offered (*see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF). Hence, only Christ is miraculously confirmed to be God and, by virtue of that, to be believed in whatever he teaches as true.

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Christ, Uniqueness of. Orthodox Christians believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God in human flesh (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF). However, some unbelievers, who may or may not believe Jesus existed, do not believe that Jesus was necessarily a wise or a particularly good man. Others, such as Muslims (*see* ISLAM), think that Jesus was a prophet, along with other prophets. Hinduism depicts Christ as one among many great gurus. Liberal Christians and many others hold Christ as a good human being and a great moral example.

CT Christianity Today

In his essay “Why I Am Not a Christian,” the agnostic Bertrand Russell wrote, “Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we know nothing about him.” As to Christ’s character, he said, “I cannot myself feel that either in the matter of wisdom or in the matter of virtue Christ stands quite as high as some other people known to history. I think I should put Buddha and Socrates above him in those respects” (Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*).

Deity and Humanity. Christianity is unique among world religions, and Christ’s true uniqueness is the centerpiece of Christianity. The truth about Christ is based primarily on the New Testament documents which have been shown elsewhere to be authentic (*see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS, RELIABILITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF). The New Testament record, especially the Gospels, is one of the most reliable documents from the ancient world. From these documents we learn that numerous facets of Christ are absolutely unique.

Jesus Christ was unique in that he alone, of all who ever lived, was both God and man. The New Testament teaches the fully unified deity and humanity of Christ. The Nicene Creed (325) states the uniform belief of all orthodox Christianity that Christ was fully God and fully man in one person. All heresies regarding Christ deny one or both of these propositions. This as a claim alone makes him unique above all other religious leaders or persons who have ever lived, and it can be backed up with factual evidence. Some of this evidence is seen in other aspects of Christ’s uniqueness (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF).

The Supernatural Nature of Christ. *Unique in Messianic Prophecies.* Jesus lived a miracle-filled and supernaturally empowered existence from his conception to his ascension. Centuries before his birth he was foretold by supernatural prophecy (*see* MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ; PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE).

The Old Testament, which even the most ardent critic acknowledges was in existence centuries before Christ, predicted the *where* (Micah 5:2), the *when* (Dan. 9:26), and the *how* (Isa. 7:14) of Christ’s entry into the world. He would be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15) from the line of Adam’s son Seth (Gen. 4:26), through Noah’s son Shem (Gen. 9:26–27), and Abraham (Gen. 12:3 ; 15:5). He would come through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and would be the son of David (2 Sam. 7:12f). The Old Testament predicted that Christ would die for our sins (Psalm 22 ; Isaiah 53 ; Dan. 9:26 ; Zech. 12:10) and would rise from the dead (Pss. 2:7 ; 16:10).

All of these supernatural prophecies were uniquely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This is not true of any great religious leader or person who has ever lived, including Muhammad (*see* MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED MIRACLES OF).

Unique in Conception. Christ was not only supernaturally anticipated; he was also miraculously conceived. While announcing his virgin conception, Matthew (1:22–23) points to the prophecy of Isaiah (7:14). Luke, a physician, records this miraculous inception of human life (Luke 1:26f); Paul alludes to it in Galatians 4:4 . Of all human conceptions, Jesus’ stands as unique and miraculous (*see* VIRGIN BIRTH).

Unique in Life. From his very first miracle in Cana of Galilee (John 2:11), Jesus’ ministry was marked by its miracles (cf. John 3:2 ; Acts 2:22). These were not healings of delusional illnesses, nor were they explainable on natural grounds. They were unique (*see* MIRACLE) in that they were immediate, always successful, had no known relapses, and healed illnesses that were incurable by medicine, such as persons born blind (John 9). Jesus even raised several people from the dead, including Lazarus whose body was already to the point of rotting (John 11:39).

Jesus turned water to wine (John 2:7f), walked on water (Matt. 14:25), multiplied bread (John 6:11f), opened the eyes of the blind (John 9:7f), made the lame to walk (Mark 2:3f), cast out demons (Mark 3:10f), healed all kinds of sicknesses (Matt. 9:35), including leprosy (Mark 1:40–42), and even raised the dead to life on several occasions (Mark 5:35f ; Luke 7:11–15 ; John 11:43–44). When asked if he was the Messiah, he used his miracles as evidence to support the claim saying, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised” (Matt. 11:4–5). This outpouring of miracles was set forth ahead of time by prophets as a special sign that Messiah had come (see Isa. 35:5–6). Nicodemus even said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2).

Unique in Death. Events surrounding Christ’s death were miraculous (*see* CHRIST, DEATH OF). This included the darkness from noon to 3 P . M . (Mark 15:33) and the earthquake that opened the tombs and rent the temple veil (Matt. 27:51–54). The manner in which he suffered the excruciating torture of crucifixion was miraculous. The attitude he maintained toward his mockers and executioners was miraculous, saying, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). The way in which he actually died was miraculous. As Jesus said, “I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18). At the very moment of his departure, he was not overcome by death. Rather, he voluntarily dismissed his spirit. “Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:30).

Unique in the Resurrection. The crowning miracle of Jesus’ earthly mission was the resurrection (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). It was not only predicted in the Old Testament (Psalms 2 , 16), but Jesus himself predicted it from the very beginning of his ministry: He said, “ ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ . . . But the temple he had spoken of was his body” (John 2:19 , 21 ; Matt. 12:40–42 ; 17:9). Jesus demonstrated the reality of his resurrection in twelve appearances over forty days to more than 500 people.

Unique in the Ascension. Just like his entrance into this world, Jesus’ departure was also miraculous. After commissioning his disciples, “he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them” (Acts 1:10). Contrary to the view of some (see Harris, 423), this was not a “parable” but a literal bodily ascension into heaven from which he will return in the same literal body to reign in this world (Acts 1:11 ; Rev. 1:7 , 19–20). The great Christian creeds clearly emphasize the miraculous bodily ascension of Christ.

Unique in Sinlessness. Some of Jesus' enemies brought false accusations against him, but the verdict of Pilate at his trial has been the verdict of history: "I find no basis for a charge against this man" (Luke 23:4). A soldier at the cross agreed saying, "Surely this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47), and the thief on the cross next to Jesus said, "This man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41).

For a description of what those closest to Jesus thought of his character, Hebrews says that he was tempted as a man "yet without sinning" (4:15). Jesus himself once challenged his accusers, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (John 8:46), but no one was able to find him guilty of anything. This being the case, the impeccable character of Christ gives a double testimony to the truth of his claim. Jesus' sinlessness was unique.

The Character of Christ Is Unique. Christ's character was unique in other ways. To a perfect degree he manifested the best of virtues. He also combined seemingly opposing traits.

In Exemplifying Virtues. Even Bertrand Russell , who fancied he saw flaws in Christ's character, confessed nonetheless that "What the world needs is love, Christian love, or compassion." But this belies a belief in what most others acknowledge, namely, that Christ was the perfect manifestation of the virtue of love.

Jesus' willing submission to the ignominious suffering and death by crucifixion, while he maintained love and forgiveness toward those killing him is proof of this virtue (Luke 23:34 , 43). He alone lived perfectly what he taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). He did not retaliate against his enemies; instead, he forgave them. He rebuked his disciples for misusing the sword (Matt. 26:52), and miraculously reattached and healed the amputated ear of one of the mob who came to take him to his death (Luke 22:50).

Jesus was the perfect example of patience, kindness, and compassion. He had compassion on the multitudes (Matt. 9:36), to the point of weeping over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37). Even though he justly condemned (in no uncertain terms) the Pharisees who misled the innocent (Matt. 23), he did not hesitate to speak with Jewish leaders who showed interest (John 3).

In Combining Seemingly Opposite Traits. One of the unique things about Christ is the way he brought together in his person characteristics that in anyone else would seem impossible. He was a perfect example of humility, to the extent of washing his disciples' feet (John 15). Yet he made bold claims to deity, such as, "I and the Father are One" (John 10:30) and "before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58 ; cf. Exod. 3:14). The claim, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29) sounds arrogant, but he backed his words among little children (Matthew 18). Yet he was so strong as to overturn the tables of those who merchandised God's house, cracking a whip to chase away their animals (John 2). Jesus was known for the virtue of kindness, yet he was severe with hypocrites who misled the innocent (Matthew 23).

Life and Teaching. As Jesus himself declared, the substance of what he taught finds its roots in the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17-18). He condemned meaningless traditions and misinterpretations of the Old Testament (Matt. 5:21f ., 15:3-5 ; see ACCOMMODATION THEORY

). Though the essence of what he taught was not new, the form and the manner in which he taught it was unique. The Sermon on the Mount employs a fresh teaching method.

The vivid parables, such as the good Samaritan (Luke 10), the prodigal son (Luke 15), and the lost sheep (Luke 15:4f .), are masterpieces of communication. Parables stand at the heart of Jesus' teaching style. By drawing on the lifestyles of the people to illustrate the truths he wished to convey, Jesus communicated truth and refuted error. Also, by speaking in parables he could avoid "casting pearls before swine." He could confound and confuse those who did not wish to believe (the outsider), yet illuminate those who did desire to believe (the insider). While the use of allegories and parables themselves was not unique, the manner in which Jesus employed parables was. He brought the art of teaching eternal mystery in terms of everyday experience to a new height. The "laws of teaching" identified by modern pedagogues (Shafer, *Seven Laws*), were practiced perfectly in Jesus' teaching style.

The manner in which Jesus taught was unique. The Jewish intellectuals admitted, "No one ever spoke the way this man does" (John 7:46). As he taught in parables, he was thronged by the multitudes (Matt. 13:34). As a lad, he impressed even the rabbis in the temple. For "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:47). Later, he confounded those who attempted to trick him so that "No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions" (Matt. 22:46).

Christ Is Superior. Jesus Christ was unique in every way. From his complete deity to his perfect humanity; from his miraculous conception to his supernatural ascension; from his impeccable character to his incomparable teaching—Jesus stands above all other religious or moral teachers.

Christ Is Superior to Moses. As a Jew himself, Jesus had no argument with Moses, the prophet who brought the Jewish law and led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage to freedom as an independent nation. Moses and Jesus were prophets of the same God, and Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the law (found in the writings of Moses) but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). Jesus implies that Moses' words are God's words (compare Matt. 19:4-5 with Gen. 2:24). However, in many respects, we find that Jesus is superior to Moses.

Christ is a superior prophet to Moses. In Deuteronomy 18:15-19 , Moses predicted that God would raise up a Jewish Prophet with a special message. Anyone who did not believe this prophet would be judged by God. This passage has been traditionally interpreted as referring to Messiah. Genesis 3:15 is also understood by many to refer to Jesus as the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

Christ's revelation is superior to that of Moses. "The Law was given through Moses; Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). While Moses set up the moral and social structures which guided the nation, the law could not save anyone from the penalty of their sins, which is death. As Paul says, "by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). The revelation which came through Jesus, though, was one in which the sins which the law made known are forgiven, "being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom.

3:24). Christ's revelation builds on the foundation of Moses by solving the problem of which the law made us aware.

Christ's position is superior to that of Moses. Moses is the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, but Jesus is more than a prophet. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Moses was faithful *in* all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son *over* his house" (Heb. 3:5–6). While Moses served God, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with the right to rule over all servants.

Christ's miracles are superior to those of Moses. Moses performed great miracles, but Christ's miracles were greater in degree (*see* MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE). Moses lifted the bronze serpent to give healing to those who would look, but in this he was merely following instructions. He never made the blind to see, or the deaf to hear. Also, there is nothing in Moses' ministry to compare with the resurrection of Lazarus or of Christ.

Christ's claims are superior to those of Moses. Moses never made a claim to be God and did nothing other than fulfill his role as a prophet. Jesus did claim to be God and predicted his own resurrection to prove it.

Christ Is Superior to Muhammad. Muhammad, the founder of Islam agreed with Jesus and Moses that God is one (*see* ISLAM), that he created the universe, and that he is beyond the universe. There is considerable agreement over the events of the first sixteen chapters of Genesis, to the point where Hagar was cast out from Abram's house. After this, the Bible focuses on Isaac while Islam is concerned with what happened to their forefather, Ishmael. The teaching of Muhammad may be summarized in the five doctrines:

1. Allah is the one true God.
2. Allah has sent many prophets, including Moses and Jesus, but Muhammad is the last and greatest.
3. The *Qur'an* is the supreme religious book (*see* QUR'AN, ALLEGED DIVINE ORIGIN OF), taking priority over the Law, the Psalms, and the Injil (Gospels) of Jesus.
4. There are many intermediate beings between God and us (angels), some of whom are good and some evil.
5. Each man's deeds will be weighed to determine who will go to heaven and hell at the resurrection. The way to gain salvation includes reciting the Shahadah several times a day ("There is no God but Allah; and Muhammad is his prophet."), praying five times a day, fasting a month each year, almsgiving, and making pilgrimages to Mecca.

Christ offers a superior message. Jesus made superior claims to those made by Muhammad. Jesus claimed to be God (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF). Muhammad claimed only to be a mere man who was a prophet (*see* MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED DIVINE CALL OF). If Jesus, then, is not God, he is certainly no prophet. Jesus offered a superior confirmation for his claims. Jesus performed

numerous miracles. Muhammad performed no miracles and admitted in the *Qur'an* that Jesus did many. Only Jesus died and rose from the dead.

Christ offers a better way of salvation. Unlike the God of Islam, the God of the Bible reached out to us by sending his Son to earth to die for our sins. Muhammad offered no sure hope for salvation, only guidelines for working oneself into Allah's favor. Christ provided all that is needed to get us to heaven in his death, "For Christ also died once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

Christ offers a superior model life. Muhammad spent the last ten years of his life at war. As a polygamist he exceeding even the number of wives (four) he had prescribed for his religion. He also violated his own law by plundering caravans coming to Mecca, some of whom were on pilgrimage. He engaged in retaliation and revenge, contrary to his own teaching (*see* MUHAMMAD, CHARACTER OF).

Jesus Is Superior to Hindu Gurus. In Hinduism (*see* HINDUISM, VEDANTA) a *guru* is a teacher. The Hindu scriptures cannot be understood by reading; they must be learned from a guru. These holy men are worshiped even after their deaths as supposed incarnations of the gods. What they teach is that humans need liberation from the endless cycle of reincarnation (*samsara*) which is brought on by *karma* , the effects of all words, deeds, and actions in the present and all former lives. Liberation (*moksha*) is obtained when the individual expands his being and consciousness to an infinite level and realizes that *atman* (the self) is the same as *Brahman* (the one absolute being from which all multiplicity comes).

In other words, each Hindu must realize personal godhood. Such a realization can only be achieved by following *Jnana Yoga*—salvation by knowledge of the ancient writings and inward meditation; *Bhakti Yoga*—salvation by devotion to one of the many deities; *Karma Yoga*—salvation by works, such as ceremonies, sacrifices, fasting, and pilgrimages, which must be done without thought of rewards. Each of these methods will to some extent include *Raja Yoga* , a meditation technique involving control over the body, breathing, and thoughts.

Hinduism as it is actually practiced consists largely of superstition, legendary stories about the gods, occult practices, and demon worship.

Christ teaches a superior worldview. Jesus teaches a theistic worldview (*see* THEISM). But pantheism, the realization of godhood, is the heart of Hinduism.

Christ's teaching is morally superior. Orthodox Hinduism insists that suffering people be left to suffer, because it is their destiny, as determined by *karma* . Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." He defined neighbor as anyone in need of help. John said, "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). Also, many, if not most, gurus use their esteemed position to exploit their followers financially and sexually. The Bagwan Sri Rajneesh accumulated dozens of Rolls Royces as gifts from his followers. The Beatles became disenchanted with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi when they learned that he was much more interested in the body of one of the

women in their party than with any of their spirits. They admitted, “We made a mistake.” Even the respected guru Mahatma Gandhi slept with women other than his wife.

Jesus gives a superior path to enlightenment. While the gurus are necessary to understand the sacred writings of *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*, there is no esoteric or hidden truth in the Bible that must be explained apart from ordinary understanding. Christian meditation is not an effort to empty the mind, but rather to fill it with the truth of Scriptural principles (Psalm 1). Inward meditation is like peeling an onion; you keep tearing off layer after layer until, when you reach the middle, you find that there is nothing there. Meditation on God’s Word begins with content and opens up the meaning until it yields contentment of soul.

Christ teaches a better way of salvation. The Hindu is lost in the karmic cycle of reincarnation until he reaches *moksha* and is left to work the way out of this maze alone. Jesus promised that we would be saved by faith (Eph. 2:8–9 ; Titus 3:5–7), and that we could know that our salvation is guaranteed (Eph. 1:13–14 ; 1 John 5:13).

Christ Is Superior to Buddha. Siddhartha Gautama (*Buddha* is a title meaning “enlightened one”) is inferior to Christ. Buddhism began as a reformation movement within Hinduism, which had become a system of speculation and superstition. To correct this, Gautama rejected the rituals and occultism and developed an essentially atheistic religion (though later forms of Buddhism returned to the Hindu gods). His basic beliefs are summed in the Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is suffering.
2. Suffering is caused by desires for pleasure and prosperity.
3. Suffering can be overcome by eliminating desires.
4. Desire can be eliminated by the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path is both a system of religious education and the moral precepts of Buddhism . It includes (1) right knowledge (“Four Noble Truths”), (2) right intentions, (3) right speech, (4) right conduct (no killing, drinking, stealing, lying, or adultery), (5) right occupation (which causes no suffering), (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness (denial of the finite self), and (8) right meditation (*Raja Yoga*).

The goal of all Buddhists is not heaven or being with God, for there is no God in Gautama’s teaching. Rather they seek nirvana, the elimination of all suffering, desires, and the illusion of self-existence. While a liberal branch of Buddhism (Mahayana Buddhism) now has deified Gautama as a savior, Theravada Buddhism stays closer to Gautama’s teachings and maintains that he never claimed divinity. As to his being a savior, it is reported that Buddha’s last words were, “Buddhas do but point the way; work out your salvation with diligence.” As a variant form of Hinduism, Buddhism is subject to all of the criticisms mentioned above. Jesus’ teaching is superior. Further:

Christ fills life with more hope. Jesus’ teaching is superior to Buddha’s in that Jesus taught hope in life, while Buddhism sees life only as suffering and selfhood as something to be eradicated. Jesus taught that life is a gift of God to be enjoyed (John 10:10) and that the individual is to be honored supremely (Matt. 5:22). Furthermore, he promised hope in the life to come (John 14:6).

Christ offers a better way of salvation. The Buddhist also teaches reincarnation as the means of salvation. However, in this form the self or individuality of the soul is eradicated at the end of each life. So even though you live on, it is not you as an individual who has any hope of attaining nirvana. Jesus promised hope to each man and woman as an individual (John 14:3) and said to the thief on the cross beside him, “Today you shall be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Jesus is a better Christ. Jesus claimed and proved to be God in human flesh. Buddha was a mere mortal man who died and never rose again. Jesus, however, rose bodily from the grave. Gautama simply wanted to bring his “enlightenment” to others to help them to nirvana, where all desires and individual existence is lost.

Christ Is Superior to Socrates. Although Socrates never started a religion, he has attracted a great following. Socrates never wrote anything, but Plato , his disciple, wrote a great deal about him, although these accounts may be as much Plato’s ideas as the thought of Socrates. Plato presents Socrates as a man convinced that God has appointed him to the task of promoting truth and goodness by making humans examine their words and deeds to see if they are true and good. Vice, in his opinion, was merely ignorance, and knowledge led to virtue. He is credited as the first person to recognize a need to develop a systematic approach to discovering truth, though the system itself was finally formulated by Aristotle—a disciple of Plato’s.

Like Christ, Socrates was condemned to death on the basis of false accusations from authorities who were threatened by his teaching. He could have been acquitted if he had not insisted on making his accusers and judges examine their own statements and lives, which they were unwilling to do. He was content to die, knowing that he had carried out his mission to the end, and that death, whether a dreamless sleep or a wonderful fellowship of great men, was good.

Christ has a superior basis for truth. Jesus, like Socrates, often used questions to make his hearers examine themselves, but his basis for knowing the truth about human beings and God was rooted in the fact that he was the all-knowing God. He said of himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” He was, in his very being, the fount from which all truth ultimately flowed. Likewise, as God, he was the absolute Goodness by which all other goodness is measured. He once asked a young man to examine his words by saying, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” Jesus was the very truth and good which Socrates wanted to understand.

Christ gives more certain knowledge. While Socrates taught some true principles, he often was left to speculate about many important issues, such as what happens at death (*see* CERTAINTY/CERTITUDE). Jesus gave a sure answer to such questions, because he had certain knowledge of the human destination (John 5:19–29 ; 11:25–26). Where reason (Socrates) has

insufficient evidence to make a definite conclusion, revelation (Jesus) gives answers which might never be anticipated.

Christ's death was more noble. Socrates died for a cause and did so with courage, which is certainly to be commended. However, Jesus died as a substitute for others (Mark 10:45) to pay the penalty that they deserved. Not only did he die for his friends, but also for those that were, and would remain, his enemies (Rom. 5:6–7). Such a demonstration of love is unequalled by any philosopher or philanthropist.

Christ's proof of his message is superior. Rational proofs are good when there is sound evidence for their conclusions (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). But Socrates cannot support his claim to be sent by God with anything that compares to the miracles of Christ and his resurrection (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). Pagan prophets and prophetesses, such as the Oracle of Delphi, do not compare with the precise biblical prediction and miracles (*see* PROPHECY AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE). In these acts there is a superior proof that Jesus' message was authenticated by God as true (*see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ; MIRACLES AS CONFIRMATION OF TRUTH).

Christ Is Superior to Lao Tse (Taoism). Modern Taoism is a religion of witchcraft, superstition, and polytheism, but it was originally a system of philosophy, and that is how it is being presented to Western culture today. Lao Tse built this system around one principle which explained everything in the universe and guided it all. That principle is called the Tao. There is no simple way to explain the Tao (*see* ZEN BUDDHISM). The world is full of conflicting opposites—good and evil, male and female, light and dark, yes and no. All oppositions are manifestations of the conflict between *Yin* and *Yang* . But in ultimate reality *Yin* and *Yang* are completely intertwined and perfectly balanced. That balance is the mystery called the Tao. To understand the Tao is to realize that all opposites are one and that truth lies in contradiction, not in resolution (*see* LOGIC ; FIRST PRINCIPLES).

Taoism goes beyond this to urge living in harmony with the Tao. A person should enter a life of complete passiveness and reflection on such questions as, “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” or “If a tree falls in the forest when no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?” One should be at peace with nature and avoid all forms of violence. This system of philosophy has many similarities with Zen Buddhism.

Christ brings superior freedom. Jesus allows humans to use their reason. In fact, he commands them to do so (Matt. 22:37 ; cf. 1 Peter 3:15); Taoism does not, at least on the highest level. Taoism engages in the claim that “Reason does not apply to reality.” That statement itself is self-defeating, for it is a reasonable statement about reality. It is either true or false about the way things really are, and not contradictory, yet it claims that ultimately truth lies in contradiction. Jesus commanded: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, *and with all your mind* . This is the great and foremost commandment” (Matt. 22:37–38 , emphasis added). God says, “Come now, and let us reason together,” (Isa. 1:18). Peter exhorts us to “give a reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15b).

Jesus encouraged the use of freedom to choose, never imposing himself on the unwilling (Matt. 23:37). Taoism asks each follower to set will on the shelf; to give up the power to change

things. Jesus says that each person has a choice and that this choice makes the difference. Each chooses to believe or not believe (John 3:18), to obey or disobey (John 15:14), to change the world or be changed by it (Matt. 5:13–16).

Jesus allows each person the freedom to be saved. Taoism offers only a way to resign oneself to the way things are. Christ offers a way to change both who we are and what we are, so that we might know the joys of life. Rather than accepting death as an inevitable end, Christ provides a way to conquer death by his resurrection. Lao Tse can make no such claim.

Conclusion. Christ is absolutely unique among all who ever lived (*see* WORLD RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY). He is unique in his supernatural nature, in his superlative character, and in his life and teaching (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF). No other world teacher has claimed to be God. Even when the followers of some prophet deified their teacher, there is no proof given for that claim that can be compared to the fulfillment of prophecy, the sinless and miraculous life, and the resurrection. No other religious leader (except some who copied Christ) offered salvation by faith, apart from works, based on acting to take away the guilt for human sin. No religious or philosophical leader has displayed the love for people that Jesus did in dying for the sins of the world (John 15:13 ; Rom. 5:6–8). Jesus is absolutely unique among all human beings who ever lived.

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Christ, Virgin Birth of. See VIRGIN BIRTH .

Christ of Faith vs. Jesus of History. The distinction between the “Christ of faith” and the Jesus of history is often traced to Martin Kahler (1835–1912), though he probably did not mean by the term what most contemporary critics do. Even before Kahler, Gotthold Lessing (1729–1781) laid the ground for the separation of the Christ of faith from the Jesus of history. What happened in that separation through the “quests for the historical Jesus” is discussed in the article, Jesus, Quest for the Historical.

Lessing's "Ditch." As early as 1778, Lessing viewed the gulf between the historical and the eternal as "the ugly ditch which I cannot get across, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap" (Lessing, 55). This gulf separated the contingent truths of history from the necessary truths of religion. And there is simply no way to span it from our side. Hence, he concluded that no matter how probable one finds the Gospel accounts, they can never serve as the basis for knowing eternal truths.

Kant's Gulf. In 1781, Immanuel Kant spoke in his *Critique of Pure Reason* of a gulf between the contingent truths of our experience and the necessary truths of reason. Hence, he believed it necessary to destroy any philosophical or scientific basis for belief in God. "I have therefore found it necessary," he said, "to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*" (Kant "Preface," 29). Kant held that one must approach the realm of religion by faith. It was the realm of practical reason, not of theoretical reason. He set up an impassable gulf between the objective, scientific, knowable realm of facts and the unknowable realm of value (morality and religion). This fact/value dichotomy is at the basis of the later disjunction between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history.

Kahler's Historical/Historic Divide. The title of Kahler's book described the dichotomy he saw as necessary: *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (1892). This volume is credited with originating the distinction between "historical" (*historisch*) Jesus and "historic" (*Geschichtlich*) Christ. What Kahler had in mind by "historical," though, was the reconstructed Jesus of liberal critical scholarship of his time, not the real first-century Jesus.

Kahler did ask: "Should we expect [believers] to rely on the authority of the learned men when the matter concerns the source from which they are to draw the truth for their lives?" He added, "I cannot find sure footing in probabilities or in a shifting mass of details, the reliability of which is constantly changing" (Kahler, 109, 111). While Kahler did not accept an inerrant (errorless) Bible, he did maintain that the Gospels are generally reliable. He spoke of their "comparatively remarkable trustworthiness." Kahler's confusion about how to view the Gospels led him to see even the Gospel "legends" as trustworthy, "so far as this is conceivable" (*ibid.*, 79-90, 95, 141-42).

What "we want to make absolutely clear," said Kahler, is "that ultimately we believe in Christ, not on account of any authority, but because he himself evokes such faith from us" (*ibid.*, 87). He asked the critical question of the church of his day, "How can Jesus Christ be the real object of faith for all Christians if what and who he really was can be ascertained only by research methodologies so elaborate that only the scholarship of our time is adequate to the task?" (see Soulen, 98).

Kierkegaard's "Leap." Also setting the stage for the latter disjunction between the Christ of faith and the historical Jesus was the Danish iconoclast, Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard asked, "How can something of an historical nature be decisive for an eternal happiness?" (*Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*, 86). Therefore, Kierkegaard downplayed the historical basis of Christianity. Real history was unimportant compared to belief "that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble form of a servant, that he lived and taught in our

community, and finally died" (*Philosophical Fragments*, 130). Only a "leap" of faith can place us beyond the historical into the spiritual (see FIDEISM).

Christ vs. Jesus. Rudolph Bultmann made the final definitive and radical disjunction between the Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History. The view can be summarized:

The Historical Jesus	The Historic Christ
Not relevant for faith	Relevant for faith
Jesus of scholars	Christ of believers
Jesus of critical history	Christ of the Gospels
Uncertain foundation	Certain foundation
Inaccessible to most Christians	Accessible to all Christians
The facticity of Jesus	The significance of Jesus
The Jesus of the past	The Christ of the present

The often-drawn implication of this disjunction is that the historical has little or no importance to the spiritual. As Kierkegaard argued, even if you could prove the historicity of the Gospels in every detail, it would not necessarily bring one closer to Christ. Conversely, if the critics could disprove the historicity of the Gospels, save that a man lived in whom people believed God dwelt, it would not destroy the foundations of true faith.

Evaluation. The whole dichotomy between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith is based on highly dubious assumptions. The first has to do with the historicity of New Testament documents.

What Is Needed for Salvation. This concept that belief in the facts of the Gospel are historically irrelevant is contrary to the New Testament claim of what is necessary for salvation. The apostle Paul made essential the beliefs that Jesus died and rose bodily from the grave (see CHRIST, DEATH OF ; RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). He wrote that

if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. . . . And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. [1 Cor. 15:14-19]

The Concern of the Writers. This indifference in historicity also is not shared with the New Testament writers themselves, who seem preoccupied with the details of an accurate account, not a broad-stroke myth. Luke actually tells us his research techniques and his goal as historian:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye-

witnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. [Luke 1:1–4]

Luke expresses this historical interest by tying the story to persons and events that are part of the public record of history (see ACTS, HISTORICITY OF ; LUKE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN), such as Herod the Great (1:5), Caesar Augustus (2:1), Quirinius (2:2), Pilate (3:1), and many others through Luke and Acts. Note his historical detail in dating John the Baptist’s announcement of Christ “in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracoonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas” (Luke 3:1–2a).

There is an unjustified assumption that the New Testament, and particularly the Gospels, lack adequate historical support. This is just not true (see NEW TESTAMENT ARCHAEOLOGY ; NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ; NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS, RELIABILITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF , and other articles relating to the accuracy of the New Testament record).

A False Dichotomy. The separation of historical Jesus from historic Christ is based on a false dichotomy of fact and faith (see FAITH AND REASON) or of fact and value. The historic significance of Christ cannot be separated from his historicity. If he did not live, teach, die, and rise from the dead as the New Testament claims, then he has no saving significance today.

Even after a century of usage, the distinction remains ambiguous and varies in meaning from author to author. Kahler used it to defend “critical pietism.” For Bultmann it meant Martin Heidegger’s brand of existentialism (Meyer, 27). John Meyer observes that “the Christ of Faith exalted by Bultmann looks suspiciously like a timeless gnostic myth or a Jungian archetype” (ibid., 28). Nearer the other end of the spectrum, such scholars as Paul Althaus (1888–1966) used Kahler’s distinction to defend a more conservative approach to the historicity of Jesus. Kahler would have accepted neither Bultmann’s nor Althaus’s conception. Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) is more aware of what Kahler intended. He bitterly denounces those who, in the name of this distinction, have made the historic Christ responsible for every sort of trend from the destruction of ancient culture to the progress of the modern achievements. So the distinction between *historical* and *historic* has become a catch phrase and carrier of all sorts of baggage (ibid.).

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Christ’s Death, Moral Objections to. Many critics of Christianity, including Muslim and Liberal scholars, reject the doctrine of salvation through the cross on moral grounds. One reason Muslims give is that, according to Islam, the major prophets in history have always been victorious against their enemies. If the Christ of God was killed on the cross by his adversaries, then what would have become of the constant Qur’anic theme that those who did not obey God’s prophet did not triumph? Isn’t admission of the cross an acknowledgment that the unrighteous ultimately triumphed over the righteous? (Bell, 154).

Liberal Christian scholars object to the cross because it seems eminently unjust to punish an innocent person for the guilty. Indeed the Bible itself declares that “the son shall not bear the guilt of the father . . .” (Ezek. 18:20).

Muslim Rejection of the Crucifixion. Islamic disbelief in the crucifixion of Jesus is centered around their understanding of him as a prophet. Islamic distaste for the crucifixion of a prophet is based on their concept of the sovereignty of God and rejection of belief in human depravity.

Crucifixion Is Contrary to God’s Sovereignty. All orthodox Muslims agree that God would not allow one of his prophets to suffer such an ignominious death as crucifixion (see CHRIST’S DEATH, SUBSTITUTION LEGEND ; ISLAM). Muffasir summarized the view well when he said “Muslims believe that Jesus was not crucified. It was the intention of his enemies to put him to death on the cross, but God saved him from their plot” (Muffasir, 5).

Several passages in the *Qur’an* teach that Jesus was not crucified on the cross for our sins. Sura 4:157–58 is a key text; at face value it seems to say that Jesus did not die at all. It certainly denies that he died by crucifixion. It reads: “That they said (in boast), ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of God’;—But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, And those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, For of a surety they killed him not:—Nay, God raised him up unto himself; and God is exalted in power, wise.”

A sovereign God has control over all things, and he would not allow his servant to suffer such a death. Rather, a sovereign God, such as Allah is, would deliver his servant from his enemies. Abdalati, in a typical Muslim fashion asks, “Is it consistent with God’s mercy and wisdom to believe that Jesus was humiliated and murdered the way he is said to have been?” (Abdalati, 160). The *Qur’an* states, “When Allah said: O Jesus! Lo! I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto me, and am cleansing thee of those who disbelieve and am setting those who follow thee above those who disbelieve until the day of resurrection” (sura 3:55).

A Response to the Muslim View of Sovereignty. The Islamic belief in God’s sovereignty defeats their own objection to the cross. If God can do anything he wants, then he can allow his own Son to die by crucifixion. The Quran declares:

God! There is no god but he—the living, the self-subsisting, eternal. . . . Nor shall they [his creatures] compass aught his knowledge except as he willeth. His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and he feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for he is the most high, the Supreme (in glory) (sura 2:255).

Many of the ninety-nine names for God express his sovereignty. *Al-Aziz*, “the Sublime,” mighty in his sublime sovereignty (59:23); *Al-Ali*, “the High One,” who is mighty (2:255–56); *Al-Qadir*, “the Able,” who has the power to do what he pleases (17:99–101); *Al-Quddus*, “the Most Holy One,” to whom all in heaven and on earth ascribe holiness (62:1); *Al-Mutaali*, “the Self-Exalted,” who has set himself high above all (13:9–10); *Al-Muizz*, “the Honorer,” who honors or abases whom he will (3:26); *Malik al-Mulk*, “Possessor of the Kingdom,” who grants sovereignty to whom he will (3:26); *Al-Wahed*, “the One,” unique in his divine sovereignty (13:16–17); *Al-Wahid*, “the Unique,” who alone has created (74:11); *Al-Wakil*, “the Administrator,” who has charge of everything (6:102).

Allah can do what he jolly well pleases, so he could allow his Servant to be crucified if he wished. Indeed, one passage in the *Qur’an* seems to apply this very truth to Christ: “Who then can do aught against Allah, if he had willed to destroy the Messiah son of Mary, and his mother and everyone on earth? Allah’s is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. He createth what He will: And Allah is able to do all things” (sura 5:17).

Granting God is sovereign, it is utterly presumptuous to determine what he should or should not do. As the prophet Isaiah informs us, God said, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways my ways” (Isa. 55:8). The prophet Isaiah instructs us that God did indeed approve of the ignominious death of his Servant:

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. . . . we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. . . . But, he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. [Isa. 53:2–5]

So Jesus’ crucifixion was not only approved by God, it was predicted (cf. Ps. 22:16; Zech. 12:10). It should be no surprise to a reader of the New Testament that the message of the crucifixion is

offensive to unbelievers. Indeed, Paul even referred to the “offense of the cross” but added that “God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). For “the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom” (vs. 25).

Then too, the idea of God allowing his servants to be insulted is not uncharacteristic. Muhammad’s biographer, Haykai, tells of insulting experiences suffered by Muhammad. He notes, for example, that “the tribe of Tha’if, however, not only repudiated Muhammad’s call but sent their servants to insult him and throw him out of their city. He ran away from them and took shelter near a wall. . . . there he sat under a vine pondering his defeat with the sight of the sons of Rabi’ah” (Haykai, 137).

What is more, even if it is assumed with Muslims that God would deliver his prophets from their enemies, it is wrong to conclude that he did not deliver Christ from his enemies. Indeed, this is precisely what the resurrection is. For “God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (Acts 2:24). According to the Scriptures, God raised Christ up because, as he said: “You are my Son; today I have become your Father” (Acts 13:33). Further, the Scriptures declare that God kept his promise to his people (in Ps. 16:10) and saw to it “that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.” Thus, he was “exalted to the right hand of God” (Acts 2:31, 33).

Indeed, it was by Christ’s death and resurrection that “death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54) and we can say, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55).

Contrary to Islamic teaching, the death and resurrection of Christ did manifest God’s mercy. Indeed, without it there would have been no mercy for a sinful world. Paul wrote: “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” Thus “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6, 8). He adds elsewhere that it is “not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5). As Jesus himself said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Yet he died for us when “we were [his] enemies” (Rom. 5:10).

Crucifixion Is Rooted in Original Sin. Another Muslim reason for rejecting the crucifixion is based on their rejection of the doctrine of depravity. Islamic scholars are quick to connect the Christian claim that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and the doctrine of depravity.

A. R. I. Doi notes that “connected with the Christian belief in crucifixion of Isa [Jesus] is the irreconcilable concept to original sin” (Doi, 19). He adds categorically that “Islam does not believe in the doctrine of the original sin. It is not Adam’s sin that a child inherits and manifests at birth. Every child is born sinless and the sins of the fathers are not visited upon the children.” Further, “Islam denies emphatically the concept of original sin and hereditary depravity. Every child is born pure and true; every departure in afterlife from the path of truth and rectitude is due to imperfect education.” Citing the prophet Muhammad, Doi affirms that “Every child is born in a religious mold; it is his parents who make him afterward a Jew, a Christian, or a Sabaeen. . . . In other words, good and evil is not created in man at birth. Infants have no positive moral

character.” Rather, “every human being . . . has two inclinations—one prompting him to do good and impelling him thereto, and the other prompting him to do evil and thereto impelling him; but the assistance of God is nigh” (Doi, 20).

Response to the Argument against Depravity. The orthodox Christian also connects the atoning death with human depravity. If God were not unchangeably just, and mankind not incurably depraved, the death of Christ for our sins would not have been necessary. However, contrary to Muslim belief, mankind is depraved and, hence, the suffering and death of Christ was necessary. Islamic rejection of total depravity is without foundation—as is even implied in Islamic teaching.

Even Muslims acknowledge that human beings are sinful. Otherwise, why do they need God’s mercy? Indeed, why have so many (including all Christians) committed the greatest of all sins (*shirk*), attributing partners to God (sura 4:116)? Why did God need to send prophets to warn them of their sin, if they are not constant sinners? The whole prophetic ministry, which is at the heart of Islam, is occupied with a call to repentance from the sin of idolatry. But why does humankind have this insatiable appetite for false gods if people are not depraved?

What is more, why are the unbelievers sent to hell to suffer forever? This seems to imply great sinfulness to deserve such a severe penalty as eternal suffering. It is both unrealistic and un-Qur’anic to deny the inherent sinfulness of humankind.

“Some Muslim theologians have held to a doctrine of Hereditary Sin. . . . Also, there is a famous tradition that the Prophet of Islam said, ‘No child is born but the devil hath touched it, except Mary and her son Jesus’ ” (Nazir-Ali, 165). *Qur’an* texts support the doctrine of human depravity. Humankind is sinful or unjust (sura 14:34/37; 33:72), foolish (33:72), ungrateful (14:34/37), weak (4:28/32), despairing or boastful (11:9/12–10/13), quarrelsome (16:4), and rebellious (96:6; Woodberry, 155). The *Qur’an* even declares that “If God were to punish men for their wrong-doing, He would not leave, on the (earth), A single living creature” (sura 16:61). Ayatollah Khomeini went so far as to say that “man’s calamity is his carnal desires, and this exists in everybody, and is rooted in the nature of man” (Woodberry, 159).

Jesus Had to Repent for Sins. Muslim denial of Christ’s death by crucifixion is based on a misunderstanding of repentance. Abdalati, for example, lists the following among his reasons for rejecting the crucifixion of Christ: “Is it just on God’s part, or anybody’s part for that matter, to make someone repent for the sins or wrongs of others, the sins to which the repentant is no party?” (Abdalati, 160).

Response to the Charge That Jesus Had to Repent. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that Christ repented for our sins. It simply says that he “died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). *Judicially*, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21). But at no time did he confess anyone’s sins. He taught his disciples to pray, “Forgive us our debts” (Matt. 6:12), but he nowhere joins them in that petition. This is a total distortion of the concept of a substitutionary atonement.

The Bible teaches that Jesus took our place; he paid the penalty of death for us (cf. Mark 10:45 ; Rom. 4:25 ; 1 Peter 2:22 ; 3:18). This concept of life for life is the same principle behind Muslim belief in capital punishment. When a murder takes another’s life, he must forfeit his own as a penalty. Several doctrines regarding God’s justice and God’s forgiveness, heaven and hell make no real sense apart from substitutionary atonement.

God Can Forgive without Punishing. Another misconception underlying the Islamic rejection of the crucifixion is that a merciful God can forgive sin without justly condemning it. This is reflected in Abdalati’s question “Was God the Most Merciful, the Most Forgiving and the Most High unable to forgive men’s sins except by inflicting this cruel and most humiliating alleged crucifixion on one who was not only innocent but also dedicated to his service and cause in a most remarkable way” (Abdalati, 162)?

Response to a Forgiveness Without an Atonement. Two basic mistakes are at work here. First, it is implied that what Jesus did was not voluntary, but was merely inflicted upon him. The Gospels declare that Jesus gave his life voluntarily and freely. Jesus said, “I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again” (John 10:17–18).

Muslims seem not to appreciate the basis on which the just and holy God can forgive sins. While God is sovereign, he is not arbitrary about right and wrong (see Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 136–37). Muslims, like Christians, believe that God will punish forever in hell those who do not repent (cf. suras 14:17; 25:11–14). But if God’s holy justice demands that those who do not accept him be eternally punished for their sins, then it would follow that God cannot arbitrarily forgive without a just basis for this forgiveness. In Muslim theology there is forgiveness but no basis for this forgiveness. For they reject Christ’s sacrificial payment for sin to a just God by which he can then declare righteous the unrighteous who accept Christ’s payment on their behalf (cf. Rom. 3:21–26).

A truly just God cannot simply close his eyes to sin. Unless someone capable of paying the debt of sin owed to God does so, then God is obligated to express his wrath, not his mercy. Lacking the Crucifixion, the Muslim system has no way to explain how Allah can be merciful when he is also just.

The theological blind spot in the Muslim system created by a rejection of Christ’s atoning sacrifice leads to other unfounded statements, such as Abdalati’s rhetorical question: “Does the [Christian] belief of crucifixion and blood sacrifice appear in any religion apart from pagan creeds or the early Greeks, Romans, Indians, Persians, and the like” (Abdalati, 160)?

The answer is a clear “Yes.” It is the very heart of historic Judaism, as even a casual acquaintance with the Old Testament reveals. Moses told Israel: “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” (Lev. 17:11). This is why the children of Israel were asked to sacrifice the Passover lamb, commemorating their deliverance from bondage (Exod. 12:1f). This is why the New Testament speaks of Christ as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). And the apostle Paul called “Christ, our Passover lamb, [who]

has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). The writer of Hebrews adds, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22).

Of course, Muslim scholars argue that the original Old Testament was distorted too. However, like the New Testament, the ancient Dead Sea manuscripts of the Old Testament reveal that the Old Testament today is substantially the same as the one in the time of Christ, over 600 years before Muhammad (see Geisler and Nix, chap. 21). Therefore, since the *Qur’an* urges the Jews in Muhammad’s day to accept God’s revelation in the Law (sura 10:94), and since the Jewish Old Testament is substantially the same today as it was in Muhammad’s day, then Muslims should accept that blood sacrifices for sins was a command of God.

Liberal Rejection of the Cross. With Muslims, nonorthodox “liberal” Christians reject the absolute justice of God (see ESSENTIALISM, DIVINE); the depravity of man, and substitutionary atonement. Liberals do not generally reject the historicity of the cross, but rather what they regard as its immorality. They insist that it is essentially irrational and immoral to punish an innocent person in the place of the guilty.

The Cross Is Irrational. Nothing seems more contradictory or irrational than the idea of salvation by substitution. Even the apostle Paul hinted at this when he said “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing” (1 Cor. 1:18). In fact, did not the early church father Tertullian (ca. 160s–ca. 215–20) say of the cross “I believe because it is absurd” (Tertullian, 5)?

Few if any past Christian scholars have ever claimed that the cross was irrational. Certainly, Tertullian never said the death of Christ was absurd, which would have been the Latin word *absurdum* . He said it was “foolish” (Lat.: *ineptum*) to those who were perishing—unbelievers—exactly as Paul said. Tertullian everywhere promotes the use of reason and rational consistency in his theology. He said, “nothing can be claimed as rational without order, much less can reason itself dispense with order in any one” (ibid.). Even when speaking of the mystery of human free choice, Tertullian declared that “it cannot even in this be ruled to be irrational” (ibid., 1.25).

Even regarding the Trinity and incarnation of Christ, orthodox Christians have insisted that Christian teachings are rational (see LOGIC). The “mysteries” of faith may go beyond our reason to attain by special revelation, but never against our ability to apprehend with logical consistency (see MYSTERY). The Trinity, for example, is not held to be a contradiction. It does not affirm three persons in one *Person* but three persons in one *essence* .

The Cross Is Immoral. Liberals have extolled the virtues of Christ’s death as an example of sacrificial love. But both Muslims and liberals loathe the idea of a substitutionary punishment for sin. This view seems to them to be essentially immoral. How can an innocent person be punished for the guilty? Does not even the Bible itself affirm “The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him” (Ezek. 18:20)?

A virtually universal human practice is to consider commendable the actions of one who dies in defense of the innocent. Soldiers are honored for dying for their country. Parents are called compassionate when they die for their children. But this is precisely what Jesus did. As the apostle Paul put it, “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7–8).

Sacrificial death is not alien to Islam. The Muslim practice of *Id Ghorban* (feat of sacrifice) features the sacrifice of a sheep in memory of Abraham’s sacrifice of his son. For some this is associated with the forgiveness of sins. Muslim soldiers who sacrifice their lives for the cause of Islam are awarded Paradise (sura 3:157–; 22:58–59). Neither is it without human precedent for one person to pay a debt for another, even by the sacrifice of his life for them.

If Allah could call upon his servants to die for Islam, why is it so strange that God could call upon his Son to die so salvation can be offered to Muslims, and the rest of the world? The *Qur’an* gives a beautiful example of a substitutionary atonement in describing Abraham’s sacrifice of his son on Mount Moriah. Sura 37:102–7 reads:

He said: “O my son! I see in vision That I offer thee in *sacrifice* So when they had both Submitted their wills (to God), And he laid him Prostrate on his forehead (For *sacrifice*), We [God] called out to him, “O Abraham! . . . And We *ransomed* him With a momentous *sacrifice* .” [emphasis added]

The use of the words *sacrifice* and *ransom* are precisely what Christians mean by Christ’s death on the cross. Jesus used such words of his own death (Mark 10:45). So the sacrificial death of Christ is not opposed to the Qu’ran.

As noted, the weight of this critique of the cross rests on the false premise that Jesus’ death was involuntary. But it was not forced upon him. Looking forward to the Cross, he said to the Father “yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Earlier in the Gospel of John Jesus referred to the giving of his life in saying, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18). The book of Hebrews records Jesus’ words “Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God’ ” (Heb. 10:7).

There is no other way for the debt of sin to be paid than for the sinless son of God to do so. As Anselm argued (in *Cur Deus Homo?*) the penalty for sin must be paid to God. God’s justice demands that sin be atoned for (cf. Lev. 17:11 ; Heb. 9:22). So, rather than being unjust, it is justice that demands the substitutionary atonement of Christ. The *Qur’an* teaches God is just (see sura 21:47–48). Absolute justice means that God cannot simply *overlook* sin. A penalty must be paid, either by the persons themselves or by someone else for them which enables them to go to heaven.

It does not break a moral absolute to punish an innocent person for the guilty provided he is willing and a higher moral law calls for the suspension of the lower law (see Geisler, *Christian Ethics*). In the case of the cross, it is the salvation of the world for which Christ the innocent voluntarily accepted the injustice of dying on a cross.

Conclusion. The moral critique of the cross relies on circular reasoning. It makes no sense to claim that a substitutionary atonement is *essentially* im-moral unless something is essentially moral, an unchangeably moral nature of God. But the unchangeably just and holy nature of God requires that sin be punished. Unless God's justice is satisfied by someone else on behalf of lawbreakers, the essential moral and eternal principle used by liberals would demand that everyone be eternally punished for their sins in hell. But that doctrine liberals also find repugnant. So if God is loving, as liberals do happily admit, then he must find a way to pay for our debt of sin and set us free. Christ volunteered and satisfied God's justice, "the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18), so as to release God's redeeming love and set us free of the guilt and consequences of our sins (John 3:16 ; Rom. 5:8). There was no other way.

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Christ's Death, Substitution Legend. The death and resurrection of Christ are absolutely crucial to the truth of historic Christianity (1 Cor. 15:1–4). Indeed, orthodox Christianity stands or falls on whether Christ rose bodily from the dead (Rom. 10:9 ; 1 Cor. 15:12–19). But if Christ did not die, then he obviously did not rise from the dead. One of the ways skeptics (*see* AGNOSTICISM) and critics (*see* BIBLICAL CRITICISM) of Christianity have attempted to avoid the truth of the resurrection (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR) is to posit that someone else was substituted to die on the cross for Jesus at the last moment.

Substitution Legends. Forms of the substitution legend were offered as early as the second century by opponents of Christianity as an alternative explanation to the Christian affirmation that Christ died and rose from the dead. But the factual evidence for Christ's death on the cross is substantial, and it stands on its own apart from any theological beliefs.

The substitution legend is now most commonly taught among Muslims, so their view will be answered in this article. This answer necessarily includes a rationale for the Christian position on salvation in the light of the cross. The effort to defend Christ's death as both historical and theologically intelligible is partly undertaken in the overview article, Christ, Death of, and the related article on Islamic and liberal problems with the crucifixion, Christ's Death, Moral Objections to. The following content assumes, and will avoid repeating, that content.

Reasons to Reject the Death of Christ. At one level, the Islamic reticence to accept the historical event of Christ's death is odd. Not only is there a total lack of evidence for a substitution, but Islam historically teaches that . . .

1. Jesus would die (sura 3:55; cf. 19:33).
2. Jesus would rise from the dead (19:33).
3. Jesus' disciples who witnessed the event believed that it was Jesus, not someone else in his place, who was crucified.
4. The Roman soldiers and the Jews believed that it was Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified.
5. Jesus performed miracles, including raising people from the dead.

If all this is accepted by Muslims, then there is no reason they should reject the fact that Jesus died on the cross, or even that he was raised from the dead three days later.

Early Substitution Legends. Substitution legends are not unique to Islam. Some early opponents of Christianity offered similar speculations. According to the second-century church father Frenacus, Basilides the Gnostic (*see* GNOSTICISM) taught that "at the Crucifixion He [Jesus] changed form with Simon of Cyrene who had carried the cross. The Jews mistaking Simon for Jesus nailed him to the cross. Jesus stood by deriding their error before ascending to

heaven” (Lightfoot, 156ff.). In the third century, Mani of Persia, founder of the Manichaean religion, taught that the son of the widow of Nain, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, was put to death in his place. According to another Manichaean tradition, the devil, who was trying to crucify Jesus, was himself the victim of this switch. Photius (ca. 820–ca. 895) referred in his writings to an apocryphal book, *The Travels of Paul*, in which it was said that another was crucified in Jesus’ place (Abdul-Haqq, 136).

Muslim Substitution Legends. Muslims have been drawn to the notion that Judas or Simon of Cyrene died in Jesus’ place on the cross. A competing view that he swooned on the cross and was taken down while still alive, does not help their hypothesis. Al-Tabari, well-known Muslim historian and commentator on the *Qur’an*, reports that Wahab B. Munabih, who lived around 700, propagated the lore that a human form but not a person was substituted. His version is reported:

They brought him the gibbet on which they intended to crucify him, but God raised him up to himself and a simulacrum was crucified in his place. He remained there for seven hours, and then his mother and another woman whom He had cured of madness came to weep for him. But Jesus came to them and said, “God has raised me up to himself, and this is a mere simulacrum.” [Abdul-Haqq, 135–36]

Another example of the growth of this legendary tradition is the view of Thalabi, who lived some 300 years after Munabih. “The shape of Jesus was put on Judas who had pointed him out, and they crucified him instead, supposing that he was Jesus. After three hours God took Jesus to himself and raised him up to heaven” (see Bruce, 179).

More recently, A. R. I. Doi offers the hypothesis that, when the Roman soldiers came with Judas to arrest Jesus, “the two Jews got mixed up in the dark, and the soldiers mistakenly arrested Judas instead of Jesus. Jesus was thus saved and raised up” (Doi, 21). In support, Muslims often cite the spurious *Gospel of Barnabas*.

The Inadequate Basis. Substitution legends simply are not historically credible:

They contradict the extant record of eyewitness testimony that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified (Matthew 27 ; Mark 14 ; Luke 23 ; John 19).

They are contrary to the earliest extrabiblical Jewish, Roman, and Samaritan testimony (Habermas, 87–118, Bruce, 31; see *summary in* ARCHAEOLOGY, NEW TESTAMENT ; CHRIST, DEATH OF). In spite of the fact that all of these writers were opponents of Christianity, they agree that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified under Pontius Pilate. There is not a shred of first-century testimony to the contrary by friend or foe of Christianity. The earliest substitution legends begin in about 150 among those heavily influenced by Gnosticism. None is based on evidence of eyewitnesses or contemporaries to the events.

They are implausible, since they demand total ignorance on the part of those closest to Jesus, his disciples, and the Romans. They suppose that Jesus told his mother and another woman that someone who looked like him was crucified and that they never informed the disciples nor

corrected them as they promptly went out to preach under threat of death that Jesus had died and risen from the dead.

Since most Muslims reject the fact of Christ’s crucifixion and death, they understandably have great difficulty explaining the resurrection appearances and ascension of Christ. Since they believe Christ was merely a human being, they accept the fact of Christ’s mortality. They believe Jesus will eventually be resurrected with all other humans, but, after rejecting his death on the cross, they are forced to find some other place for Christ’s death.

This dilemma has encouraged ingenious speculation. Many Muslim scholars believe Jesus Christ was transported into heaven alive. His death still must happen sometime in the future, when he returns to the earth before the last day. This they take from a literal understanding of sura 4:157–58: “That they said (in boast), ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of God’;—But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, And those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, For of a surety they killed him not:—Nay, God raised him up unto himself; and God is exalted in power, wise.”

Others hypothesize that Jesus died a natural death at some unknown time after the crucifixion and remained dead for three hours, or according to another tradition, seven hours—after which he was resurrected and taken to heaven (Abdul-Haqq, 131). There is no historical testimony to support such speculation.

A few Islamic writers, like Ahmad Khan of India, believe that Jesus was crucified, but did not die on the cross. Rather, he merely swooned (see RESURRECTION, ALTERNATE THEORIES OF) and was taken down after 3 hours (Abdul-Haqq, 132). Other Muslims in north India added the legend that Jesus visited Tibet. Abdul-Haqq notes that Ghulam Ahmad “home brew[ed] a theory that Jesus Christ took His journey to Kasmir . . . after His crucifixion. To further support his theory he conveniently found a grave in Sirinagar, Kashmir, which he declared to be the grave of Jesus.” However, the Ahmadiyyas sect’s “speculations have been condemned as heretical by the Muslim orthodoxy” (ibid., 133).

Abdalati notes that “whether he [Jesus] was raised alive in soul and body or in soul only after he died a natural death has not much bearing on the Islamic belief.” Why? “It is no Article of Faith, because what is important and binding to a Muslim is what God reveals; and God revealed that Jesus was not crucified but was raised to Him” (see Abdalati, 159). He cites sura 4:157 (quoted above).

Most Muslims, however, believe that Jesus will be physically resurrected from the dead in the general resurrection of the last day. Nothing else is essential to the Muslim faith. Therefore, rejecting Jesus’ death by crucifixion leads to a rejection of his resurrection three days later and leaves the enigma of the ascension before any death or resurrection.

The Misunderstanding. The Muslim denial of Christ’s death by crucifixion is based on a theological misunderstanding. Abdalati, for example, lists the following among his reasons for rejecting the crucifixion of Christ: “Is it just on God’s part, or anybody’s part for that matter, to

make someone repent for the sins or wrongs of others, the sins to which the repenter is no party?" (Abdalati, 160).

This, of course, is based on a complete misunderstanding of what Christians believe about the atonement of Christ. As noted in another article (CHRIST'S DEATH, MORAL OBJECTIONS TO), he did not confess or repent of our sins. He died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3). *Judicially*, he was "made to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21)—the substitution that Christians gladly admit. He paid the penalty of death in our place, so that we could stand before God without guilt (Mark 10:45 ; Rom. 4:25 ; 1 Peter 2:22 ; 3:18). This concept of life for life is not foreign to Islam. It is the principle behind their belief in capital punishment; a murderer who takes another's life must forfeit a life.

Another misconception beneath the Islamic rejection of the crucifixion is that a merciful God can forgive sin without justly condemning it. Actually there are two basic mistakes here. Muslim theology makes the first error when it implies that what Jesus did was not voluntary but was inflicted upon him. Jesus said, "I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again" (John 10:17–18). When Jesus died, the Bible relates, "He [freely] dismissed his spirit" (John 19:30).

The second error is that a sovereign God can be holy, yet arbitrarily change the rules about right and wrong (*see* CHRIST'S DEATH, MORAL OBJECTIONS TO). Muslims, like Christians, believe in hell for the unrepentant (sura 14:17; 25:11–14). But if holy justice demands that those who do not accept him be eternally punished, then God cannot arbitrarily forgive anyone for anything without a just basis for forgiveness. Muslim theology has none. Muslims reject Christ's sacrificial payment for sin to a just God, by which the unjust who accept Christ's payment on their behalf can be declared just (cf. Rom. 3:21–26). Unless someone capable of paying the penalty for sin does so, God is obligated to express wrath, not mercy. Lacking the crucifixion, the Muslim system has no way to explain how Allah can be merciful when he is also just.

Salvation in Christ. Superficially, it would seem that salvation by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ is incomprehensible to Muslims. This, we believe, is not the case. While the unbeliever does not *receive* (Gk.: *dekomai*) God's truth (1 Cor. 2:14), nevertheless, he can *perceive* it. According to Romans 1:18–20, unbelievers are "without excuse" in view of God's revelation in nature. The very fact that unbelievers are called upon to believe the Gospel implies that they can understand it (cf. Acts 16:31 ; 17:30–31). Jesus rebuked unbelievers for not understanding what he was talking about, declaring, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains" (John 9:41).

An Islamic Basis for Salvation by Substitution. Even from within Islam the Christian concept of the cross makes sense. Islam has several doctrines, God's justice and God's forgiveness, heaven and hell, that make no real sense apart from a substitutionary atonement. For Islam teaches that God is just (*see* ISLAM). But absolute justice must be satisfied. God cannot simply *overlook* sin. A penalty must be paid for it which enables them to go to heaven, either by the persons or by someone else for them. In a letter to a friend explaining why he became a Christian, Daud Rahbar, argues, "the Qur'anic doctrine of God's justice demands that such a

God be himself involved in suffering and be seen as involved in suffering. Only then can he be a just judge of suffering humanity." For "a God that is preserved from suffering will be an arbitrary and capricious judge" (Nazir-Ali, 28).

A Rational Basis for Salvation by Substitution. There is nothing contradictory or incredible about salvation by substitution. The Muslim mind should not have any more difficulty with this concept than any other mind. This concept is in accord with a virtually universal human practice. It is considered commendable for people to die in defense of the innocent. Warriors are hailed for dying for their tribe. Soldiers are honored for dying for their country. Parents are called compassionate when they die for their children. This is precisely what Jesus did. As the apostle Paul put it, "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But . . . While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:7–8).

Further, even in the Islamic understanding sacrificial death occurred. The Muslim practice of *id ghorban* (feat of sacrifice) features the sacrifice of a sheep in memory of Abraham's sacrifice of his son. For some this is associated with the forgiveness of sins. Furthermore, Muslim soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Islam were awarded Paradise (3:157–58; 22:58–59). If Allah could call upon his servants to die for Islam, why think it so strange that God could call upon his Son to die for salvation of Muslims, indeed of the world?

Conclusion. Much of the Islamic rejection of Christ is based on a misunderstanding of the facts about him. Since they believe in the divine inspiration of the original Old and New Testaments, Jesus' virgin birth, sinless life, divinely authoritative teaching, death, eventual resurrection (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR), ascension, and second coming. It is a tragedy that the rejection of his claims to be the Son of God and Savior of the world are lost in the midst of all they do accept. The primary problem is rejection of the authenticity of the Bible. Perhaps a better understanding of the factual basis for the authenticity of the Bible (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF) could open a way to take more seriously the *Qur'an* when it urges doubters to go to the Scriptures:

If thou wert in doubt As to what we have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book [the Bible] from before thee: The truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: So be in no wise of those in doubt (10:94).

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Chronology Problems in the Bible. See GENEALOGIES, OPEN OR CLOSED .

Clark, Gordon H. Gordon Clark (1902–1985) was born in Philadelphia and received his Ph.D. in philosophy in 1929. He taught at Wheaton College, Reformed Episcopal Seminary, and Covenant College and was chairman of the Philosophy Department at Butler University for twenty-eight years. His teaching career spanned sixty years.

Clark was a rational presuppositionalist, as differentiated from Cornelius Van Til, who was a revelational presuppositionalist (*see* PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS). His students included Carl F. H. Henry, John Edward Carnell, and Ronald Nash.

His thirty books covered a wide variety of philosophical, ethical, and theological topics. Some of his works of philosophy and apologetics included a complete history of philosophy, *Thales to Dewey* ; *A Christian View of Men and Things* ; *Religions, Reason, and Revelation* ; and *Historiography, Secular and Religious* . He also wrote a logic textbook.

Clark's Reformed theology centered in the sovereignty of God, and his apologetics took the triune God as revealed in Scripture as his presuppositional starting point. His test for truth was the law of noncontradiction (*see* FIRST PRINCIPLES).

Epistemological Darkness. Empirical Skepticism. In epistemology, Clark was an empirical skeptic (*see* AGNOSTICISM), agreeing with David Hume . The senses deceive and cannot be trusted. Universal and necessary principles go beyond the limits of empirical experience. As Hume showed, the senses never receive impressions of a necessary connection. Nothing,

therefore, can be proved empirically. Clark doubted all that his senses reported about an external world. He held that, apart from divine revelation, we cannot be sure that we exist.

Clark framed three chief objections to empiricism: First, it is impossible to discover a "necessary connection" between ideas and events. This denies causality and makes all historical and scientific investigation futile. At best, knowledge can extend only so far as what is impressed on the brain at this moment, and what traces remain at this moment of memories of past impressions. Second, the ongoing task of integrating self into one's current environment inevitably influences perceptions and makes them untrustworthy. Memory is effectively annihilated in this process. Third, and most fundamentally, empiricism uses time and space surreptitiously at the beginning of the learning process. But accurate time-space perceptions can only come at the end of the learning process, so the mind is continually faced with information that it is not competent to judge accurately ("Special Divine Revelation," 33).

Historical Skepticism. Clark's historical skepticism is parallel to his empirical doubts. Thus, Clark denies the validity of historical apologetics. Even if we could know that the resurrection of Christ is a fact from empirical testimony, it would prove nothing (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). "Suppose Jesus did rise from the grave. This only proves that his body resumed its activities for a time after his crucifixion; it does not prove that he died for our sins or that he was the Son of God. . . . The resurrection, viewed purely as an isolated historical event, does not prove that Christ died for our sins." Historical and archaeological research are incompetent to deal with such questions (Clark, "Philosophy of Education," 35).

Innate Ideas. Clark considered himself Augustinian in epistemology, beginning with God-given, innate ideas (*see* AUGUSTINE). Apart from divine illumination via innate ideas, the mind would be locked in epistemological darkness. By the light of the *Logos* we can see the world. Clark boldly translated John 1:1 , "In the beginning was Logic. And Logic was with God, and Logic was God" (cited in Nash, *The Philosophy of Gordon Clark*, 67, 118; *see* LOGIC). Since each human being was created by God, each person is an innate idea of God. But a person's blank mind is not able to lift itself above its sensory context to an abstract spiritual level. So unaided, no person can know God. The theories of empiricism from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas to John Locke , therefore, do not work (*Religions, Reason, and Revelation* , 135). We cannot know God, certainly not in any saving way. God, however, revealed himself in Scripture, his infallible, inerrant Word (*see* BIBLE, CANONICITY OF). Christianity based on this revelation is the only true religion (*see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ; WORLD RELIGIONS, CHRISTIANITY AND). Christianity is known to be true because it alone is free from internal contradictions in its truth claims. All opposing systems have contradictory beliefs in one or more central teachings.

Rejection of Theistic Proof. Like most other presuppositionalists, Clark rejected the traditional proofs for the existence of God (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). His reasons were much the same as those of Hume and Immanuel Kant . Since our senses cannot be trusted, we cannot begin in experience and prove anything about the world, much less about God. He referred to Thomas Aquinas's classical apologetics as a "Christianized interpretation of Aristotelianism" (*Christian View of Men and Things* , 309). He found Aquinas's arguments for God to be circular, purely formal, invalid, and indefensible (*Religions, Reason, and Revelation* , 35).

Thomism, Clark said, requires the concepts of *potentiality* and *actuality*, yet Aristotle never succeeded in defining precisely what is meant by those ideas (“Special Divine Revelation as Rational,” 31). The reasoning is circular: *Motion* is used to define *actuality* and *potentiality*, yet *actuality* and *potentiality* are used to define *motion* (ibid., 36).

Thomas traces back the causes of motion with the assumption that there is a first cause, since causes cannot go backward into infinity. But this is also the conclusion Thomas draws. Therefore, he is begging the question (ibid., 31).

For Thomas there are two ways to know God. We can know by negation what God is not, and we can know what he is like by analogy (see ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF). There can be no identical meanings derived from these two methods. But unless the terms can be univocal, the argument is a fallacy (ibid.).

Thomism identifies God as the Unmoved Mover. Suppose the existence of the Unmoved Mover has been demonstrated. This would not prove the Unmoved Mover to be God; it is simply a physical cause of motion. Nothing in the argument provides this force with a transcendent personality. “In fact, if the argument is valid, and if this Unmoved Mover explains the processes of nature, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is superfluous, and indeed impossible” (ibid., 37).

The argument for the existence of God is, at best, useless. It proves no more than a finite or physical God. It allows, but does not prove, the existence of a good God, but he need neither be omnipotent nor the cause of all that happens.

All causal arguments involve an equivocation. This argument involves Clark’s criticism of analogy (see the following section).

On these bases, Clark finds the cosmological argument “worse than useless. In fact, Christians can be pleased at its failure, for if it were valid, it would prove a conclusion inconsistent with Christianity” (*Religions, Reason, and Revelation*, 41).

Rejection of Analogy. Clark contended that the doctrine of analogy, as implied in theistic arguments, involves a logical fallacy of equivocation. Taking the propositions: “Contingent things in motion exist, which have both actuality and potentiality,” and “God exists as all actuality with no potentiality,” Clark questions whether the verb *exists* can be defined the same way when applied to Necessary Beings as when applied to contingent beings. He fears there is too much divergence for the argument to be valid (*Thales to Dewey*, 227, 278). *Exists* has too much of a temporal, human sense to be appropriately applied to God. “In this sense of the word *exist*, God does not exist” (ibid., 312).

“If we should arrive validly at the conclusion, God exists, this existence at which we have arrived would not be God’s existence. Syllogisms [see LOGIC] and valid arguments require their terms to be used univocally” (ibid.).

The Test for Truth. Clark was an unyielding defender of the validity of the law of noncontradiction (see FIRST PRINCIPLES). Noncontradiction was the “inescapable” basis of all knowledge and the test for truth (*Christian View of Men and Things*, 313). Clark’s defense of the law of noncontradiction was what Van Til would call a transcendental argument. Without the forms of logic, Clark averred, no discussion on any subject would be possible (ibid., 308). Using noncontradiction, apologetics has a two-fold task:

Negative Task. Apologetics must show that all non-Christian systems are contradictory within their truth claims. Clark did this in his history of philosophy, *Thales to Dewey*. He brought all the great philosophers before the bar of rationality, and found each of them wanting.

Positive Task. Clark believed that only Christianity is free from contradiction and, hence, only it can be proven true. Using a geometric method reminiscent of René Descartes, Clark reduced Christianity to its basic axioms in order to show their internal consistency. He concluded: “Christianity is a comprehensive view of all things; it takes the world, both material and spiritual, to be an ordered system” (ibid., 33).

Clark was aware that no finite system could be expected to provide answers to all problems, since no mortal is omniscient. He reasoned that “if one system can provide plausible solutions to many problems, while another leaves too many questions unanswered, if one system tends less to skepticism and gives more meaning to life, if one world view is consistent while others are self-contradictory, who can deny us, since we must choose, the right to choose the more promising first principle?” (ibid., 34).

Common Ground with Non-Christians. In opposition to his contemporary in Reformed theology, Cornelius Van Til, Clark believed that common ground could be found with unbelievers. This common ground is found in the laws of logic and “a few divine truths,” which unbelievers know by virtue of the image of God in them (*Barth’s Theological Method*, 96). In response to Karl Barth, Clark affirmed that “Faith is a mental activity and by definition presupposes a rational subject. Reason, therefore, can be considered to be an element in common to believer and unbeliever” (ibid., 102).

Evaluation. Positive Contributions. In addition to the overall contributions Clark has made to a creative evangelical rethinking of its task, Clark has had strong influence on individual evangelicals, notably John Carnell, Carl Henry, and Ronald Nash.

Clark’s system offers a comprehensive test for truth in all systems. Noncontradiction can be applied to every belief system. It is offered as a means both for discovering which are false, and in giving evidence of the true one. The law of noncontradiction is employed by all rational people, so it is something of an indisputable standard, whatever the worldview. It is both fair and universal.

Unlike some multi-step philosophical tests for truth, Clark gives only one, and it is a simple one: Truth cannot conflict with itself. Either a view is noncontradictory or it is not. Clark’s criterion also is rational. It is clear and consistent, not apt to get lost in subjective, mystical experience.

As Nash correctly observes, Clark stressed “the importance of refusing to separate faith” (cited in Robbins, 89). He was an arch enemy of fideism, insisting on the need for rational religious belief.

Another positive feature is Clark’s stress on objective, propositional truth (*see* TRUTH, NATURE OF). He correctly emphasizes this, not only in general, but in the propositional revelation expressed in Scripture.

Negative Critique. Empirical skepticism unjustified. Clark claimed not to trust his senses, yet he needed them to read his Bible. How could he believe what he read? Like other skeptics, Clark inconsistently trusted his senses in everyday affairs. How else could he have eaten or crossed a busy street? Also, how can one know his or her senses are unreliable unless that can be determined by senses? For example, we learn by our senses to make allowances for the appearance of a straight stick that looks crooked when thrust into the water. We could not know not to trust the bent reflection unless we could trust our senses.

And like other empirical skeptics, Clark was not skeptical about his skepticism (*see* AGNOSTICISM). He accepted it uncritically as a necessary step in his presuppositionalism. But why should skepticism have been the starting point? Why not assume we can gain knowledge by way of our senses? Many of the criticisms in the article DAVID HUME as well as in the critique of PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS can be leveled at Clark.

Circular reasoning. Clark commits the fallacy of *petitio principii* or begging the question (*see* LOGIC). He admits that his system involves circular reasoning, but attempts to resolve the problem, in part, by claiming that all other systems have the same problem. “Non-Christian arguments regularly assume the point in dispute before they start. The questions are so framed as to exclude the Christian answer from the beginning” (*Religions, Reason, and Revelation* , 27). He believes that he escapes the problem because skepticism is self-defeating (*Thales to Dewey* , 29–30). It hardly seems to further his cause to reduce his argument to the level of the rest, and this does not eliminate the possibility that other views are just as self-consistent.

Fallacious arguments against proof. Clark’s rejection of theistic proofs (*see* GOD, ALLEGED DISPROOFS OF) was no better than that of his agnostic mentors Hume and Kant (*see* AGNOSTICISM). Clark’s apologetic offers a strange rationalism. First he defended the skeptics in their arguments against God, only to argue later the need to rationally defend God by presuppositionalism. It would have been simpler to use classical arguments from the beginning.

A survey of all systems? To be fair, before Clark proves his point, he must prove every other system in history and on the contemporary scene to be inconsistent. He takes the conclusion of his argument beyond the evidence. The finiteness of the investigator limits the support for his thesis (Lewis, 119). One lifetime is simply too short to survey every other conceivable system. Clark might force the conclusion of a probability that Christianity is true by this method, but Clark reduces all probability to skepticism. By his own standard, then, his apologetic method leaves us in skepticism.

Consistency within other systems. A similar problem is that Clark uses internal consistency as the only test for the truth of a system. But he cannot know that all systems are contradictory simply using the law of noncontradiction. By Christian standards this might be possible, but many systems are self-consistency within their own view of reality. The pantheist (*see* PANTHEISM) says, “I am God.” If this were an internally contradictory statement, then God himself could not say it. But he can and does. “God is all, and all is God” may be a contradictory statement to a theistic view, but to a pantheist who believes the real world is an illusion, it is perfectly self-consistent (*see* HINDUISM ; MONISM).

A negative test only. At best the law of noncontradiction is a negative test for truth. It can falsify a worldview truth claim, but it cannot verify one. It cannot prove that one alone is true, since more than one view may be internally self-consistent. As Gordon Lewis put it, “Contradiction is the surest sign of error, but consistency is not a guarantee of truth” (120).

Conclusion. Clark has provided a great service to Christian apologetics by stressing the laws of logic on which all rational arguments are based. The law of noncontradiction is absolutely necessary to the affirmation and confirmation of all truth claims. However, logic is only a set of formal principles. It tells what *could be* true; not what *is* true. To know what is really true, sooner or later one must touch base with the external world. This is what classical apologetics does.

Clark’s own view depends on his acceptance of the validity of sense impressions and probability (*see* INDUCTIVISM), which he denies have any validity as a test for truth. On his own principles his view could not be true. He must trust his senses, even when reading books on other views. He must confess only a probability that *all* non-Christian views are false, since he has not examined each of them. He must trust his senses even when he accepts the claim that the Bible is true. Clark’s apologetic method fails to be a comprehensive positive test for the truth of Christianity.

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Clarke, Samuel. Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) was an important English philosopher, physicist, and apologist of his time. Clarke studied at Cambridge and became a Newtonian in an atmosphere dominated largely by the science of René Descartes (1596–1650). He was ordained in the Church of England. His posts included rector at St. James, Westminster.

His writings are collected in *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, which include his Boyle lectures of 1704, “A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God,” and 1705, “A Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and The Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation in Answer to Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza, the Author of the Oracles of Reason, and Other Deniers of Natural and Revealed Religion.” Several volumes of sermons survive. Clarke’s works exerted an influence on Joseph Butler (1692–1752) in his *Analogy in Religion* (1736).

Classical Apologetic Approach. Clarke’s approach falls into the category of classical apologetics. He began with a strong cosmological argument for God’s existence as expressed in natural theology. He proceeded to defend the Christian supernatural revelation (*see* MIRACLE). As the extended title of his book indicates, it is directed at Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677), and other naturalistic approaches (*see* NATURALISM).

Existence and Attributes of God. The 1704 Boyle lectures consisted of “one argument in a chain of propositions.” The first three are the most important:

Proposition one. It is undeniable that something has existed from all eternity. Since something is, it is evident that something always was. Otherwise, things that are were produced out of nothing, without a cause. Something cannot be effected unless there is something that effected it. This is a “first plain and self-evident truth” (“Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes,” 1).

Proposition two. An unchangeable and independent being has existed from eternity. “Either there has always existed some one unchangeable and independent being, from which all other beings that are or ever were in the universe, have received their origin; or else, there has been an infinite succession of changeable and dependent beings produced from one another in an endless succession” (*ibid.*, 2). There cannot be an endless succession of beings, for such a series must be caused either from within or without. It cannot be caused from without, since supposedly everything is within the series. It cannot be caused from within because no being in the series is

self-existent and necessary, and such a series arose from either necessity, mere possibility, or chance. It cannot be from necessity, since the infinite regress doesn’t allow anything necessary. It cannot be from chance, which is a mere word without any meaning. It cannot be explained by mere possibility, since pure potentiality for existence does not explain why anything actually exists. Therefore, “there must have existed from eternity some one immutable and independent being” (*ibid.*).

Proposition three. That unchangeable, independent being which existed from all eternity must be self-existent, or necessarily-existing. Whatever exists must come into being from nothing, without cause, or it must be self-existent. To arise without cause from nothing is a contradiction. “To have been produced by some external cause cannot possibly be true of everything; but something must have existed eternally and independently; as has likewise been shown already” (*ibid.*, 3). The being must be self-existent. This eternal, necessary being cannot be the material universe (*see* MATERIALISM). The material universe is neither eternal nor necessary since many of its properties are contingent. It cannot be necessary and eternal, since its nonexistence can be conceived. And the nonexistence of a necessary being is not possible.

Morality and Christianity. The Boyle lecture of 1705 on natural religion and the truth of Christianity set out fifteen propositions. The first four are devoted to obligations of natural religion. Propositions five to fifteen are on the truth and certainty of Christian revelation. The argument is typical of the classical approach in that it defends the possibility of miracles and the historicity of supernatural events supporting Christianity (*see* APOLOGETICS, HISTORICAL ; MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST).

Evaluation. Most of the points of an evaluation of Clarke are covered in detail in the articles GOD, EVIDENCE FOR, and GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR.

Positive Contributions. Clarke provided a strong classical defense of theism and Christianity (*see* APOLOGETICS, ARGUMENT OF). His argument, especially the first part of it, is one of the most powerful ever offered for an eternal, Necessary Being. It later had a strong influence on the American apologist Jonathan Edwards. It bears strong similarities to the “third way” of Thomas Aquinas.

Likewise, Clarke saw what other classical theists have seen, that the defense of Christianity must come in two steps. First there must be a rational defense of the existence of God. Second there must be a historical defense of the supernatural origin of Christianity.

Negative Critique. Unfortunately, Clarke’s logic in the latter part of his argument is not so tight as in the first. While it is clear that (1) something undeniably exists and (2) something must be eternal and necessary; it is not so clear from his treatment that this “something” must be (3) absolutely one. His arguments that matter cannot be eternal are dependent on Newton’s physics. In the context of modern science, the evidence of a sudden, explosive origin is more compelling (*see* BIG BANG THEORY).

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Classical Apologetics. *Classical apologetics* is so called because it was the apologetic method practiced by the first thinkers who studied and practiced the application of reason to the defense of Christianity. These pioneer apologists included Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas (*see* APOLOGETICS, TYPES OF). The roots of classical apologetics are found in some second- and third-century apologists as well. Modern classical apologetics is represented by William Paley, John Locke, C. S. Lewis, B. B. Warfield, John Gerstner, R. C. Sproul, William Craig, J. P. Moreland, and Norman L. Geisler.

Classical apologetics stresses rational arguments for the existence of God (*see* GOD, EVIDENCES FOR) and historical evidence supporting the truth of Christianity. Stress is placed on miracles as a confirmation of the claims of Christ and the biblical prophets and apostles.

Contrasts with Presuppositional and Evidential Apologetics. Classical apologetics differs from various forms of presuppositional apologetics in its handling of proofs for the existence of God and its use of historical evidence. Classical differs from evidential apologetics over whether there is a logically prior need to establish the existence of God before arguing for the truth of Christianity (e.g., the deity of Christ and inspiration of the Bible [*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF]).

Classical apologetics is characterized by two basic steps. Its first step is to establish valid theistic arguments for the truth of theism apart from (but with appeal to) special revelation in Scripture. Its second step is to compile historical evidence to establish such basic truths of Christianity as the deity of Christ and the inspiration of the Bible. The use of the resurrection of Christ often plays an important role in this second step.

Validity of Theistic Proofs. Classical apologetics accepts, and presuppositionalists reject, the validity of traditional theistic proofs for God. Some presuppositionalists replace traditional proofs with transcendental arguments for God of their own (*see* PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS ; VAN TIL, CORNELIUS). Not all classical apologists accept *all* the traditional proofs for God. For example, many reject the validity of the Ontological Argument. But most accept some form of the Cosmological Argument and the Teleological Argument. Many also believe the Moral Argument is valid.

Presuppositional apologists reject the validity of theistic proofs for God (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). Most of them accept the validity of much of what David Hume and Immanuel Kant said in

their critiques of theistic argumentation (*see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR). Some, such as Gordon Clark, do this on the basis of empirical skepticism. Cornelius Van Til and others do it because they believe facts have no meaning apart from the presupposed trinitarian world view. Whatever the grounds, all true presuppositionalists join atheists and agnostics in rejecting the validity of traditional theistic proofs for God (*see* AGNOSTICISM ; ATHEISM).

Historical Evidence and Theism. One apologetic tactic is to show the historical reliability of the New Testament (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS) and argue from that credibility to the New Testament's testimony that Jesus claimed to be, and was miraculously proven to be, the Son of God (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF). From this, Jesus' own voice is added to historical evidence that the Old Testament is the Word of God. His promise of the ministry of the Holy Spirit does the same for the New Testament (*see* BIBLE, JESUS' VIEW OF).

Sometimes classical apologists begin this second step by showing that the Bible claims to be, and is supernaturally proven to be, the Word of God. In doing so they often use the same basic evidence as is used by evidential apologetics. This includes miracles (*see* MIRACLE ; MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ; MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE), fulfilled prophecy (*see* PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE), the unity of the Bible, and other indications of its supernatural origin (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCES FOR). The difference between the evidentialists and the classical apologists at this point is that the latter see the need to first establish a theistic universe in order to establish the possibility of miracles. Evidentialists do not see theism as a logically necessary precondition of historical apologetics.

The basic argument of the classical apologist is that it makes no sense to speak about the resurrection as an act of God unless as a logical step it is established that there is a God who can act. Likewise, the Bible cannot be the Word of God, unless there is a God who can speak. And Christ cannot be shown to be the Son of God except on the logically prior premise that there is a God who can have a Son.

While some evidentialists use theistic proofs, they do not believe it is logically necessary to do so. They believe this is simply an alternate approach. The works of John Warwick Montgomery and Gary Habermas fit this category.

At this point there is a similarity between classical apologetics and presuppositionalism. Both believe that one cannot argue legitimately from historical data unless he begins with the prior premise that a theistic God exists. They differ about how to establish this prior premise. The presuppositionalists claim that each worldview acts as a presuppositional grid to filter incoming facts and attempt to make them fit the individual's idea of how the world works. But underlying that process is a built-in, suppressed knowledge of the truth, as expressed by Romans 1 and Augustine's dictum that every human being is "doing business" with God. The apologist is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit to show the failure of the held worldview and to excite the innate knowledge. Classical apologists insist that the apologist takes a more active role in partnership with the Holy Spirit to reason through the truth about God and until it is established and admitted in the heart of the unbeliever.

Objections to Classical Apologetics. Other Christian views make several important objections to classical apologetics. Some of these come from evidentialists and others from presuppositionalists or fideists (*see* FIDEISM), who reject the validity of traditional theistic arguments.

Invalidity of Traditional Proofs. Both fideists and strict presuppositionalists reject all the classical arguments for God's existence. Their specific objections are considered elsewhere (*see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR).

Invalidity of Historical Arguments. Fideists and presuppositionalists contend that no appeal to any kind of evidence, including historical evidence is valid, since the same data is interpreted differently under varying worldview perspectives. There are no bare facts. All facts are interpreted, and the interpretation derives from one's worldview. If the dead body of Jesus can be agreed to have come back to life, even that information can be understood differently by different worldviews. A Christian theist (*see* THEISM) sees the event as a supernatural resurrection that confirms Christ's claim to be the Son of God. But the pantheist (*see* PANTHEISM) views it simply as a manifestation of the One Being, of which we are all a part. It reveals Christ to be a guru, not God the Creator revealed in human flesh. The atheist or naturalist views the event as a myth or at most an anomaly that has a purely natural explanation.

In response to this objection, many classical apologists, the author included, agree with the basic point made by the presuppositionalists but note that this does not affect the approach, since classical apologetics believes it is logically necessary to establish theism first as the worldview context in which facts of history are properly understood.

Classical apologists and the presuppositionalists disagree on two matters. First, classical apologists contend that they can establish theism by traditional rational arguments, and presuppositionalists do not. Second, classical apologists argue that it is only logically necessary to establish theism before one can properly understand the historical evidence. Many presuppositionalists, following Van Til, insist that one must presuppose a Triune (*see* TRINITY) God who has revealed himself in Scripture as a necessary presupposition for any historical evidence in support of Christianity. But this, to the classical apologists, is simply arguing in a circle.

The Validity of Transcendental Arguments. Not every presuppositionalist discards *all* arguments in favor of Christianity. Some use a transcendental argument (e.g., Greg Bahnsen). They insist that the only valid way to argue for the truth of Christianity is to show that it is transcendently necessary to posit the basic truth of Christianity as a condition for making any sense out of our world. On no other presupposition can one even assume there is any meaning in history or science, or even attempt to communicate.

The classical apologists agree that this is true so far as theism is necessary to view life as meaningful and coherent. In a closed system there is no ultimate meaning, no ultimate values, and no "miracle" happens that cannot be accounted for by naturalistic phenomenon (cf. John 3:1-2 ; Acts 2:22 ; Heb. 2:3-4). But it is not necessary to presuppose that the God is triune, has a Son incarnated as Jesus of Nazareth, and has revealed himself in the sixty-six inspired books of

Christian Scripture. One can make sense of the world by assuming less than the whole truth of Christianity.

Other differences are detailed elsewhere. It is sufficient to note here that they involve the role of faith and reason, especially the use of logic or reason to demonstrate God's existence which classical apologists use and pure presuppositionalists reject.

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Clement of Alexandria. Church Fathers of the second and third centuries were apologists who defended the faith against the attacks of both Jewish and pagan thinkers. Among the first apologists was Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 213).

The Apologetics of Clement. To some the position of some early apologists, such as Clement, seems overly rationalistic, and stresses Greek philosophy too heavily. On closer

analysis, however, the first postapostolic defenders of the Faith were more Christian in apologetic than would at first appear (*see* FAITH AND REASON).

Clement affirmed that “before the advent of our Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. . . . Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring ‘the Hellenic mind’ as the law, the Hebrews, ‘to Christ’ ” (*Stromata* 1.5). He also spoke of the inspiration of Greek poets (*Exhortation to the Heathen* 8), and went so far as to declare that “by reflection and direct vision, those among the Greeks who have philosophized accurately, saw God” (*Stromata* 1.19).

However, Clement was not so rationalistic that he did not affirm *sola Scriptura*, insisting of the Bible that “certainly we use it as a criterion in the discovery of things.” For “what is subjected to criticism is not to be believed till it is so subjected; so that what needs criticism cannot be a first principle” (*Stromata* 7.16).

However, Greek philosophy at best served only a preparatory role for Christ. For “Hellenic philosophy comprehends not the whole extent of the truth, and . . . it prepares the way for the truly royal teaching . . . and fitting him who believes in providence for the reception of the truth” (*Stromata* 1.16).

There were limitations to philosophy. The Greeks had only “certain scintillations of the divine word” (*Exhortation* 7). Faith is the means of attaining the full revelation of God (*Exhortation* 8).

Like Justin Martyr, Clement believed that the truth of philosophy was borrowed from the Hebrew Scriptures. He wrote: “I know thy teachers, even if thou wouldst conceal them. You have learned geometry from the Egyptians, astronomy from the Babylonians; . . . but for laws that are consistent with truth, and your sentiments respecting God, you are indebted to the Hebrews” (*Exhortation* 6). However, what truth philosophers possessed did have did not directly reveal Christ. He said plainly: “I do not think that Philosophy directly declared the Word, although in many instances philosophy attempts and persuasively teaches us probable arguments” (*Stromata* 1.19).

It is often overlooked that Clement believed that faith is a prerequisite of philosophy; believing is a precondition of knowing. For according to him all knowledge is based on first principles and “first principles are incapable of demonstration. . . . Accordingly, faith is something superior to knowledge and [is] its criterion” (*Stromata* 2.4).

Evaluation. Within its context, Clement’s defense of the Christian faith was effective. From mastery of the prevailing philosophy, he defended the superiority of the Christian revelation. While non-Christian philosophers possessed some truth, it too came from God, either by general or special revelation. Apart from Christianity the Greeks at best had only a preparatory and partial knowledge of God. The fullness of truth is found only in Christ. Indeed, what truth the pagans possessed they borrowed from the Christian Scriptures.

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Coherentism. *See* TRUTH, DEFINITION OF .

Coherence as Test of Truth. *See* CLARK, GORDON ; TRUTH, DEFINITION OF .

Common Ground. The question of “common ground” is largely a debate between classical apologetics and presuppositional apologetics. The issue is whether there is any area of neutral evidence or starting point at which Christian and non-Christian can meet (*see* HISTORICAL APOLOGETICS). Revelational presuppositionalists deny that there is a common ground to which both sides can connect in establishing the truth of Christianity.

Cornelius Van Til strongly believed the noetic effects of sin so vitiated human understanding that there is no common understanding of the facts. One cannot build an apologetic argument on the facts of experience or history apart from the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and mind (*see* HOLY SPIRIT, ROLE IN APOLOGETICS). One’s worldview must be presupposed or posited by a transcendental argument in order to give an interpretive framework to otherwise bare facts.

Both historical and classical apologists reject this view, claiming there are starting points in reason (*see* FAITH AND REASON ; LOGIC) from which to build a case for a theistic and Christian worldview (*see* APOLOGETICS, ARGUMENT OF ; GOD, EVIDENCE FOR).

Comte, Auguste. Auguste Comte (1797–1857) was from a rationalist (*see* RATIONALISM) French Catholic family. He studied science and was secretary of Saint-Simone at *Ecole Polytechnique*. He said he “naturally ceased believing in God” at age fourteen. Comte is the father of both positivism and sociology. He coined the latter term. He developed a mystical (*see* MYSTICISM), nontheistic, humanistic religious cult in which he installed himself as high priest (*see* HUMANISM, SECULAR).

Comte’s main works were *Cours, The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (1830–42, trans. 1853) and *The Catechism of Positive Religion* (1852, trans. 1858). *The Catechism* included a calendar of secular “saints.”

Comte’s Positivistic Philosophy. With an epistemological starting point in Immanuel Kant’s antimetaphysical agnosticism and G. W. F. Hegel’s historical developmentalism, Comte developed his “law of growth.” It included three stages of human development: *theological* (child)—ancient, *metaphysical* (youth)—medieval, and *positivistic* (adulthood)—modern. The first featured primitive belief in personal gods, later replaced by the Greek idea of impersonal law, only to be superseded by the modern (positivistic) belief in the methodological unity of science. These three stages represent the mythological (mythos), metaphysical (logos), and

scientific (positivistic) stages of the human race. According to Comte, human beings move forward from the personal explanation of nature, to impersonal law, and finally to an objective method. They advance from belief in supernatural beings to acceptance of natural forces, to understanding through phenomenal (empirical) descriptions. Instead of animating spirits or impersonal powers, natural laws are posited. In this three-stage growth spiritual and then rational causes are discarded for purely natural (positivistic) descriptions.

The religious stage has its own evolution. People move from polytheistic (*see* POLYTHEISM) manifestations of nature to multiple gods and finally a monotheism which consolidates all the forces that are not understood into a single godhead. The problem with the religious interpretation is that it anthropomorphizes nature. The problem with the metaphysical stage is that it makes ideas real, rather than merely describing and interrelating them, as does the positivistic stage.

Comte's goal was to find a general law by which all phenomena are related. Such a law, he believed, would be the ideal result of positivistic philosophy. However, the best likely result is a unity in scientific method.

For Comte, sociology is the final science, the science of society. Social progress is dialectical, moving from Feudalism (*see* FREUD, SIGMUND), through the French Revolution to Positivism. Freedom of thought is as out of place in society as in physics. True freedom lies in rational subjection to scientific laws. One law is that society must develop in a positivistic direction.

Comte's three stages were expressed politically as well. First, the Middle Ages society shared common religious ideas (theological stage). Second, the French Revolution society had common political ideals (metaphysical stage). Finally, the Modern (positivistic) society must share the scientific method. In this stage the Catholic priesthood was replaced by a scientific-industrial elite. Dogma is based on science and proclaimed by this elite.

Karl Marx denied that he had read Comte before 1886, but a Comptian friend (E. S. Beesley) chaired the 1864 meeting of the Marxist International Workingmen's Association. Comte's views undoubtedly influenced the development of Marx's dialectical understanding of history.

Comte's Religious Views. Comte disliked Protestantism, pronouncing it negative and productive of intellectual anarchy. He developed his own nontheistic humanistic religion, in which Comte was the high priest of the Cult of Humanity. His mistress, Clothilde Vaux, was high priestess. Comte developed a Humanistic Religious Calendar, with such "saints" as Frederick the Great, Dante, and Shakespeare.

Evaluation. Comte's views are prey to a variety of philosophical, scientific, and historical weaknesses. Critique of some of his ideas is found elsewhere, particularly in the article, Humanism, Secular.

Comte's Atheism Is Inadequate. As other atheists (*see* GOD, ALLEGED DISPROOF OF), Comte never succeeded in eliminating God. He provided no real rebuttal to arguments for the existence

of God (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). Instead, he tried to explain them away through his theories of historical development.

Comte's Historical Development Is Unfounded. Comte's philosophy of history is both gratuitous and unfounded. It is neither philosophically justified nor does it fit the facts. History simply does not fit into the neat stages of development his view demands. For example, there remain great modern and contemporary metaphysical views, such as panentheism , represented by Alfred North Whitehead , and monotheism predated polytheism, as demonstrated by the Ebla tablets (*see* MONOTHEISM, PRIMITIVE)

Comte's Humanistic Beliefs Are Bizarre. Even other atheists and humanists are embarrassed by Comte's religious beliefs. They depict a religious and superstitious perspective that he himself characterized as primitive. If religion is outdated by the scientific, then why establish another religion, with a high priest, priestess, and holy days?

In effect, Comte deified the scientific method for studying nature. Yet Comte protested that others had deified nature. The positivist approach was not just a method for discovering some truth, but *the* method for discovering all truth. As such, it involved self-defeating beliefs in materialism. It was weakened as a worldview by a denial of metaphysics and absolute morality (*see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF).

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Contradiction. *See* FIRST PRINCIPLES .

Conventionalism. *Conventionalism* is the theory that all meaning is relative. Since all truth claims are meaningful statements, this would mean that all truth is relative. But this is contrary to the Christian claim that there is absolute truth (*see* TRUTH, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF). Absolute truths are true at all times, in all places, for all people.

Conventionalism is a reaction to Platonism (*see* PLATO), which contends that language has an unchanging essence or ideal forms. Conventionalists believe that meaning changes to fit each situation. Meaning is arbitrary and relative to culture and context. There are no transcultural

forms. Language (meaning) has no essence of itself; linguistic meaning is derived from the relative experience on which language is based.

Some of the modern proponents of conventionalism are Ferdinand Saussure (d. 1913), Gottlob Fregge (d. 1925), and Ludwig Wittgenstein (d. 1951). Their view is widely accepted in current linguistic philosophy.

Symbols and Meaning. An important difference separates a conventionalist theory of symbols and a conventionalist theory of meaning. Other than natural symbols (for example, smoke signifying fire) and onomatopoeic terms (for example, *crash*, *bang*, *boom*) whose sound express to the words' meanings, virtually all linguists acknowledge that symbols are conventionally relative. The word *down* has no intrinsic relation to the fluffy feathers of a duck. The word also refers to a lower position, a psychological state, a type of mountain landscape, an attempt to move the ball in American football, and the direction south. The same or similar group of sounds may carry far different meanings in other languages, and many languages will have differing sounds to refer to the feathers on a duck. This is true of most words.

This is not the same as claiming that the meaning of a sentence is culturally relative. It is only to say that the words used to convey meaning are relative. That is, individual symbols are relative, but not the significance a combination of symbols carries into a sentence.

Evaluation. As a theory of meaning, conventionalism has serious faults. First, it is a self-falsifying theory. If the theory were correct, the statement "All linguistic meaning is conventional" would be relative and ultimately meaningless. But the conventionalist who makes such statements assumes that sentences do carry objective meaning, so he makes objectively meaningful statements to argue that there are no objectively meaningful statements.

Second, if conventionalism were correct, universal statements would not translate into other languages as universal statements. But this is not the case. The sentence "All triangles have three sides." is understood to be universally true in Mongolian, Spanish, or any language with words for *triangle*, *three*, and *side*. The same is true of the statement "All wives are married women." If meaning were culturally relative, no such universal, transcultural statement would be possible.

There would be no universal truths in any language. One could not even say that $3 + 4 = 7$. In logic there would be no law of noncontradiction. In fact, no consistent conventionalist can even deny such absolute first principles without using them. The very statement that "The meaning of all statements is relative to a culture" depends for meaning on the fact that laws of logic are not relative to a culture, but in fact transcend cultures and languages.

Third, if conventionalism were true, we would not know any truth prior to knowing the context of that truth in that language. But we can know $3 + 4 = 7$ before knowing any conventions of a language. Mathematics may depend on relative symbols to express itself, but the truths of mathematics are independent of culture. Likewise, laws of logic are independent of human convention. Logic is not arbitrary, and its rules are not created in a cultural context, but are rather discovered. They are true prior to language and cultural expression.

Fourth, a related problem is that conventionalism confuses the *source* of meaning with its ultimate *ground*. The source of a person's knowledge that "All wives are married women" may be social. One may have learned it from a parent or a teacher. But the ground for knowing that this is a true statement is not social but logical. It represents a first principle of logic in that the predicate is reducible to the subject (wife = married woman). It is true by definition, not acculturation.

Fifth, if conventionalism were correct, no meaning would be possible. If all meaning is based on changing experience, which in turn gets meaning from changing experience, there is no basis for meaning. An infinite series is impossible in finding a first cause for the universe, and it is impossible in finding the beginning of meaning if all meanings depend on other meanings. A statement without any basis for meaning is a baseless statement.

Sixth, conventionalism has only an internal criterion for meaning. But internal criteria don't help adjudicate meaning conflicts of the same statement from different worldview vantage points. Either a theist (*see* THEISM) or a pantheist (*see* PANTHEISM) can make the statement "God is a Necessary Being." The words in themselves, without objective definitions behind the words to fall back to, lack any sort of relation to truth. The theist and pantheist can talk for hours, leaving one another with the impression that they believe the same things about God. By being able to unpack firm meanings for *God* and *Necessary Being*, however, the conversants can discuss the differences in their worldviews.

It is easy to see that no truly descriptive knowledge of God is possible for a conventionalist. Language is strictly based in experience. It tells us only what God *seems to be to us in our experience*. It cannot tell us what he *really is in himself*. This reduces to self-defeating agnosticism or the claim that we know that we cannot know anything about the nature of God (*see* ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF). Conventionalists reduce the meaning of *God* to a mere interpretive framework, rather than a being beyond the world. Theism shows God to be (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT; GOD, EVIDENCE FOR; KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT).

Seventh, conventionalism has a circular justification. It really does not justify its claims, but merely asserts them. A conventionalist asked for the basis of this belief that all meaning is conventional cannot give a nonconventional basis. If she could she would no longer be a conventionalist. But a conventional basis for conventionalism would be a relative reason for relativism. Such an argument could only be circular.

Eighth, conventionalists often distinguish between surface and depth grammar to avoid some of their dilemmas. However, such a distinction assumes that they have a vantage point independent of language and experience. Conventionalism, by its very nature, does not allow such a vantage point outside one's culture. So even this distinction is logically inconsistent with the theory.

Conclusion. The conventionalists' theory of meaning is a form of semantic relativism. Like other forms of relativism, conventionalism is self-defeating. The very theory that all meaning is relative is itself a nonrelative concept. It is a meaningful statement intended to apply to all

meaningful statements. It is a nonconventional statement claiming that all statements are conventional.

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Cosmological Argument. The arguments traditionally used to prove God’s existence are *the cosmological argument*, *the teleological argument*, *the moral argument*, and *the ontological argument*. Respectively, these are the arguments from the cosmos, from design, from moral law, and from the idea of an absolutely perfect (or necessary) being.

Forms of the Argument. There are two basic forms of the cosmological argument: the *horizontal* or *kalam* cosmological argument and the *vertical*. The horizontal cosmological argument reasons back to a Cause of the *beginning* of the universe. The vertical cosmological argument reasons from the *being* of the universe as it now exists. The former, explaining how the universe *came to be*, was championed by Bonaventure (1221–1274). The latter, explaining how it *continues to be*, flows from Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274). The first calls for an *originating* Cause, and the latter for a *sustaining* Cause. Forms of the cosmological argument combine both dimensions.

A Survey of Cosmological Arguments. The basic idea of this argument is that, since there is a universe rather than none at all, it must have been caused by something beyond itself. This reasoning is based on the law of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF), which says that every finite or contingent thing is caused right now by something other than itself.

Aristotle: Unmoved Mover(s). Plato’s (428–348 B.C.) student Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) gave further sophistication to his teacher’s argument for God. In its strongest form, Aristotle’s cosmological argument is unfolded in the article on Aristotle. Aristotle’s argument presupposed a polytheistic (*see* POLYTHEISM) universe. He moved from the fact of change and its movements to the existence of pure actualities or unmoved movers. These necessary beings can act upon contingent beings. They move potential change so that it becomes actualized change.

Aristotle’s cosmology postulated dozens of unmoved movers, but ultimately one heaven and one God. For only material things can be numerically differentiated.

Noteworthy about Aristotle’s argument is that it introduces the question of an infinite regress of causes (*see* INFINITE SERIES). Aristotle struggles with a view that there must have been a plurality of first causes, but unlike Plato’s “ *Demiurgos*,” Aristotle’s First Cause is a final (purposing) cause.

This purposing cause should not, however, be confused with the efficient or producing cause of later Christian thinkers. Neither Plato’s World Soul, Former, or *Demiurgos* (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF), nor Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover is identical with the absolutely perfect Being of Christian theism. Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover was not a personal God and had no religious significance. No worship was due this pantheon. The First Cause was not infinite. Only what is formless or indefinite could be considered infinite to the Greeks.

Anselm: Cosmological-Type Arguments. Before Anselm, St. Augustine offered a “proof” for God. After him Anselm (1033–1119). He is best known for his ontological argument in the *Proslogion*, but an earlier work, the *Monologion*, offered three *a posteriori* proofs for God’s existence (Anselm 1–3). A description of his arguments is given in the article on Anselm.

Anselm’s first argument is from the existence of good things:

1. Good things exist.
2. The cause of this goodness is either one or many.
3. If it were many, there would be no way to compare their goodness. But some things are better than others.
4. So there is one Supreme Good who causes all goodness in all good things.

The second argument is similar but works from perfection:

1. Some beings are more nearly perfect than are others.
2. But things cannot be more or less perfect unless there is one wholly perfect standard for comparison.
3. That standard is a Most Perfect Being.

The third argument, from being, is most obviously cosmological:

1. Something exists, and
2. owes its existence either to nothing or to something.

3. Nothing cannot cause something.
4. There is, then, a something, which is either one or many.
5. If many, the beings would be mutually dependent for their own existence or dependent on another.
6. They cannot be mutually dependent for their existence. Something cannot exist through a being on which it confers existence.
7. Therefore, there must be one being through which all other beings exist.
8. This being must exist through itself.
9. Whatever exists through itself, exists in the highest degree of all.
10. Therefore, a supremely perfect Being exists in the highest degree.

These arguments, unlike Plato's but like the reasoning of Plotinus, identify the Creator with the supreme Good. Unlike Aristotle's, the arguments view God as the *efficient*, not the *final*, Cause of the world. Unlike Plato or Aristotle, Anselm holds that this efficient Cause does not merely operate on eternally existing matter. Rather this Cause causes everything, including matter.

These Christian theistic arguments combined at least three elements: (1) Efficient causality from Plato's *Timaeus* argument; (2) identification of this God with the Good of Plato's *Republic*, the supremely perfect Being; (3) identification of this God with the Hebrew-Christian God. This God causes the very being, not merely the forms of being, of everything that exists.

Alfarabi : Necessary Existence Argument. Arabian and Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages influenced later Christian forms of the cosmological argument. The Muslim thinker Alfarabi (870?-950) provided the heart of later scholastic arguments by his distinction between *essence* and *existence*.

Aristotle distinguished between *what* a thing is and *that* it is. But Alfarabi stated this distinction as between a thing's essence and its existence. This distinction implies an argument for God's existence, the form of which is shown in the article on Alfarabi (see also Maurer, 95-97). This reasoning establishes the concept of "possible beings," whose essence is distinct from their existence. These beings do not "have" to exist. Once they did not exist, for existence is not part of their essence. It can be said that they exist *accidentally*, rather than *essentially*.

Such beings must have received existence from another being. That causing being may also have been caused. But some uncaused being had to start all the causing. This First Cause must be an essential Being, whose essence is to exist. Only existence of such a Necessary Being explains the existence of all accidental beings.

Stated philosophically, if there are beings whose essence is *not to exist*, then there must be a Being whose essence is *to exist*. Possible beings are not possible unless there is a Necessary Being from whom they can receive existence. And since a being cannot give existence to another when it is dependent for its own existence on another, there must be a Being whose existence was not given to it by another, but who gives existence to all others.

Avicenna : First Cause Argument. Following Alfarabi, the Muslim philosopher Avicenna formulated a similar cosmological argument that was emulated in many forms by later scholastics. For the form, see the article AVICENNA. The proof begins with Alfarabi's "possible beings," which must have a cause for their being. There cannot be an infinite series of causes of being, since the cause of being must exist at the same time as it causes another. Through this First Cause, all other beings exist. This First Cause must be a Necessary Being. The cause of all possible beings cannot itself be a possible being. It must be a Necessary Being.

By borrowing some neo-Platonic (see PLOTINUS) premises and a ten-sphere cosmology, Avicenna extended his argument to argue that this necessary First Cause created a series of angels or "intelligences." These control the ten cosmic spheres. He reasoned that the Necessary Being, who is essentially one, can create only one effect at a time. Since thinking is creating and God necessarily thinks, since he is a Necessary Being, there must be an emanation from God of ten beings, called "intelligences," who do the actual work. The last of these beings, called "Agent Intellect," forms the four elements of the cosmos and informs the human mind of all truth.

Avicenna's God, then, was a Necessary Being from whom a serial creative force of ten gods followed with absolute necessity. Unlike the Christian God who freely created and who is directly responsible for the existence of everything else that exists, Avicenna's chain of Gods is necessary and these Gods create all below them.

The Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) anticipated several later Christian formulations of cosmological-type arguments. He argued for a First Mover, a First Cause, and a Necessary Being, as in Aquinas's first three arguments. He insisted that the "I AM" of the Old Testament (Exod. 3:14) meant "absolute existence" and that God alone exists absolutely and necessarily. All creatures have existence only as an "accident" superadded to their essence by their Cause.

Thomas Aquinas: Five Arguments. When Aquinas formulated his "Five Ways," he was not creating arguments that were substantially new. Maimonides had the first three arguments. Alfarabi and Avicenna had the first two proofs. Anselm had an argument for perfection similar to the fourth argument. And Aquinas's fifth proof was more of a teleological argument, which such scholars as Thierry of Chartres and William of Conches had adapted from Plato's *Timaeus* argument. Aquinas does, of course, state the arguments out of the context of his own philosophy, which is more Aristotelian than that of most of his Christian predecessors. The first four arguments of Aquinas may be summarized:

The Argument from Motion (Aquinas, 1.2.3).

1. Things do move. Motion is the most obvious form of change.
2. Change is a passing from *potency* to *act* (i.e., from potentiality to actuality).
3. Nothing passes from potency to act except by something that is in actuality, for it is impossible for a potentiality to actualize itself.
4. There cannot be an infinite regress of actualizers or movers. If there is no First Mover, there can be no subsequent motion, since all subsequent motion depends on prior movers for its motion.
5. Therefore, there must be a first, Unmoved Mover, a pure actualizer with no potentiality in it that is unactualized.
6. Everyone understands this to be God.

The Argument from Efficient Causality.

1. There are efficient causes in the world (i.e., producing causes).
2. Nothing can be the efficient cause of itself, for it would have to be prior to itself in order to cause itself.
3. There cannot be an infinite regress of (essentially related) efficient causes, for unless there is a first cause of the series there would be no causality in the series.
4. Therefore, there must be a first, uncaused, efficient Cause of all efficient causality in the world.
5. Everyone gives to this the name of God.

The Argument from Possibility and Necessity.

1. There are beings that begin to exist and cease to exist (i.e., possible beings).
2. But not all beings can be possible beings, because what comes to exist does so only through what already exists. Nothing cannot cause something.
3. Therefore, there must be a Being whose existence is necessary (i.e., one that never came into being and will never cease to be).
4. There cannot be an infinite regress of Necessary Beings, each of which has its necessity dependent on another because
 - a. An infinite regress of dependent causes is impossible because of the reasoning in the argument for efficient causality.

- b. A Necessary Being cannot be a dependent being.

5. Therefore, there must be a first Being that is necessary in itself and not dependent on another for its existence.

The Argument from Gradation (Perfection) in Things.

1. There are different degrees of perfections among beings (some are more nearly perfect than others).
2. But things cannot be more or less perfect unless there is a wholly perfect.
3. Whatever is perfect is the cause of the less-than-perfect (the higher is the cause of the lower).
4. Therefore, there must be a perfect Being that is causing the perfections of the less-than-perfect beings.
5. This we call God.

The argument for a First Cause of being. There seems to be a basic form behind all of these arguments with only a different starting point. Each argument begins in some characteristic of being (change, causality, contingency, and perfection, respectively) and then argues to a First Cause:

1. Some dependent beings exist.
2. All dependent beings must have a cause for their dependent existence.
3. An infinite regress of existentially dependent causes is impossible.
4. Therefore, there must be a first, uncaused Cause of the existence of every dependent being.
5. This independent Being is identical with the "I AM" of Scripture. The implication is that it is impossible to have more than one absolutely necessary and independent being upon which everything else exists for its being.

Duns Scotus: Argument from Producibility. John Duns Scotus (1265?–1308?) modified the cosmological argument of Aquinas in two important ways. First, he began with the *producibility* of being, not merely with produced beings. Second, he amplified on the argument against an infinite regress of dependent causes. The full form of Scotus's proof (Scotus, 39–56) is:

1. Being is produced (i.e., beings come into being). This is learned through experience (by observing beings produced), but it is also true independent of experience (i.e., it would be

true of beings that do not exist). It would be true, even if God had not willed to create anything.

2. What is produced is producible, either by itself, by nothing, or by something else.
3. But no being can produce itself. In order to cause its own existence, it would have to exist prior to its own existence.
4. Neither can something be caused by nothing. This is contradictory.
5. Therefore, being is producible only by some being that is productive. Only beings can produce beings.
6. There cannot be an infinite regress of productive beings, each producing the being of the one following it, because
 - a. This is an essentially related, not an accidentally related, series of causes (1) where the primary cause is more nearly perfect than the secondary, (2) where the secondary cause depends on the primary for its very causality, and (3) where the cause must be simultaneous to the effect.
 - b. An infinite series of essentially related causes is impossible, because, (1) if the whole series is dependent for its causality (every cause depending on a prior cause), then there must be something beyond the series that accounts for the causality in the series. (2) If an infinite series were causing the effect, then there would have to be an infinite number of causes simultaneously causing a single effect. This is impossible. There cannot be an actual infinite number in a series, for it is always possible to add one more to any number. (3) Wherever there are prior causes, there must be a prime (first) cause. One cause would not be nearer to the beginning than any other unless there is a beginning. (4) Higher causes are more nearly perfect than lower causes, and this implies a perfect Cause at the head of all less-than-perfect causes. (5) An infinite regress of causes implies imperfection, since each cause lacks the ability to explain the succeeding causes. But an imperfect series implies something perfect beyond the series as a ground for the imperfect.
7. Therefore, there must be a first, productive Cause of all producible beings.
8. This First Cause of all producible beings must be one, because
 - a. It is perfect in knowledge, and there cannot be two beings that know everything perfectly, for one would know itself more completely than would the other.
 - b. It is perfect in will; hence, it loves itself more completely than it loves anything else, which means that the other infinite would be loved less than perfectly.

- c. It is infinitely good, and there cannot be two infinitely good beings, for then there would be more than an infinite good, and this is impossible since there cannot be more than the most.
- d. It is infinite in power. If there were two with infinite power, this would mean that there would be two total primary causes of the same effect, and this is impossible, since there cannot be two causes each doing all the causing.
- e. Absolute infinite cannot be excelled in perfection, since there cannot be a more perfect than the wholly Perfect.
- f. There cannot be two Necessary Beings, for to differ, one would have to have some perfection the other lacked (if there is no real difference, they do not really differ). But whatever a Necessary Being has, it must have necessarily. Hence, the one lacking what the other had necessarily would not be a Necessary Being.
- g. Omnipotent will cannot be in two beings, for then one could render impotent what the other wills omnipotently. Even if they agreed not to hinder each other, they would still be incompatible, for each would be the total primary (and direct) cause of any given thing that they agreed should exist. But an omnipotent Cause must be the total primary (and direct) Cause of what it wills. The cause agreeing to, but not directly willing, the effect would be only the indirect cause and hence not the direct (omnipotent) Cause of the effect.

Leibniz : The Argument from Sufficient Reason. The most influential form of the cosmological argument in modern times arose from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), the German rationalist. The proof (Leibniz, 32–39) is stated:

1. The entire (observed) world is changing.
2. Whatever is changing lacks within itself the reason for its own existence.
3. There is a sufficient reason for everything, either in itself or else beyond itself.
4. Therefore, there must be a cause beyond this world for its existence.
5. This cause is either its own sufficient reason or else it has a cause beyond it.
6. There cannot be an infinite regress of sufficient reasons, for the failure to reach an explanation is not an explanation; but there must be an explanation.
7. Therefore, there must be a First Cause of the world that has no reason beyond it but is its own sufficient reason. The sufficient reason is in itself and not beyond itself.

Under the influence of Leibniz's disciple, Christian Wolff (1679–1754), this proof became the pattern for cosmological argument in the modern world. Wolff started the argument (Collins, 137–38) in a slightly different manner:

1. The human soul exists (i.e., we exist).
2. Nothing exists without a sufficient reason for existence.
3. The reason for our existence must be contained either in ourselves or else in another, diverse from ourselves.
4. The reason for our existence is not in ourselves. Our nonexistence is possible or conceivable.
5. So the reason for our existence must be outside of ourselves.
6. One does not arrive at a sufficient reason for existence without reaching a being that has within itself the reason for its own existence. If it did not, then there must be a sufficient reason for its existence beyond itself.
7. A being that has within itself the reason for its own existence is a Necessary Being.
8. Therefore, there must be a Necessary Being beyond us that is the sufficient reason for our existence. If there is not a Necessary Being beyond us, we would be Necessary Beings, having the reason for own existence in ourselves.
9. It is logically impossible for a Necessary Being not to exist. Self-existence or ascetic flows necessarily from the nature of a Necessary Being.
10. Hence, this Necessary Being is identical with the self-existent God of Scripture.

The Leibniz-Wolffian formulation of the cosmological argument rests heavily on the principle of sufficient reason (*see* SUFFICIENT REASON, PRINCIPLE OF), which is usually defended as a self-evidently true analytic principle. The argument is *a posteriori* in form, but not existential. It begins with the existence of something, but then proceeds toward its conclusion, so it is based on a conceptual certainty, not an actual (existential) certainty. This is precisely the point at which modern criticism of the cosmological argument begins. Even scholastic philosophers were highly influenced by this kind of reasoning (Gurr). Their reformulation of Aquinas's cosmological argument is subject to the same criticism.

Meeting Objections to the Argument. Objections against the cosmological argument, emanating largely from Immanuel Kant and David Hume, are treated at length in biographical articles on those philosophers and in the article God, Objections to Proofs for.

Taylor: Restating the Cosmological Argument. Richard Taylor occasioned renewed interest in the cosmological argument by a restatement that evades many traditional objections. Taylor's restatement takes this shape (Taylor, 279–95).

1. The universe as a whole does not explain its own existence.
 - a. No observable part explains its own existence.
 - b. Nor does the whole explain its existence (its nonexistence is conceivable).
 - c. Answering the questions *Where ? How long ? What? or How large?* does not answer *why* the world exists when it need not exist (e.g., a large ball found in the forest needs an explanation as to *why* it exists; expanding the ball to the size of the whole universe does not eliminate the need for an explanation).
2. Whatever does not explain its own existence calls for an explanation beyond itself.
 - a. It is logically possible that the principle of sufficient reason is not true. It is not analytically true; it can be denied without contradiction.
 - b. But it is implausible and unreasonable to deny its truth as applied to the world. The nonexistence of the world is conceivable, whether it includes only one grain of sand or all the stars, and we assume the principle of sufficient reason in all our thought.
3. An infinite regress of reasons is impossible, for it fails to give a sufficient reason; it just indefinitely avoids giving the reason that is demanded by existence. Therefore, there must be a first self-sufficient, (independent) cause of the whole universe.

Taylor adds that it is no less meaningful to speak of God as an independent or Necessary Being than it is to speak of square circles not existing. If it is meaningful to speak of beings that are impossible, then it is meaningful to speak of a Being that is necessary. A concept of a Being that cannot *not* exist is just as meaningful as a concept of one that *cannot* exist (i.e., one that can be nonexistent).

A few comments are in order on the state of the cosmological argument in the light of Taylor's revision. It does not provide a rationally inescapable conclusion. He admits that it is logically possible that the principle of sufficient reason is not true. Taylor's argument does appear to lend plausibility to a cosmological type of argument, since it shows that it is meaningful to ask for a cause of the whole world. It shows how the concept of a Necessary Being is meaningful and argues forcefully against infinite regress. The argument is grounded in the need for an existence-explanation for the world, not in some alleged conceptual or logical necessity, as in the ontological argument.

Despite these positive factors for theism, Taylor's argument is subject to the criticisms of the rationalistic Leibniz-Wolffian tradition. It places the success of the cosmological argument in the hands of the principle of *sufficient reason*, rather than basing it squarely on the principle of

existential causality. The world demands a real cause and not merely an explanation or reason. This cannot be accomplished by confusing and/or equating a ground for the actual here-and-now “be-ing” of the world with an explanation of the inconceivability of its nonexistence. Conceptual problems call for conceptual solutions. Real dependent beings call for an independent Being on which they are depending for their present.

Conclusion. The vertical cosmological argument is based on the premise that something is keeping the universe in existence right now. Something has not only caused the world to *come into being* (Gen. 1:1), but is also causing it to *continue to be* (cf. Col. 1:17). The world needs both an *originating* cause and a *conserving* cause. This argument provides an answer to one of the most basic of all questions: “Why is there something (right now) rather than nothing?” Briefly, it can be put this way:

1. Every part of the universe is dependent.
2. If every part is dependent, then the whole universe must also be dependent.
3. Therefore, the whole universe is dependent right now on some independent Being beyond it for its present existence.

In response, critics argue that the second premise is the fallacy of composition. Just because every piece of a mosaic is square does not mean the whole mosaic is square. Also, putting two triangles together does not necessarily make another triangle; it may make a square. The whole may (and sometimes does) have a characteristic not possessed by the parts.

Defenders of the vertical form of the cosmological argument are quick to note that sometimes there is a necessary connection between the parts and the whole. For example, if every piece of a floor is oak, then the whole floor is oak. If every tile in the kitchen is brown, then the floor is brown. The reason for this is that it is of *the very nature of* patches of brown tile that when you put more like patches of brown tile, you still have a patch of brown. And putting two triangles together does not necessarily make another triangle. Nevertheless, putting two triangles together will necessarily make another geometric figure.

Likewise, *it is of the very nature of dependent beings that when you put more of them together, you still have a dependent being*. If one thing is dependent for its being, then another dependent being can no more hold it up than can one parachutist save another if neither of their parachutes open.

Some critics respond that the whole is greater than the parts. While the parts are dependent, the whole universe is not. However, either the sum of the parts is equal to the whole or it is more than the whole. If the whole universe is equal to its parts, then the whole must be dependent, just as the parts are. Proof of this is that, when all the parts are taken away, the whole would vanish too. Thus, it must be contingent also.

If, on the other hand, the whole universe is more than the parts and would not vanish were the parts all destroyed, then the “whole” is the equivalent of God. For it is an uncaused,

independent, and eternal, and Necessary Being on which the entire universe depends for its existence.

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Creation and Origins. The Bible’s Hebrew word for “creation” (*bara*) and its Greek counterpart (*ktisis*) are usually reserved for the origin or beginning of things. However, even though God has completed his work of creation (Gen. 2:2 ; Exod. 20:13), he is not finished with his work *in* creation (John 5:17). Belief in a theistic creation and continued preservation of the world are often dismissed today as unscientific (*see* ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE ; BIG BANG ; ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF). This view is built partly on a misunderstanding of the biblical teaching on God’s creation and providence and partly on a naturalistic bias. It is notable that most founders of modern science, who were assuredly scientific in outlook, believed that evidence from the scientific world pointed to a Creator.

This is a study of importance, both in the scientific search for truth, and in Christian faith. God’s literal creation of the universe is vital to Christianity (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ; EVOLUTION ; EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL). In addition to its implications for theism generally, Christians find in the New Testament a direct relationship between the literal creation of Adam (*see* ADAM, HISTORICITY OF) and the most basic Christian teachings.

God’s Work of Origin. There is a difference between God’s work in the *origin* of the world and his work in the *operation* of it. In most biblical references, there is no doubt that the word *creation* refers to the origination of the universe. Where a process may be implied, it is not the creation of the physical universe in view but the propagation of animal or human life.

The Hebrew word *bara* is used of God's operation of the world only rarely, as in Psalm 104:30 and Amos 4:13. It is used of the origin of the world or universe in Genesis 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3, 4; 5:1, 2; 6:7; Deuteronomy 4:32; Psalm 89:11, 12; 148:5; Isaiah 40:26; 42:5; 43:1, 7; 45:8, 12; and Malachi 2:10. The Greek *ktisis* refers to creation in Mark 10:6; 13:19; Romans 1:20; 1 Corinthians 11:9; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; 1 Timothy 4:3, and Revelation 3:14; 4:11, and 10:6.

The Old Testament Word Bara. Genesis 1:1 (cf. 1:21, 27). "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This obviously refers, not to the functioning of the universe, but to its genesis.

Genesis 2:3. "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." The fact that God *rested* (ceased the act of creating) and is still in that rest (Heb. 4:4-5) proves that the word *creation* is used here of the past, singular, unpeated events of origin.

Genesis 2:4. "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens." This places the creation event in the past.

Genesis 5:1-2. The creation of Adam and Eve is also said to be past: "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'man.'"

Genesis 6:7. God cries out to Noah, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them." Though this seems to refer to the humans alive in Noah's time, nonetheless, their *creation as a race* in Adam (Rom. 5:12) was a past event of origin. Of course, God continues with the propagation of the race (Gen. 1:28; 4:1, 25). But the creation of Adam was an event of beginning that was not repeated.

Deuteronomy 4:32. Moses said, "Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of?"

Job 38:4, 7; Psalm 148:5. Of the angels the psalmist says, "he commanded and they were created." Job tells us the angels were already there when God "laid the earth's foundation." So the reference to creation in this psalm returns to the very beginning.

Psalm 89:11-12. Creation is used of all things God made, which are now his and give him glory: "The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it. You created the north and the south; Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name."

Isaiah 40:26; 42:5; 43:1, 7. God created the stars, numbered, and named them, relates Isaiah 40:26. In 42:5 he declares that God "created the heavens . . . [and] the earth and all that comes out of it" (see also Isa. 45:8, 12). God created Jacob and "everyone who is called by my [God's] name" (Isa. 43:1, 7).

Malachi 2:10. Referring to creation of the human race, Malachi says, "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us?" While the race has been propagated since Adam, the Bible makes it clear that it was created in Adam (Gen. 1:27; cf. Rom. 5:12). So the creation of mankind is viewed as an event of origin. Even Jesus referred to it as an event which occurred at "the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female'" (Matt. 19:4).

The New Testament Word Ktisis. Like the Old Testament, the New Testament consistently uses the word creation (*ktisis*) only to refer to a past event of origin.

Mark 10:6. When Jesus says that "at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female,'" he no doubt means creation as a past singularity, not a regular, observable process.

Mark 13:19. "Those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again." This is an unmistakable reference to creation as the point of beginning, not a process of continuing.

Romans 1:20. Paul declared that "since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." Paul refers both to the original work of making the world and the evidence remaining from that creation event.

1 Corinthians 11:9. Original creation of a literal Adam and Eve are in view in the acts by which God made "woman from man" and "for man."

Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16. Ephesians speaks of creation as a past completed action, referring to the "God, who created all things." Paul adds in Colossians that "all things *were created* through him and for him" [Christ].

1 Timothy 4:3. First Timothy 4:3 declares that "God created [all foods] to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth." Now while foods are being produced in the present, the reference here is to the *original* creation of food. This is evident from the use of the aorist tense, indicating completed action. Also, the phrase "to be received" points to the original purpose of the creation of food.

Revelation 3:14. The book of Revelation refers to creation as the past work of God by which things began. John noted Christ's preeminence from the very "beginning of God's creation" (Rev. 3:14; cf. Col. 1:15, 18). The heavenly host around God's throne praise God because by him all things "were created" (4:11). And the angel swore by him "who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it" (10:6; cf. 14:7).

God's Ongoing Creation. Some uses of *bara* and *ktisis* do refer to God's continuing work or providence. God did not cease to relate to the world he had created. He continually operates in it. He sustains its very existence.

Psalm 104:30. "When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth." Here *create* (*bara*) is used, not of the initial *generation* of life, but of its continual

regeneration . The context speaks of God causing “the grass [to] grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate” (vs. 14). It is “He [who] makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains” (Ps. 104:10) and who “bring[s] darkness, [and] it becomes night” (vs. 20). It is a God who continually provides food for all living things (vs. 28). The repeated emphasis is on God’s preservation of his world.

Amos 4:13 . “He [God] who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth—the LORD God Almighty is his name.” *Bara* here seems to be used of God’s work in his creation, not simply of his original work of creation. The word *made* which is often used interchangeably with the word *create* (cf. Gen. 1:26 , 27 ; 2:18) is used in other texts to describe God’s continual providence (cf. Ps. 104:3 , 4 , 10).

Other Descriptions . In numerous ways, the Bible presents God at work. In addition to creating and making, he is “doing” and “causing” the operations of nature. He *sustains* it (Heb. 1:3), *holds it together* (Col. 1:17), causes it to *have being* (Rev. 4:11), *produces* life in it (Ps. 104:14). He is the continual cause of its existence. There would be no reality of creation, past or present, were it not for God.

Comparing Creation and Providence. God’s dual work of creating and preserving the world are often presented in the same passage, even the same verse. Notice these revealing contrasts.

God produced and yet produces. Genesis 1:1 says “God *created* the heavens and the earth” and later he is at work through the land “ *producing* vegetation” (vs. 11). The first was an act of origin; the second was one of operation. Both are the work of God.

God rested and yet is at work. Genesis 2:3 declares that “God *rested*” from his original “work of creating.” But Jesus affirmed that God “*is always at his work*” (John 5:17). The former describes the commencement of his work of creation; the latter depicts the *continuance* of his work in creation.

God laid foundations of earth and yet is making it productive. Psalm 104:5 declares that God “ *set* the earth on its foundations.” A few verses later God is “ *bringing forth* food from the earth” (vs. 14). The first is a work of originating, the second of operating. God does both.

God brought the world into being and yet keeps it in being. In Acts 17:24 the Scriptures teach that God “ *made* the world.” A couple of verses later it says “in him we live and move and *have our being*” (vs. 28). God is both the past cause of its *becoming* and also the present cause of its *being* .

God created the world and yet holds it together. Colossians 1:16 expresses God’s past work as one by which “all things *were created* .” The very next verse explains “in him all things *hold together* .” The former is an act of causing to come to be. The latter is God’s act of causing to continue to be.

God made the universe and yet he still sustains it. Hebrews 1:2 declares that “through him [Christ] he [God the Father] *made* the universe.” Verse 3 reveals that Christ is also “ *sustaining* all things by his powerful word.”

The cosmos was created by God and yet has its being through him. In Revelation 4:11 , the apostle John contrasts God’s works of creation and preservation. He wrote, “by your will they *were created*” and also “ *have their being*.” All things *got* being from God and also still *have* being from him.

The reality of creation deals with origins and present operation. The Creator is necessary, not only to make it, but also to sustain it. No picture of creation is complete that neglects either work.

Explaining God’s Work. As we have seen, God’s work in relation to the world’s existence falls into two broad categories: creating and preserving (providential care). In each of these categories there are three areas of contrast: the actor (God), his acts, and the result of his actions. The acts of God in creation and preservation can be contrasted.

God’s Acts of Creating and Preserving. Scriptures already shown declare that God’s acts are necessary both for the world *coming to be* as well as for it *continuing to be* . There are several ways this may be stated that highlight nuances of the distinction:

- God brought the universe from nothing, and he keeps it from returning to nothing.
- God is the beginning cause and the conserving cause of all that exists.
- God was active in life’s production, and he is active in its reproduction.
- God was operative in the generating of the world, and he actively governs it. Providence refers most specifically to God’s governance of all that exists and occurs.
- God was involved in making the universe, and he is involved in caring for it.
- God is responsible for originating and operating the cosmos.

These can be summarized as a chart:

Acts of Creation	Acts of Preservation/Providence
Creating the world	Preserving the world
Coming to be	Continuing to be
Bringing from nothing	Keeping from nothing
Beginning	Conserving
Producing	Reproducing

Generating	Governing
Making	Caring for
Originating	Operating

God as Actor: Primary and Secondary Causality. By focusing on God as both *Originator* and chief *Operator* of creation, one can see God as both directly and indirectly involved in his world from beginning to end. While he is the *Primary Cause* of all things, God works through *secondary causes*. What we commonly refer to as the processes of nature are, in reality, God's indirect acts through secondary (or natural) causes. In this capacity, God is the *Remote Cause*, while natural forces are *proximate* causes of events. Another way to state this is that God is the *Ultimate Cause*, while nature is the *immediate* cause of most happenings. The relation between God's two roles of *Originator* and *Operator* can be summarized:

Directly, in Creation God is:	Directly, in Providence God Is:
Originator	Operator
Source	Sustainer
Creator	Conserver
Producer	Provider
Indirectly, God Is:	As He Works Through:
Primary Cause	Secondary causes
Remote Cause	Proximate causes
Ultimate Cause	Immediate causes
Original Commander	Subauthorities in chain of command

The Results. God acts in his world in two ways: by *direct intervention* (as in creation) and by *indirect action* (as in preservation). The first is an *immediate* act of God and the other is a *mediate* action. The direct acts of God are *instantaneous*; the indirect ones involve a *process*. Also, God's acts of creation are *discontinuous* with what has gone before. They are *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing") (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF), or *de nova* (brand new). For example, he produced something from nothing, life from nonlife, and the rational from the nonrational. These are discontinuities spanned by a direct act of God (*see* EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL).

Further, God's acts of creation brought about *unique* events of origin, whereas his acts of preservation involve a *repetition* of events. The one produced *singularities* and the other *regularities*. The original creation events are *unobserved* today, but God's operation of the world can be *observed* in the present. The result of God's actions can be contrasted like this:

Result of God's Action(s)

Result of Direct Intervention	Result of Indirect Action
Immediate	Mediate

Instantaneous	A process
Discontinuous with past	Continuous with past
Unique event	Repetition of events
Singularity	Regularities
Unobserved	Observed

This distinction between past singularities and present regularities, both of which are acts of God, is the basis for two kinds of science: origin science and operation science.

Scientific Importance. Until after the lifetime of Darwin, the developers of modern science were creationists, in that they believed in the supernatural origin of the universe and of life. Their number includes:

- Johann Kepler (1571–1630), celestial mechanics, physical astronomy
- Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), hydrostatics
- Robert Boyle (1627–1691), chemistry, gas dynamics
- Nicholas Steno (1638–1687), stratigraphy
- Isaac Newton (1642–1727), calculus, dynamics
- Michael Faraday (1791–1867), field theory
- Charles Babbage (1792–1871), computer science
- Louis Agassiz (1807–1873), glacial geology, ichthyology
- James Simpson (1811–1870), gynecology
- Gregor Mendel (1822–1884), genetics
- Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), bacteriology
- William Kelvin (1824–1907), energetics, thermodynamics
- Joseph Lister (1827–1912), antiseptic surgery
- James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879), electrodynamics, statistical thermodynamics
- William Ramsay (1852–1916), isotopic chemistry

In addition to these founders of scientific and mathematical fields were their forerunners, who also held to supernatural creation. Their number included Roger Bacon, 1220–1292),

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), and Galileo Galilei (1564–1642). With few exceptions, scientists before 1860 were Christians. Newton’s statement is typical of what scientists believed during the first two and one-half centuries of the Enlightenment:

This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. And if the fixed stars are the centres of other like systems, these, being formed by the like wise counsel, must be all subject to the dominion of One. [Newton, 369]

Kepler clarified his motives for doing science when he wrote:

May God make it come to pass that my delightful speculation [*The Mystorium Cosmographicum*] have everywhere among reasonable men fully the effect which I strove to obtain in the publication; namely, that the belief in the creation of the world be fortified through this external support, that thought of the Creator be recognized in nature, and that his inexhaustible wisdom shine forth daily more brightly. [cited in Holton, 84]

Not only were founders of modern science creationists, but the very concept of creation was a significant factor in the impetus for science. M. B. Foster, writing in the prestigious English journal, *Mind* , in 1934 observed that:

The general question arises: What is the source of the un-Greek elements which were imported into philosophy by the post-reformation philosophers, and which constitute the modernity of modern philosophy? And . . . what is the source of those un-Greek elements in the modern theory of nature by which the peculiar character of the modern science of nature was to be determined? The answer to the first question is: The Christian revelation, and the answer to the second: The Christian doctrine of creation. [Foster, 448]

The Turn to Naturalism. After Charles Darwin (1809–1882) published *On The Origin of Species* in 1859, the scene changed radically. At first a naturalistic explanation of species became dominant (*see* NATURALISM). However, added to the last paragraph of the second edition of his bombshell book, Darwin made the disclaimer that he was not insisting on a naturalistic explanation of the origin of the first living thing(s). He wrote, “There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one.” Although Darwin believed life arose in a “warm little pond,” he did not attempt a totally naturalistic explanation of the universe (*see* EVOLUTION, COSMIC), though his view naturally pointed in that direction. Ultimately, such naturalistic explanations gained dominance.

Fallacies of Antisupernaturalism. The naturalistic bias in science is due to the rise of antisupernaturalism following the work of Benedict Spinoza , who argued that miracles are impossible, and David Hume , who insisted that the miraculous is incredible. Both of these arguments have flaws, as shown in the article MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST .

Indeed, much has happened in late-twentieth-century science to turn attention back to a supernatural Creator, especially by way of the big bang view, the anthropic principle, and developments in molecular biology.

Origin Science and Operation Science. Connected with an antisupernatural presupposition, the current scientific rejection of creationist views is based on a failure to distinguish between *operation science* , which deals with observed present regularities, and *origin science* , the speculative reconstruction of unobserved past singularities. The former is an empirical science; the later operates more like a forensic science. Neither macro-evolution nor creation is an operational science. Both operate on the principles of origin science (*see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF). Creation is just as much a science—an origin science—as is macro-evolution.

Theological Importance. It is the created world that manifests God’s glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1 KJV). The psalmist declared: “O LORD , our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens” (Ps. 8:1). From this statement flows the basis for theistic worship.

That creatures are to worship is evident throughout Scripture. John wrote that in heaven the glory of creation will be a theme for praise. The righteous will sing: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Rev. 4:11).

Paul affirmed that this worship mandate extends to all humanity and that no one is truly ignorant of the need to worship the Creator: “Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen.” However, “they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:19–20).

Because the universe is created, and is not God, it is idolatry to worship it or any part of it. The cosmos is not made of God-stuff; it is made by God from nothing. See the section on creation *ex nihilo* in CREATION, VIEWS OF . It is a grievous sin to worship and serve the “created things rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). For this reason the Bible strongly condemns idolatry. God commanded: “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” (Exod. 20:4). God is as different from the world as a potter is different from the clay pot (Rom. 9:20–21). Admiration and worship should go to the Craftsman, not the thing made.

Social/Ethical Importance. *Creation Sanctifies Marriage.* Jesus rooted the moral basis for marriage in the literal creation of Adam and Eve. Responding to the question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” (Matt. 19:3), Jesus said, “Haven’t you read . . . that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one

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flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (vss. 4–6).

Creation Endows Humans with Dignity. Moses said that *killing* humans was wrong because "in the image of God has God made man" (Gen. 9:6). James added that *cursing* other humans is wrong for the same reason: "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness" (James 3:9).

Creation Gives Meaning to Morality. All moral principles (see MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF). are rooted in the absolute perfection and unchangeable nature of God (see GOD, NATURE OF). Creation most particularly speaks to moral principles related to relationships among human beings as fellow image-bearers of God. For example, the prohibition against killing another human being is because only God gives and has the right to take away human life (Gen. 9:6 ; Job 1:21). We dare not do the same without authorization, because we did not create human life and do not own it. Our moral responsibility to protect and preserve human life springs from the fact that it is created by God.

Creation Unifies Humanity. God created Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:27), and commanded them to bear children (1:28), which they did (5:1). All human beings are their descendants (1 Chron. 1:1 ; Luke 3:38). On the basis of this doctrine of human unity in the first parents, Paul declares to the Greek philosophers that, from one, God made every nation (Acts 17:26–29). Malachi asked, "Have we not all one father? Did not one God create us?" (2:10). One implication of this created unity is that racism is both morally wrong before the Creator and it is incorrect. There is one race only, the Adamic race, which is divided into ethnic groups. Inter-marriage among these groups is permitted. Ethnic hatred is a direct attack on God's design.

Creation Defines Sexual Equality. The doctrine of creation opposes attempts by either men or women to assert preeminence over the other. Despite charges leveled against conservative Christians to the contrary, abusive and demeaning behavior violates the teaching of Scripture. God declares that both sexes are equal in his sight: "God created them, male and female . . . in his image" (Gen. 1:27). This is equality in essence. Jesus repeated this truth in Matthew 19:4 . Likewise the apostle Paul noted the interdependence of man and woman: "Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. . . . However, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God" (1 Cor. 11:9–12).

Creation Legitimizes Government Authority. The Bible declares that "there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" (Rom. 13:1). In Genesis 9:6 , stated above, the image of God in created humanity is so important that murderers are to be executed. Protection of human life and punishment of those who violate it became a function of government. According to the apostle Paul, the one who governs "is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Rom. 13:4b).

Creation Grounds Roles and Authority. Male leadership or headship is a contentious issue in churches where members hold to the biblical view of creation. It is not that conservative Christians (men and women) are misogynists, as feminist-rights advocates frequently charge. Equal value and respect of men and women and an order that stresses male headship are taught in Genesis and applied to the church in the New Testament.

Paul states the principles strongly in 1 Timothy 2:11–14 : "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner." In regard to the family authority structure, Paul wrote: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. . . . For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:3 , 8–9). It is evident here that the order of creation is given as one basis for the authority structure within a family.

Both by order of creation and Adam's role as head of the covenant between God and humanity, the authority structure in home and church was established through the male. Adam's was the ultimate responsibility to keep the provisions of the covenant. It was his sin that brought death to the human race (see, for example, Rom. 5:12–14).

In a brief mention of a complex issue, it must be stressed that this mandate must not be considered grounds for denying the essential equality of male and female (see above). God's plan for separate roles does not speak to relative importance or value in the spiritual body of Christ where "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Creation and Fall Are Related to Salvation. Romans 5 expressly connects redemption with the literal creation of Adam: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. . . . For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:12 , 17). In this text, the fact of literal death, which all humans experience, is directly connected with a literal Adam and his fall. Likewise, by direct comparison, the literal death of Christ and deliverance from sin is related to this literal Adam.

Creation Is Related to the Resurrection. Citing Genesis 2:24 , Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49 :

"The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

Paul compares a literal Adam and a literal Christ in teaching the meaning of the literal resurrection of Christ. Since Christ is the firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20) of the believer's physical resurrection, the doctrine of Adam's creation connects with that of Christ's resurrection and believers.

Creation Is Related to the Second Coming. The apostle Peter exhorted:

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. [2 Peter 3:1–13]

Peter vividly compares the literal creation of the world and its eventual literal destruction and eventual salvation. The truth of one is interdependent with the other. That is, the believer's confidence in the ultimate purging and restoring of creation is based on the evidence for the creation of the universe.

Conclusion. The God of the Bible is active both in the *origination* and in the *conservation* of the universe. He is the cause of it *coming to be* as well as the cause of it *continuing to be* . The kalam cosmological argument is evidence of the first kind of God's causal relation to the universe (a *horizontal causality*). And the traditional cosmological argument is evidence of God's *vertical causality* in sustaining the universe's existence right now. This last kind of causality stands in contrariety to deism. Both kinds of causality support *ex nihilo* creation. Each corresponds to a kind of science: God's originating causality is the object of *origin science* (*see ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF*), and his conserving causality is the object of *operation science* .

Science would have developed far differently had its founders from Roger Bacon on had the atheistic outlook of much of the late-twentieth-century scientific community. Most strongly believed in a planned theistic creation, with knowable, discoverable laws set in place by a Designer. Post-Darwin prejudice against any supernatural explanation for creation is actually based on a confusion between origin and operation sciences.

Indeed, even redemption is described as a new *creation* (2 Cor. 5:17), which implies connection with the "old" one. Even the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture (*see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR*), flows from the fact that there is a God who can speak the universe into existence (for example, Gen. 1:3 , 6). The apostle Paul declared that the "God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Like his creation, the Word of God comes "from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

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Creation, Views of. Three basic views seek to explain the origin of the universe. Theists (*see* THEISM) hold that all things were created *ex nihilo* , "from nothing." Pantheists (*see* PANTHEISM

) believe the material universe arose *ex Deo* , “out of God,” an aspect of an impersonal God’s being, rather than the work of a cognizant being who acts outside of himself. Materialism (*see* MATERIALISM) affirms creation *ex materia* (out of pre-existing material).

Materialists, including atheists (*see* ATHEISM) and dualists (*see* DUALISM), think that origins do not involve creation at all, if *creation* is defined as the executed work of a being. For comparison, however, materialism and pantheism can be joined under the rubric of creation. Materialistic origin can be called *Creation ex materia*, “from matter.”

Creation ex Materia. A materialistic (or dualistic) view of existing things usually asserts that matter (or physical energy) is eternal. Matter always has been, and for that matter, always will be. As the physicist claims in the first law of thermodynamics, “energy can neither be created nor destroyed.”

There are two basic subdivisions in the “creation-out-of-matter” view: those that involve a God and those that do not.

God Created Out of Preexisting Matter. Many ancient Greeks (dualists) believed in creation by God out of some previously existing, eternal “lump of clay” (see Plato, 27f.). That is, both God and the “stuff” of the material universe (cosmos) were always there. “Creation” is the eternal process by which God has been continually giving shape to the stuff of the universe.

Plato called matter the *formless* (or chaos). God was the *Former* (or *Demiurgos*). Using an eternal world of *forms* (ideas), God gave shape or structure to the formless mass of matter. The Former (God), by means of the forms (ideas which flowed from the form), formed the formless (matter) into the formed (cosmos). In Greek terms, the *Demiurgos*, by means of the *eidōs* (Ideas), which flowed from the *agathos* (good), formed *chaos* into a *cosmos* . Elements of platonic dualism can be disassembled easily:

Matter is eternal. The basic stuff of the universe has always been. There never was a time when the elements of the physical universe did not exist.

“Creation” means formation, not origination. “Creation” does not mean bringing something into existence. Rather, it means formation. God organizes matter that is.

The “Creator” is a Former, not a Producer. So *Creator* does not mean *Originator* , but *Builder* . God is an Architect of the material universe, not the Source of all things.

God is not sovereign over all things. Such a God is not in ultimate control, for there is something eternal besides God. Eternal matter stands in dualistic tension with God, and he cannot do anything about it. He can shape matter within certain parameters. Just as there are limits on what can be made out of paper (it is good for making kites but not space ships), so the very nature of matter is a handicap. Both the existence and nature of matter place limits on God.

There Was No God to Do the Creating. A second view is generally called atheism , although many agnostics (*see* AGNOSTICISM) hold nearly the same worldview. An atheist says there is no

God; an agnostic claims not to know whether there is a God. But neither believes it necessary to posit God in order to explain the universe. Matter is simply there. The universe is ultimately all that exists. Even mind came from matter.

The strict materialist responds to the question of where the universe came from with the question: Where did God come from? The materialist’s worldview makes the question nonsensical, because the universe fills much of the conceptual place normally reserved for the Creator (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF).

That creation came out of matter has been held by thinkers since the ancient atomists (*see* ATOMISM). Karl Marx (1818–1883) was the modern philosopher who sought to carry materialism to its ultimate conclusion in socialism (Marx, 298). A century later, astronomer Carl Sagan popularized the view on television and in popular books. Much of the Western world heard Sagan’s creed: “*The Cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be*” (Sagan, 4). Humanity is simply stardust pondering stars. Human beings created God. As Marx put it, mind did not create matter; matter created mind (Marx, 231).

Granting the eternal existence of matter and motion, the atheist explains everything else by the doctrines of *natural evolution* (*see* EVOLUTION, COSMIC) and *natural laws* . Natural evolution (*see* EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL) works by the interaction of *matter, plus time, plus chance* . Even the complexities of human life can be explained by the purely natural laws of the physical universe. Given enough time, monkeys at a typewriter can produce the works of Shakespeare. No intelligent Creator is necessary.

The Tenets of Creation ex Materia. Nontheism’s concept of origins can be summarized under four points:

Matter Is Eternal. As noted above, the central premise of materialism is that matter has always been. Or, as one atheist put it, if matter came to be, it came into existence *from* nothing and *by* nothing (Kenny, 147). The material universe is a self-sustaining and self-generating closed system. Isaac Asimov speculated that there was an equal chance that nothing would come from nothing or that something would come from nothing. As luck would have it, something emerged (Asimov, 148). So either matter is eternal or else it came from nothing spontaneously without a cause.

The original materialists, atomists (*see* ATOMISM), believed matter to be a mass of innumerable indestructible pellets of reality called atoms. With the splitting of the real atom and emergence of Albert Einstein’s theory of $E = MC^2$ (Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared), materialists now speak of the indestructibility of energy (the first law of thermodynamics). Energy does not pass out of existence; it simply takes on new forms. Even at death, all the elements of our being are reabsorbed by the environment and reused by other things. So the process goes on.

No Creator Is Necessary. Strict materialism demands the premise of atheism or nontheism. There is no God, or at least there is no need for a God. The world explains itself. As *The*

Humanist Manifesto II put it, “As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity” (Kurtz, 16).

Humans Are Not Immortal. Another implication is that there is no immortal (*see* IMMORTALITY) soul or spiritual aspect to human beings. *The Humanist Manifesto I* rejected “the traditional dualism of mind and body. . . . Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the ‘ghost in the machine’ and the ‘separable soul’ ” (*ibid.*, 8, 16–17). The strict materialist does not believe in spirit or mind at all. There is no mind, only a chemical reaction in the brain. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) defined matter:

The world (I mean not the earth only, that denominates the lovers of it “worldly men,” but the *universe* , that is, the whole mass of all things that are) is corporeal, that is to say, body; and hath the dimensions of magnitude, namely, length, breadth, and depth: also every part of body is likewise body, and hath the like dimensions; and consequently every part of the universe is body, and that which is not body is no part of the universe: and because the universe is all, that which is no part of it is nothing, and consequently nowhere. [Hobbes, 269]

Less stringent materialists admit the existence of a soul but deny that it can exist independently of matter. For them the soul is to the body what the image in the mirror is to the one looking at it. When the body dies, so does the soul. When matter disintegrates, the mind is also destroyed.

Humans Are Not Unique. Among those holding creation out of matter there are differences regarding the nature of human beings. Most accord a special status to humans, as the highest point in the evolutionary process. However, virtually all agree that humans differ only in degree, not in kind, from lower forms of life. Human beings are simply the highest and latest animal form on the evolutionary ladder. They have more highly developed abilities than primates. Certainly humans are not unique *over* the rest of the animal kingdom, even if they are the highest *in* it.

An Evaluation of Creation ex Materia. For a critique of dualism, see FINITE GODISM . The atheist position is critiqued under ATHEISM . Further, the evidence for theism is evidence against an eternal universe (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; THEISM). Contemporary science has provided powerful arguments against the eternity of matter from the big bang cosmology (*see also* EVOLUTION, COSMOLOGICAL).

Creation, ex Deo. While atheists and dualists believes in creation *ex materia* , pantheism holds to creation *ex deo*, out of god. All pantheists fall into one of two categories: absolute and nonabsolute pantheism.

Absolute Pantheism. An absolute pantheist claims that only mind (or spirit) exists. What we call “matter” is an illusion, like a dream or mirage. It appears to exist, but it really does not. This view was defended by two classical representatives, Parmenides from the West (a Greek) and Shankara from the East (a Hindu).

Parmenides argued that all is one (*see* MONISM), because to assume more than one thing exists is absurd (Parmenides, 266–83). Two or more things would have to differ from one another. But the only ways to differ are by something (being) or nothing (nonbeing). It is impossible to differ by nothing, since to differ by nothing (or nonbeing) is just another way of saying there is no difference at all. And two things cannot differ by being because being (or existence) is the only thing they have in common. That would mean they differ in the very respect in which they are the same. Hence, it is impossible to have two or more things; there can be only one being. All is one, and one is all. Nothing else really exists.

In the terminology of creation, this means that God exists and the world does not. There is a Creator but no creation. Or at least we can only say there is a creation by reckoning that creation comes out of god the way a dream comes from a mind. The universe is only the nothing else of which god thinks. God is the totality of all reality. And the unreal about which he thinks and which appears to us is like a zero. It is literally nothing.

Shankara described the relation of the world to God, illusion to reality, by the relation of what appears to be a snake but on closer examination turns out to be a rope (*see* Prabhavananda, 55). When we look at the world, what is there is not reality (Brahman). Rather, it is merely an illusion (*maya*).

Likewise, when a person looks at himself, what appears to be (body) is only an illusory manifestation of what really is (soul). And when one looks into his soul, he discovers that the depth of his soul (Atman) is really the depth of the universe (Brahman). Atman (humanity) is Brahman (God). To think we are not God is part of the illusion or dream from which we must awake. Sooner or later we must all discover that all comes from God, and all is God.

Nonabsolute Pantheism. Other pantheists hold a more flexible and elastic view of reality. While they believe all is one with god, they accept a multiplicity in the unity of God. They believe all is in the one as all radii are in the center of a circle or as all drops merge into one infinite pond. Representatives of this view include the second-century neoplatonic philosopher, Plotinus (205–270), the modern philosopher, Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677), and the contemporary Hindu, Radhakrishnan.

According to nonabsolute pantheism, there are many things in the world, but they all spring from the essence of the One (god). The many are in the One, but the One is not in the many. That is, all creatures are part of the Creator. They come from him the way a flower unfolds from a seed or sparks come from a fire. Creatures are simply many drops that splash up from the Infinite pond, only to eventually drop back in and blend with the All. All things come from God, are part of God, and merge back into God. Technically speaking, for the pantheist, there is no creation but only an emanation of all things from God. The universe was not made out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), nor out of something preexisting (*ex materia*). It was made out of God (*ex deo*).

Significant elements in this pantheistic view of origins can be briefly outlined:

There is no absolute distinction between Creator and creation. Creator and creation are one. They may differ in perspective, as two sides of a saucer, or relationally, as cause to effect. But

creator and creation are no more different than the reflection in a pond differs from the swan swimming on it. One is a mirror image of the other, real thing. Even for those who believe the world is real, Creator and creation are simply two sides of the same coin. There is no real difference between them.

The relationship between Creator and creation is eternal. Pantheists believe that God caused the world, but they insist that he has been causing it forever, just as rays shine forever from an eternal sun. The universe is as old as God. Just as one stone could rest forever on another in an eternal world, so the world could be dependent on God forever.

The world is made of the same substance as God. Pantheists believe God and the world are of the same substance. Both are comprised of god-stuff. The creation is part of the Creator. It is one in nature with God. God is water. God is trees. As Marilyn Ferguson put it, when milk is poured into cereal, God is poured into God (Ferguson, 382)! Ultimately there is only one substance, one stuff in the universe, and it is divine. We are all made of it, so we are all God.

Humanity Is God. If all of creation is the emanation of God, then so is mankind. The pop theologian of New Age pantheism, Shirley MacLaine, believes one can say with equal truthfulness, “*I am God*,” or “*I am Christ*,” or “*I am that I am*” (MacLaine, 112). In her television special miniseries, “Out on a Limb” (January 1987), she waded to the ocean and proclaimed, “I am God. I am God!” Lord Maitreya, believed by many to be the “Christ” of the New Age, declared through Benjamin Creme, his press agent, “My purpose is to show man that he need fear no more, that all of Light and truth rests within his heart, that when this simple fact is known man will become God.”

An Evaluation of Creation ex Deo. There are several ways to evaluate *ex deo* creation. Since it is part of a pantheistic worldview, the criticisms of pantheism apply to it. For example, there is a real distinction between the finite and the infinite, the contingent and the necessary, the changing and the unchanging. And since I am not a necessary or unchanging Being, then I must be a contingent being. But a contingent being is one that *can* not be. And such a being actually exists only because it was caused to exist by God where otherwise it would not have existed. In short, it exists out of nothing (*ex nihilo*).

Second, as the kalam cosmological argument shows, the universe is not eternal. Hence, it came to be. But before it existed it was nothing. Or, more properly, there was nothing (except God), and after he created the world there was something (besides God). This is what is meant by *ex nihilo* creation. Therefore, whatever comes into being (as the universe did) does so from nothing, that is, *ex nihilo*.

Creation ex Nihilo. *Ex nihilo* is from the Latin meaning “from or out of nothing.” It is the theistic view of origins that affirms that God brought the universe into existence without using preexisting material. Theism declares that only God is eternal and that he brought everything else into being without the use of preexisting material and without making the universe out of “pieces” of his own substance. Rather, it was made “from nothing” (*ex nihilo*).

The Coherence of ex Nihilo Creation. Some critics contend *ex nihilo* creation is a meaningless concept. Others claim it is unbiblical, a later philosophical insertion into Christian thinking. The argument that *ex nihilo* creation is incoherent goes like this:

1. To create “out of” implies preexisting material.
2. But *ex nihilo* creation insists there was no preexisting material.
3. Hence, *ex nihilo* creation is a contradiction in terms.

In response, theists deny the first premise, pointing out that “out of nothing” is simply a positive way to state a negative concept—“not out of something.” That is, God did not create the universe out of any preexisting material. The dictum that “nothing comes from nothing” is not to be understood absolutely. It means that something cannot be caused *by nothing*, not that something cannot come *after nothing*. That is, something can be created from nothing but not by nothing. God brought the universe into existence from nonexistence. *Ex nihilo* simply denotes movement from a state of nothing to a state of something. It does not imply that nothing is a state of existence *out of which* God formed something. Nothing (other than God) is a state of nonexistence that preceded the universe coming into being. When atheists and pantheists use the preposition *ex* they mean “out of” in the sense of a material cause. By *ex* a theist means an efficient cause. Midday comes “from morning,” *after* morning but not literally out of it.

The Logic of ex Nihilo Creation. The basis for *ex nihilo* creation is twofold: First, the only logical alternatives are unacceptable. Second, it is the logical conclusion from the First-Cause argument for God’s existence (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT).

The three possibilities. That *ex deo* and *ex materia* creation are incompatible with theism has been shown. Hence, *ex nihilo* creation must be true.

First of all, a theistic God cannot create *ex deo*. Since God is a simple being (*see* GOD, NATURE OF), he cannot take a “part” of himself and make the world. Simplicity means without division or parts. Thus, there is no way the created world can be a part of God. Such a view is pantheism, not theism.

Further, a theistic God is a Necessary Being, *viz.*, one that cannot not be. He cannot come into being or cease to be. Creation is a contingent being; creation is a being that is but can not be. So, it is impossible for creation to be a part of God, since it is contingent and he is necessary. In short, a Necessary Being has no extraneous elements of his being out of which to make something. One might say God has no *parts* with which he can *part*. If he could part with them, they would not be necessary. If they are necessary he cannot part with them. So *ex deo* creation is impossible for a theistic God.

Further, a theistic God cannot create *ex materia*. For the belief that there is something eternal outside of God is not theism but dualism. There cannot be another infinite being outside of God, since it is impossible to have two infinite beings. If there are two, they must differ, and two infinite beings cannot differ in their being, since they are the very same kind of being. Two

univocal beings cannot differ in their being, since that is the very respect in which they are identical. They could only differ if they were different kinds of beings (see ONE AND MANY, PROBLEM OF). Hence, there cannot be two infinite beings.

And if there is one infinite and one (or more) finite being(s), then the finite being cannot be an eternal Necessary Being. It cannot be necessary since it is limited by its potentiality, and any being with the potentiality not to be is not a Necessary Being. It cannot be eternal, since what is limited in its being never reaches to eternity. Therefore, it could not have preexisted forever (see GOD, EVIDENCES FOR).

However, if the universe is not eternal, and if God cannot create out of himself , then he must have created *ex nihilo*, since there is no alternative. For a theist, *ex nihilo* creation is thus proven.

The Argument from the First Cause. The horizontal form of the cosmological argument (see KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT) argues that there is a beginning of the material, space-time universe. But if the universe has a beginning, then it has not always existed. This eliminates creation *ex materia* (out of preexisting material), since there was no material before matter came into existence. There was nothing, and then there was matter which was created by God but not from any preexisting matter. In other words, if all finite being came into existence by a First Cause who always existed, then “before” it existed there was nothing other than the eternal First Cause. Hence, all finite being came into existence out of nonexistence.

Elements of ex Nihilo Creation. The Absolute Difference between Creator and Creation. Christian theism holds that there is a fundamental difference between the Creator and his creation. The following contrasts will focus these differences.

Creator	Creation
Uncreated	Created
Infinite	Finite
Eternal	Temporal
Necessary	Contingent
Changeless	Changing

God and the world are radically different. One is Maker and the other is made. God is the Cause and the world is the effect. God is unlimited and the world is limited. The Creator is self-existing but creation is entirely dependent on him for its existence.

Some illustrations may help to further clarify the real distinction between Creator and creation. In pantheism , God is to the world what a pond is to the drops of water in it, or what a fire is to the sparks that come from it. But in theism God is to the world what the painter is to a painting or the playwright is to a play. While the artist is, in some sense, manifest *in* the art, he is also *beyond* it. The painter is not the painting. Its maker is beyond, over, and above it. The Creator of the world causes it to exist and is revealed in it; but God is not the world.

Creation Had a Beginning. Another crucial element of the theistic view of creation from nothing is that the universe (everything except God) had a beginning. Jesus spoke of his glory with the Father “before the world was” (John 17:5). Time is not eternal. The space-time universe was brought into existence. The world did not always exist. The world did not begin *in* time. The world was the beginning *of* time. Time was not there *before* creation and then at some moment in time God created the world. Rather, it was not a creation *in* time but a creation *of* time.

This does not mean that there was a time when the universe was not. For there was no time before time began. The only thing “prior” to time was eternity. That is, God exists forever; the universe began to exist. Hence, he is prior to the temporal world ontologically (in reality), but not chronologically (in time).

To say that creation had a beginning is to point out that it came into being out of nothing. First it did not exist, and then it did. It was not, and then it was. The cause of that coming to be was God.

Illustrating ex Nihilo Creation. There really are no perfect illustrations of *ex nihilo* creation, since it is a unique event that does not occur in our experience. We only experience something coming from something. Nonetheless, there are imperfect but helpful analogies. One is the creation of a new idea, which brings into existence something that did not exist before. We literally conceive it or conjure it up. We create it, as it were, out of nothing. Of course, unlike the physical universe, ideas are not matter. But like God’s *ex nihilo* creation, they are brought into existence by a creative intelligence.

Another illustration of *ex nihilo* is an act of free will, by which a free agent initiates an action that did not before exist. Since a free choice (see FREE WILL) is self-determined, it did not spring from previous conditions. Hence, much like *ex nihilo*, it does not flow from previous states. Rather, a free choice is not determined by anything else; it literally creates the action itself.

Support for ex Nihilo Creation. One of the oldest extrabiblical recorded statements on creation known to archaeologists, over 4,000 years old, makes a clear statement on *ex nihilo* creation: “Lord of heaven and earth: the earth was not, you created it, the light of day was not, you created it, the morning light you had not [yet] made exist” (*Ebla Archives*, 259). Creation from nothing is clearly expressed outside the Bible in 2 Maccabees 7:28 . It says, “Look at the heavens and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed.”

While the Hebrew word for “creation,” *bara* , does not necessarily mean to create from nothing (cf. Ps. 104:30), nevertheless, in certain contexts it can mean only that. Genesis 1:1 declares: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Given the context that this is speaking about the original creation, *ex nihilo* seems to be implied here. Likewise, when God commanded: “Let there be light,” there was light (Gen. 1:3), *ex nihilo* creation is involved. For light literally, and apparently instantaneously, came to be where previously it was not.

Psalm 148:5 declares: "Let them [angels] praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created."

Jesus affirmed: "And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began" (John 17:5). This phrase is repeated in 1 Corinthians 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:9 . Obviously, if the world had a beginning, then it did not always exist. It literally came into existence out of nonexistence. In this sense, every New Testament passage that speaks of the "beginning" of the universe assumes *ex nihilo* creation (cf. Matt. 19:4 ; Mark 13:19). Romans 4:17 asserts *ex nihilo* creation in very clear and simple terms: "God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were." In Colossians 1:16 the apostle Paul added, "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." This eliminates the view that the visible universe is simply made out of invisible matter, since even the invisible created realm was brought into existence.

In the Apocalypse John expressed the same thought, declaring, "for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being" (Rev. 4:11).

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible declares the doctrine of God's creation of everything else that exists, other than himself, out of nothing.

Criticism of Ex Nihilo Creation. There are several important implications of creation *ex nihilo* . Most of them arise out of misunderstandings of the view.

It Does Not Imply Time before Time. It is objected that the view implies that there was time before time began, since it holds that time had a beginning and yet God existed before (a temporal term) time began. This objection is answered by the theist by pointing out that *before* is not used here as a temporal term, but to indicate ontological priority. Time did not exist before time, but God did. There was no time before time, but there was eternity. For the universe, nonbeing came "before" being in a logical sense, not a chronological one. The Creator is "before all time" only by a priority of nature, not of time. God did not create in time; he executed the creation of time.

It Does Not Imply Nothing Made Something. Sometimes *ex nihilo* creation is criticized as though it affirmed that nothing made something. It is clearly absurd to assert that nonbeing produced being (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF). For in order to create there must be an existing cause, but nonexistence does not exist. Hence, nothing cannot create something. Only something (or someone) can cause something. Nothing causes nothing.

In contrast to nothing producing something, *ex nihilo* creation affirms that Someone (God) made something from nothing. This is in accord with the fundamental law of causality which demands that everything that comes to be is caused. Nothing cannot bring something into existence, but Someone (God) can bring something other than himself into existence, where prior to that it did not exist. So, for theism, creation from nothing does not mean creation by nothing.

It Does Not Imply "Nothing" Is Something. When the theist declares that God created "out of nothing," he does not mean that "nothing" was some invisible, immaterial something that God

used to make the material universe. Nothing *means* absolutely nothing. That is, God, and utterly nothing else, existed. God created the universe, and then alone did something else exist.

Conclusion. *Ex nihilo* creation is both biblically grounded and philosophically coherent. It is an essential truth of Christian theism which clearly distinguishes it from other worldviews, such as pantheism (*ex deo*) and atheism (*ex materia*). Objections to *ex nihilo* creation do not stand in the face of careful scrutiny.

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