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Genealogies, Open or Closed. From an apologetic standpoint, the problem of “open” or “closed” genealogies is this: If they are open (have gaps), then why do they appear closed, especially in Genesis 5 and 11 where exact ages at which the children were born are mentioned? If they are closed, then the creation of mankind is placed somewhere around 4000 B.C., which flies in the face of all the historical and scientific evidence for a minimum date for humanity (see GENESIS, DAYS OF). Since they must be either open or closed, there is an apologetic problem either way with regard to the authenticity of the Genesis record.

Solutions to the Problem. Closed Chronology View. According to the closed chronology view, there are no gaps in the list in Genesis 5 and 11. They are both complete and provide all the numbers necessary for determining the age of the human race.

Arguments. In favor of the closed chronology view, different arguments have been offered. The strongest is the *prima facie* argument. The genealogies appear to be closed. For not only is the age given at which the son is born, and his son, and so on, but the total age of the father after he had the son is given. For example, the text says, “When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son . . . and he named him Seth. . . . Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died. When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enos . . .” (Gen. 5:3–6). This wording appears to leave no room for gaps.

With one exception, no lists in the Bible supply missing links in this genealogy. There are only two other lists of this early period covered by Genesis 5 and 11 and both have the same names in them

Genesis 5, 11	1 Chronicles 1:1–28	Luke 3:34–38
Adam	Adam	Adam
Seth	Seth	Seth
Enosh	Enosh	Enosh
Kenan	Kenan	Kenan
Mahalalel	Mahalalel	Mahalalel
Jared	Jared	Jared

Enoch	Enoch	Enoch
Methuselah	Methuselah	Methuselah
Lamech	Lamech	Lamech
Noah	Noah	Noah
Shem	Shem	Shem
Arphaxad	Arphaxad	Arphaxad
_____	_____	Cainan
Shelah/Salah	Shelah/Salah	Shelah/Salah
Eber	Eber	Eber
Peleg	Peleg	Peleg
Reu	Reu	Reu
Serug	Serug	Serug
Nahor	Nahor	Nahor
Terah	Terah	Terah
Abram	Abram /Abraham	Abraham

The one exception is Cainan (in the Luke 3 list). Otherwise, disregarding the alternate spelling of Salah/Shelah and Abram’s changed name to Abraham, the lists are identical and reveal no gaps. The same names appear in both, with no missing generations apparent.

It is argued that there is no solid evidence for human civilization that goes back farther than about 4000 B.C. So-called fossil “humans” are not descendants of Adam. They have been explained variously as (1) a pre-Adamic race that was wiped out between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 (the gap theory); (2) prehuman creatures that had human-like forms but were not really human; (3) frauds (Piltdown Man) or misinterpretations (like “Nebraska Man,” which turned out to be based on an extinct pig’s tooth).

Finally, closed chronology proponents attempt to explain the one gap in the lists (Cainan, Luke 3:36) as either a textual problem, such as a copyist mistake, or the listing of another son of Arphaxad in addition to Salah. According to this view, Salah and Cainan would be brothers. Hence, Cainan’s name in Luke 3 would not represent a gap in the Genesis and Chronicles complete chronologies.

Objections to the Closed Chronology View. The implausible explanation of Luke 3:36. The attempt to explain away Luke 3:36 as no gap seems highly implausible. There is no real manuscript authority for omitting Cainan from Luke 3:36. That sequence is in all major, and virtually all minor, manuscripts. There is absolutely no indication in the text that Cainan should be listed as a brother of Salah. The grammatical construction is the same for all the other names in the list who were sons. Although the Greek reads “of” or “from” without the word *son*, the translators rightly supply *son* since it is what is implied in every other case in the list. Making

this one an exception, when it has the same construction, is begging the question. There is no precedent in any of the genealogical lists for listing Cainan as anything but the father of Salah.

The only other explanation is that both Genesis 11 and 1 Chronicles are outlines that hit the significant points in the family tree. They have at least one known gap in their genealogies.

Other known gaps. The genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1 has at least one serious known gap, even though the text reads that Jehoram was the father of Uzziah (vs. 8), it is known from 1 Chronicles 3 that three missing generations separate Joram and Uzziah:

Matthew 1:8	1 Chronicles 3:11–12
Jehoram	Jehoram
_____	Ahaziah
_____	Joash
_____	Amaziah
Uzziah	Azariah (more commonly Uzziah)

Now since there are known gaps in the genealogies, even from a strictly biblical point of view the genealogies cannot be considered closed.

Scientific and historical evidence. Even if one takes the most conservative interpretation of what constitutes a human remain of “modern man,” the evidence is still strong that there were human beings around well before 4000 B.C . Peoples appear to have wandered North America since 10,000 B.C . Even if all fossil finds before Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal peoples were not human, there are numerous complete skeletons of these groups dated before 10,000 B.C . Even if one discounts all prehistoric precivilization fossils and speaks only of “civilized” humankind, the time extends several thousand years earlier than 4000 B.C . There was a civilization in Egypt well before this time. Scientific and historical evidence would seem to rule out a closed genealogy.

Open Genealogies. The scientific evidence. Open genealogies are a better solution to the problem.

As already discussed, even discounting the exaggerated claims of supposedly fossil human beings millions of years or even hundreds of thousands of years old, there is strong evidence for the existence for “modern” humans well beyond 4000 B.C ., which a closed genealogy demands.

The biblical evidence. The biblical evidence for an open genealogy with an unknown number of missing generations is supported. First, there are those three missing generations in Matthew 1:8 , even though the Greek *gennaō* (“begat” KJV ; “was the father of” NIV) is used. In biblical Hebrew culture being a *father* was thought in the same light as being a *forefather* or *ancestor* . *Begat* can mean “was the ancestor of.” The word *son* (*ben*) can mean descendant. Jesus was the

kjv King James Version
niv New International Version

“son of David,” though at least thirty-one generations separated David from the Christ (the twenty-eight named in Matt. 1:17 plus the three missing from verse 8 that are found in 1 Chron. 3:11–12).

In another example, a comparison of 1 Chronicles 6:3–14 with Ezra 7:2 reveals that Ezra omits six generations between Seraiah and Ezra:

1 Chronicles 6:6–14	Ezra 7:2
Zerahiah	Zerahiah
Meraioth	Meraioth
Amariah	_____
Ahitub	_____
Zadok	_____
Ahimaaz	_____
Azariah	_____
Johanan	_____
Azariah	Azariah
Amariah	Amariah

There is at least one generation missing even in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogy which *appears* to be closed. This demonstrates that whatever the text *seems* to say, chronology must be interpreted through an open genealogy.

If there are no gaps in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies, implausible examples emerge. For by adding up the numbers one can determine the following dates of birth and death A.A. (after Adam’s creation):

- Adam (1–930 A.A.)
- Seth (130–1042 A.A.)
- Enosh (235–1140)
- Kenan (325–1236)
- Mahalalel (395–1290)
- Jared (460–1422)
- Enoch (622–987)
- Methuselah (687–1656)

Lamech (874–1651)

Noah (1056–2006)

Shem (1558–2158)

Arphaxad (1658–2096)

Salah (1693–2126)

Eber (1723–2187)

Peleg (1757–1996)

Reu (1787–2026)

Serug (1819–2049)

Nahor (1849–1997)

Terah (1878–2083)

Abraham (2008–2183)

Isaac (2108–2228)

Jacob (2168–2315)

First, Adam, the first man (*see* ADAM, HISTORICITY OF), would have been a contemporary of Noah's father. For Adam died in the year 930 A.A. (after Adam's creation). Lamech, Noah's father, was born in 874 A.A. This means they were contemporaries for fifty-six years. Likewise, Abraham only missed being a contemporary of Noah by two years. But there is no indication that this is the case.

It is more implausible to assume that Nahor, the grandfather of Abraham, died before his great, great, great, great, great, grandfather Noah. For Noah died 2006 A.A. and Nahor died in 1997 A.A.

Isaac would have been born fifty years before Noah's son Shem died.

In Genesis 10:4 a man (Javan) is said to bring forth peoples, not individuals (e.g., Kittim and Dodanim). The *im* on the end of their names is plural, indicating a plurality of people—a tribe or nation.

If there are no gaps then significant population improbabilities emerge. Numbers 3:19 , 27–28 says that the four sons of Kohath gave rise to the families of the Amramites, Isharites,

Hebronites, and Uzzielites, of which the males alone numbered 8600 only one year after the Exodus. Thus, the grandfather of Moses had in the lifetime of Moses 8600 male descendants alone, 2750 of whom were between the ages of thirty and fifty (Num. 4:36). This would be a very prolific family indeed.

Levi's son Kohath was born before Jacob's descent into Egypt (Gen. 46:11) where Israel stayed for 430 years (Exod. 12:40 , 41). Since Moses was 80 years old at the time of the Exodus (Exod. 7:7) he must have been born more than 350 years after Kohath. Yet Kohath was Moses' grandfather (1 Chron. 6:1–3). This would make the generation between Kohath and Moses (viz., Amram) 350 years long when the life span of Moses' period had already diminished to 120. Well before Moses' time, Abraham died at 175, Isaac at 120, Jacob at 147, and Joseph at 110.

Nowhere does the Bible even suggest a summation of the numbers listed in Genesis 5 and 11 . No chronological statement is deduced from these numbers either in Genesis 5 and 11 or anywhere else in Scripture. There is no total given anywhere in the biblical text of the time that elapsed between creation and Abraham, as there is for the time in Egypt (Exod. 12:40) and the time from the Exodus to Solomon (1 Kings 6:1).

The symmetry of the text argues against it being complete. Scholars have noted that their symmetrical arrangement of Genesis 5 and 11 into groups of ten argues for their compression. Noah is the tenth name from Adam and Terah the tenth from Noah. Each ends with a father who had three sons. This is certainly the case in Matthew 1 where there are three series of fourteen (double-seven, the number of completeness and perfection), for we know three generations are left out in Matthew 1:8 (cf. 1 Chron. 3:11–12).

Objection to the Open Genealogy View. Of objections to the open genealogy view not yet discussed, the most important one is based on the alleged implausible interpretation of the language of Genesis 5 and 11 . It is objected that not only does it seem stretched to find gaps in Genesis 5 or 11 , given the language of the text, but it seems like isogesis (reading into the text) rather than exegesis (reading out of the text). After all, the name of the father and son are given as well as their age when they had this son who became the father of the next son at a certain age. Listing the father's age at the time of the son's birth is without meaning unless he is the immediate son, and there are no gaps.

In response, some important matters must be kept in mind.

First, the Bible comes out of another culture and linguistic setting. Metaphorical imagery can mislead the reader into thinking the Bible is saying something, when it means something different. In Hebrew, as in English, one can speak of the four "corners" of the earth (Isa. 41:9 ; cf. Ezek. 7:2). Is the Bible saying that the world is square? Some critics say so. Yet the earth is also described as a circle or globe (Isa. 40:22). Is it possible that corners is metaphorical language that may mean the geography covered by the four "quarters" of the compass, just as it means when we say it?

Second, as noted in the implausible dates above, even within the Bible there is strong evidence of gaps in the genealogies.

Third, there are ways to understand the text of Genesis 11 that do allow for gaps. The formula phrase “and X lived so many years and begat Y” can mean “and X lived so many years and became the ancestor of Y.” This is not speculation, for in Matthew 1:8 (“Jehoram begat Uzziah”) it means precisely this. “Begat” must mean “became the ancestor of,” since 1 Chronicles 3:11–12 fills in three missing generations between Jehoram and Uzziah. This would not have been an oversight by Matthew, for the genealogy of the line of David was known by every Jewish man.

Allusions to each father’s age at the time of the son’s birth is not necessarily without meaning. Just because we do not know why God included something in the text does not mean there was no purpose for doing so. It is a bit presumptuous to tell God what he should or should not have put in his inspired Word. B. B. Warfield suggests that this information should “make a vivid impression on us of the vigor and grandeur of humanity in those old days of the world’s prime” (Warfield). This detail lends credibility to the fact that people lived to enormously long ages before the flood (*see* SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE). It makes sense to know that men who lived that long did not have children at age sixteen, like men who live only three score and ten. Even discounting Noah’s late age for having children (500), the average age for childbearing in Genesis 5 is over 100 years of age. This is certainly fitting for someone who lives as long as eight hundred or nine hundred years.

Conclusion. The evidence supports the view that the Bible does not give us in Genesis 5 and 11 a closed chronology but an outline genealogy. This is supported by both internal biblical evidence of missing generation(s), even in Genesis 11 , but also by external evidence that humankind dates to long before 4000 B.C . This being the case, there is no real conflict on this matter between the Bible and science nor between the Bible and itself. Open genealogy provides an accurate line of descent for lineage purposes, but it does not satisfy our curiosity about the date of human creation.

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Genesis, Days of. The problem posed by modern science to defenders of the “literal” interpretation of Genesis 1 is legendary: How can there be six literal days of creation when scientific dating has demonstrated that life emerged gradually over many millions of years?

Six Twenty-four-Hour Days. Apologists are quick to note that this problem is acute only for those who hold to six successive, twenty-four hours (= 144 hours) of creation. It does not apply to other twenty-four-hour views nor to the view that interprets “days” to mean long periods of time.

Arguments for Solar Days. The problem is deepened by the fact that there is *prima facie* evidence to indicate that the days of Genesis 1 are indeed twenty-four-hour periods. Consider the following arguments:

The normal meaning of yom. The usual meaning of the Hebrew word *yom* (“day”) is twenty-four hours unless the context indicates otherwise. But the context does not indicate anything but a twenty-four-hour day in Genesis 1 .

The numbers are in series. When numbers are used in a series (1, 2, 3 . . .) in connection with days it refers to twenty-four-hour days. There is no exception to this elsewhere in the Old Testament.

“Evening and morning” is used. The phrase “and there was evening and there was morning” denotes each period. Since the literal twenty-four-hour day on the Jewish Calendar began at sunset and ended before sunset the next day, Genesis 1 must refer to literal days.

The days are compared to a work week. According to the Law of Moses (Exod. 20:11) the Jewish work week of Sunday through Friday was to be followed by rest on Saturday, just as God had done in his six-day week of creation. But we know that the Jewish work week refers to six, successive, twenty-four-hour days.

Life cannot exist without light. According to Genesis 1 , the sun and stars were not made until the fourth day (1:14), but there was life on the third day (1:11–13). However, life cannot exist for long without light. Hence, the “days” must not be long periods of time.

Plants cannot live without animals. Plants were created on the third day (1:11–13) and animals were not created until the fifth day (1:20–23). But there is a symbiotic relation between plants and animals, one depending on the other for its life. For example, plants give off oxygen and take in carbon dioxide and animals do the reverse. Hence, plants and animals must have been created together, not separated by long periods of time.

A Response to the Arguments. In spite of these arguments, the case is less than definitive. Those who reject the six-solar-day view reply:

Day (yom) can mean a long period. Most often the Hebrew word *yom* means twenty-four hours. However, the meaning in Genesis 1 is determined by context, not majority vote. Even in this passage in Genesis 1–2 , *yom* is used of the whole of creation. Genesis 2:4 refers to “the day

(*yom*)” when they were created. The Hebrew word appears elsewhere for long periods, as in Psalm 90:4 (cited in 2 Peter 3:8): “For a thousand years in your sight are like a day (*yom*) that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.”

Numbered days need not be solar. Neither is there a rule of the Hebrew language demanding that all numbered days in a series refer to twenty-four-hour days. Even if there were no exceptions in the Old Testament, it would not mean that “day” in Genesis 1 could not refer to more than one twenty-four-hour period. But there is another example in the Old Testament. Hosea 6:1–2 reads: “Come, let us return to the LORD . He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.” Clearly the prophet is not speaking of solar “days” but of longer periods in the future. Yet he numbers the days in series.

There was a beginning and an end. That this phrase is *often* used in connection with twenty-four-hour days does not mean it is *always* used in this way. Genesis 1 is a good candidate to be an exception. Further, if one is going to take everything in Genesis 1 in a strictly literal way, then the phrase “evening and morning” does not encompass a twenty-four-hour day, but only the late afternoon and early morning. This is considerably less than twenty-four hours. Technically the text does not say the day was composed of “evening and morning” (thus making a twenty-four-hour Jewish day). Rather, it simply says “And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day” (1:5). The phrase may be a figure of speech indicating a beginning and end of a definite period of time, just as we refer to “the dawn of world history” or the “sunset years of one’s life.”

Finally, if every day in this series of seven is to be taken as twenty-four hours, then why is the phrase “evening and morning” not used of the seventh day? In fact, as we shall see, the seventh day is not twenty-four hours, and thus there is no necessity to take the other days as twenty-four hours either, since all of them alike use the same word *yom* and have a series of numbers with them.

The six periods are comparable to a work week. It is true that the creation week is compared with a work week (Exod. 20:11). However, it is not uncommon in the Old Testament to make unit-for-unit rather than minute-for-minute comparisons. For example, God appointed forty years of wandering for forty days of disobedience (Num. 14:34). And in Daniel 9:24–27 , 490 days equal 490 years.

We know the seventh day is more than twenty-four hours, since, according to Hebrew 4 , the seventh day is still going on. For Genesis says “on the seventh day he [God] rested” (2:2), but Hebrews 4:5–10 informs us that God is still in that Sabbath rest into which he entered after he created.

When did light appear? Light was not created on the fourth day, as defenders of the solar day argue. Rather, it was made on the very first day, when God said, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). As to why there was light on the first day and the sun did not appear until the fourth day, there are two possibilities. Some scholars have noted a parallelism between the first three days (light, water, and land—all empty) and the second three days (light, water, and land—all filled with

bodies). This may indicate a parallelism in which the first and fourth days cover the same period of time. In that case we are dealing with three periods of time, not six, and the sun existed from the beginning. Others have argued that, while the sun was created on the first day, it did not *appear* visually until the fourth day. Perhaps, this was due to a vapor cloud that allowed light through but not the distinct shape of the heavenly bodies emanating the light.

Not all plants, animals are interdependent. If Genesis 1 is a parallel outline for creation, covering three days as suggested above, then the problem of plants and animals being created separately disappears. Also, some plants and animals are interdependent, but not all. Genesis does not mention all the plants and animals but only some.

If the days are six successive periods, then those forms of plant and animal life that need each other could have been created together. In fact, the basic order of events is the order of dependence. For example, many plants and animals can exist without humans (and they were created first), but humans (who are created on the last day) cannot exist without plants and animals.

“Days” as Time Periods. Other orthodox Christians believe the days of Genesis 1 can involve long periods of time. They offer biblical and scientific evidence for this view.

The Biblical Evidence for Long Days. There are many indications in the text of Scripture to support the belief that the creation “days” were longer than twenty-four hours. The following are those most often given in support of this position.

Day (yom) often means time. Returning to word meanings, it should be noted how *yom* is used in the Bible. The word sometimes means a *prophetic day* , a significant future time as in “the day of the LORD ” (Joel 2:31 ; cf. 2 Peter 3:10). As noted above, “A day is as a thousand years” in Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 . And in Genesis 2:4 the word summarizes the entire creation. This indicates a broad meaning of the word *yom* in the Bible that parallels the range of meaning for the English *day* .

As also noted above, Hebrews 4:3–5 teaches that God is still in that seventh-day cessation from creating described as a day in Genesis 2:2–3 . This day, then, is at least 6000 years long, even on the shortest chronologies.

The third day is longer. On the third “day” God not only created vegetation but it also grew to maturity. For the text says “The land *produced vegetation*: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:12 , emphasis added). But to grow from seeds to maturity and produce more seeds is a process that takes months or years.

The sixth day is longer. It would also appear that the sixth day was considerably longer than a solar day. Consider everything that happened during this period of time (*see* Newman, Appendix III):

God created all the many thousands of the land animals (Gen. 1:24–25).

God formed man from dust (Gen. 2:7) as a potter (cf. Jer. 18:2f).

God planted a Garden (Gen. 2:8), suggesting activity involving time.

Adam observed and named all these thousands of animals (Gen. 2:19).

God promised “I will make him a helpmeet” (Gen. 2:18), denoting a subsequent time.

Adam searched for a help mate for himself, apparently among the creatures God had made
“But for Adam no suitable helper *was found* [implying a time of searching]” (Gen. 2:20 ,
emphasis added).

God put Adam to sleep for a time and operated on him, taking out one of his ribs and healing
the flesh (Gen. 2:21).

Adam indicated he had anticipated Eve for some time (Gen. 2:23).

Eve was brought to Adam who observed her, accepted her, and was joined to her (Gen.
2:22–25).

It seems highly unlikely that all of these events, especially the second, were compressed
within a twenty-four-hour period.

The Scientific Evidence for Long Days. Most scientific evidence sets the age of the world at
billions of years. The age of the universe is based on the speed of light and the distance of the
stars as well as the rate of expansion of the universe. Early rocks have been dated in terms of
radioactivity and set at billions of years old. Simply given the rate that salt runs into the sea and
the amount of salt there would suggest multimillions of years (*see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF).

Views of the Genesis Days. If, of course, the days of Genesis are long periods of time, then
there is no conflict with modern science on the age of the earth. But even if the days of Genesis
are twenty-four hours there are still ways to reconcile long periods of time with Genesis 1 –.

Revelatory Day View. Some conservative scholars have suggested that the “days” of Genesis
may be days of *revelation*, not really days of *creation* (Wiseman). That is, it took God a literal
solar week (of 144 hours) to reveal to Adam (or Moses) what he had done in the ages before
humans were created. Even the Exodus passages (20:11) which speak of the heavens and earth
being “*made*” (*asah*) in six days can mean “revealed.”

Just as a prophet can get revelation from God looking forward to a future series of events (cf.
Daniel 2 , 7 , 9 ; Revelation 6–19), even so God can reveal a past series of events to one of his
servants. Indeed, Moses was on the holy mountain for forty days (Exod. 24:18). God could
have taken six of these days to reveal the past creation events to him. Or after God created
Adam, he could have taken six literal days to reveal to him what he had done before Adam
arrived on the scene. Some scholars believe this material could have been memorized and passed

on as the first “history of the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 2:4), just as the other “histories” (lit.,
“genealogies”) were apparently recorded and passed on (for example, Gen. 5:1 ; 6:9 ; 10:1).

Alternate Day-Age View. Other evangelical scholars have suggested that the “days” of
Genesis are twenty-four-hour periods of time in which God created the things mentioned, but
that they are separated by long periods in between. This would account for both the indications
of great lengths of time in Genesis 1 and indications that there were twenty-four-hour days
involved.

Gap Theories. C. I. Scofield made popular the view that there could be a great gap of time
between the first two verses of the Bible into which all of the geological ages fit. In this way the
days could be twenty-four hours each and yet the world could be many millions of years old or
more.

Others believe that there may be a “gap” or, better, a lapse of time before the six, twenty-
four-hour days of Genesis begin. In this case, the first verse of the Bible would not necessarily
refer to the original *ex nihilo* creation of God (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF) but more recent acts of
God in forming a world he had previously created (see Waltke).

So there are ways to accommodate long periods of time and still accept a basically literal
understanding of Genesis 1–2 . There is no necessary conflict between Genesis and the belief
that the universe is millions or even billions of years old.

How Old Is the Earth? There seems to be no way to prove how old the universe really is,
either from science or from the Bible. There are known and possible gaps in the biblical
genealogies. And there are unprovable presuppositions in all the scientific arguments for an old
earth, that is, an earth of millions or billions of years old.

Gaps in the Biblical Record. Bishop James Ussher (1581–1656), whose chronology was used
in the old Scofield Bible, argued that Adam was created 4004 B.C . However, his calculations are
based on the assumption that there are no gaps in the genealogical tables of Genesis 5 and 11 .
But we know this is false (*see* GENEALOGIES, OPEN OR CLOSED). For the Bible says “Arphaxad .
. . . became the father of Salah” (Gen. 11:12), but in Jesus’ genealogy in Luke 3:36 “Cainan” is
listed between Arphaxad and Salah (Shelah). If there is one gap there may be more. Indeed, we
know there are more. For example, Matthew 1:8 says “Joram the father of Uzziah,” but the
parallel listing in 1 Chronicles 3:11–14 illustrates missing generations between Joram and
Uzziah (Azariah), namely, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah. Just how many gaps there are in
biblical genealogies and how long a time gap this represents is not known. But gaps there are
and, hence, complete chronologies cannot be made, only accurate genealogies (lines of descent)
are given.

Presuppositions in the Scientific Arguments. There are many scientific arguments for an old
universe, some of which are persuasive. However, none of these arguments is foolproof, and all
of them could be wrong. A few examples will illustrate the point of why we should not be
dogmatic.

The speed of light may change. In spite of the fact that Einstein considered it absolute, and modern science has held it to be unchanging, it cannot be proven that the speed of light has never changed. Yet the speed of light (ca. 186,000 miles a second) is assumed for many proofs of an old earth. However, *if* the speed of light is constant and *if* God did not also create the light rays when he created the stars, then it would appear that the universe is billions of years old. For it has apparently taken millions of years for that light to get to us. But these are big “*ifs*” that have not been proven. Indeed, they would appear to be unprovable. So, while the argument from the speed of light to an old universe may seem plausible, it is not a demonstrable proof.

Radioactive dating makes assumptions. It is well known that U235 and U238 give off lead isotopes at a known rate. By measuring the amount of their deposit one can calculate when the decay began. Many early rocks in the earth’s crust have been dated in the billions of years by this method. But again, as plausible as this may be, it is not proven. For one must assume at least two things to come to the conclusion that the world is billions of years old. First, it must be assumed that there were no lead deposits at the beginning. Second, one must assume that the rate of decay has been unchanged throughout its entire history. Neither can be proven. Hence, there is no way to prove by radioactive dating that the world is billions of years old.

There is no conflict. The same is apparently true of all arguments for an old earth.

For example, the oceans have a known amount of salt and minerals in them and these go into the ocean at a fixed rate every year. By simple mathematics it can be determined how many years this has been going on. However, here too it must be assumed that there were no salts and minerals in the ocean at the start and that the rate has not changed. A worldwide flood, such as the Bible describes, would certainly have changed the rate of deposits during that period.

All of this is not to say that the universe is not billions of years old. It may be. However, the arguments in favor of great age all possess presuppositions that cannot be proven. With this in view, the following conclusions are appropriate: There is no demonstrated conflict between Genesis 1–2 and scientific fact. The real conflict is not between God’s *revelation* in the Bible and scientific *fact*; it is between some Christian *interpretations* of the Bible and many scientists’ *theories* about the age of the world.

Indeed, since the Bible does not say exactly how old the universe is, the age of the earth is not a test for orthodoxy. In fact, many orthodox, evangelical scholars hold the universe is millions or billions of years old, including Augustine, B. B. Warfield, John Walvoord, Francis Schaeffer, Gleason Archer, Hugh Ross, and most leaders of the movement that produced the famous “Chicago Statement” on the inerrancy of the Bible (1978).

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Gnostic Gospels. See GNOSTICISM ; GOSPEL OF THOMAS ; NAG HAMMADI GOSPELS .

Gnosticism. The Gnostics followed a variety of religious movements that stressed *gnosis* or knowledge, especially of one’s origins. Cosmological dualism was also a feature of the system—opposed spiritual worlds of good and evil. The material world was aligned with the dark world of evil.

No one is certain of the origins of Gnosticism. Some believe it was rooted in a heretical group within Judaism. Supporters of this theory cite *The Apocalypse of Adam* and *The Paraphrase of Shem* as early Gnostic documents revealing Jewish origins. Others give it a Christian context. An incipient form may have infiltrated the church in Colosse. Or it may have had a totally pagan root. During the second through the fourth centuries it was addressed as a major threat by such church fathers as Augustine, Justin Martyr, *Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen.

Early Sources. Irenaeus’s book *Against Heresies* provides extensive treatment of what Gnostics believed. Three Coptic Gnostic codices were published. Two were discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945. Codex Askewianus contains *Pistis Sophia* and Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae contains *The Book of Jeu*. Best known among the Nag Hammadi documents is the *Gospel of Thomas*. A third work from this period, Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae, was found elsewhere and published in 1955. It contains a *Gospel of Mary* [Magdalene], a *Sophia of Jesus*, *Acts of Peter*, and an *Apocryphon of John*. The first translation of a tractate, *The Gospel of Truth*, appeared in 1956, and a translation of fifty-one treatises, including *Gospel of Thomas*, appeared in 1977.

Leaders. The early fathers of the church held that Gnosticism had first-century roots and that Simon the Sorcerer of Samaria (Acts 8) was the first Gnostic. According to church fathers, Simon practiced magic, claimed to be divine, and taught that his companion, a former prostitute, was reincarnated Helen of Troy. Hippolytus (d. 236) attributed the *Apophysis Megale* to Simon. Simon’s disciple, a former Samaritan named Menander, who taught in Syrian Antioch near the

end of the first century, taught that those who believed in him would not die. That claim was nullified when he died.

At the beginning of the second century, Saturninus (Satornilos) asserted that the incorporeal Christ was the redeemer, denying that Christ was really incarnated in human flesh. This belief is shared with docetism. In this period Cerinthus of Asia Minor was teaching adoptionism, the heresy that Jesus was merely a man upon whom Christ descended at his baptism. Since Christ could not die, he departed from Jesus before his crucifixion. Basilides of Egypt was called both a dualist by Irenaeus and a monist by Hippolytus.

One of the more controversial, though atypical, Gnostics was *Marcion of Pontus. He believed that the God of the Old Testament was different from the God of the New Testament and that the canon of Scripture included only a truncated version of Luke and ten of Paul's Epistles (all but the pastoral Epistles). His views were severely attacked by Tertullian (ca. 160s–ca. 215). Marcion became a stimulus for the early church to officially define the limits of the canon (*see* APOCRYPHA, OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS ; BIBLE, CANONICITY OF).

Valentinus of Alexandria was another prominent Gnostic. He came to Rome in 140 and taught that there were a series of divine emanations. He divided humanity into three classes: (1) Hylics or unbelievers, who were immersed in material and fleshly nature; (2) psychics or common Christians, who lived by faith and pneumatics; and (3) spiritual Gnostics. His followers included Ptolemaeus, Heracleon, Theodotus, and Marcus. Heracleon's interpretation of John is the first known New Testament commentary.

Gnostic-like beliefs persisted into the fourth century. Among the late manifestations was Manichaeism, a dualistic cult that trapped Augustine in his pre-Christian life. Against it he wrote many treatises, which are collected in *The Anti-Manichaean Writings* in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

Teachings. Since Gnosticism lacked a common authority, it encompassed a variety of beliefs. Central to many, if not most, were:

1. a cosmic dualism between spirit and matter, good and evil;
2. a distinction between a finite Old Testament God, *Yahweh*, who was equated with Plato's Demiurge or Craftsman, and the transcendent God of the New Testament;
3. view of creation as resulting from the fall of Sophia (Wisdom);
4. identification of matter as evil;
5. belief that most people are ignorant of their origins and condition;
6. identification of sparks of divinity that are encapsulated in certain spiritual individuals;

7. faith in a docetic Redeemer, who was not truly human and did not die on the cross. This Redeemer brought salvation in the form of a secret *gnosis* or knowledge that was communicated by Christ after his resurrection.
8. a goal of escaping the prison of the body, traversing the planetary spheres of hostile demons, and being reunited with God;
9. a salvation based not on faith or works, but upon special knowledge or *gnosis* of one's true condition;
10. a mixed view of morality. Carpocrates urged his followers to engage in deliberate promiscuity. Epiphanes, his son, taught that licentiousness was God's law. Most Gnostics, however, took a strongly ascetic view of sexual intercourse and marriage, contending that the creation of woman was the source of evil and procreation of children simply multiplied the number of persons in bondage to the evil material world. Salvation of women depended on their one day becoming men and returning to the conditions of Eden before Eve was created. Oddly enough, women were prominent in many Gnostic sects.
11. interpretation of baptism and the Lord's supper as spiritual symbols of the *gnosis* ;
12. view of the resurrection as spiritual, not physical (*see* RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF). In the Nag Hammadi codices *De Resurrectione* affirms that

The Saviour swallowed up death. . . . For he laid aside the world that perishes. He changed himself into an incorruptible aeon and raised himself up, after he had swallowed up the visible by the invisible, and he gave us the way to immortality. . . . But if we are made manifest in this world wearing him, we are his beams and we are encompassed by him until our setting, which is our death in this life. We are drawn upward by him like beams by the sun, without being held back by anything. This is the spiritual resurrection which swallows up the psychic together with the fleshly. [Malinine, 45]

Gnosticism as an organized movement acknowledging its source all but died. The sole surviving remnant is in southwestern Iran. However, many Gnostic teachings live on among new agers, existentialists, and Bible critics. The revival of interest in the Gospel of Thomas by the Jesus Seminar is a case in point. There is also a tendency, even among some evangelical scholars (see Geisler), to deny the physical nature of the resurrection. However, Gnosticism lives today in the New Age Movement in an extensive way (Jones).

Evaluation. Gnosticism was thoroughly critiqued by the early church fathers, especially Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, and Origin, though Origin bought into some of their views. Marcion's view of the canon is critiqued in the articles Apocrypha, New Testament, and BIBLE, CANONICITY OF . For more on Gnosticism see the articles CHRIST, DEATH OF ; DOCETISM , and DUALISM .

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God, Alleged Disproofs of. Many theists offer proofs for God. Likewise, devout atheists (*see* ATHEISM) have offered what they consider to be disproofs of God corresponding to the ontological argument, the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, and the moral argument. Specific arguments by nontheists against the apologetic arguments are covered in GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR .

An Ontological Disproof of God. One atheist argued as follows (see Findlay, 111f.):

1. God is by definition a necessary existence.
2. But necessity cannot apply to existence.
3. Therefore, God cannot exist.

In support of the crucial second premise he noted that necessity is a logical term, not an ontological one. That is, necessity applies to propositions, not to being or reality.

Theists point out that the second premise is self-defeating. It is a necessary statement about existence that claims that no necessary statements can be made about existence. Who said

necessity cannot apply to existence? This legislates meaning rather than listens to it. In fact, the very criterion by which one concludes that necessity cannot apply to existence is arbitrary. There is no necessity to accept it.

A Cosmological Disproof of God. This argument against God can be stated:

1. God is a self-caused being (see Sartre, 758, 762).
2. But it is impossible to cause one's own being, for a cause is prior to its effect, and one can't be prior to oneself.
3. Therefore, God cannot exist.

This argument commits the straw-man fallacy in the first premise. Theists do not hold that God is a *self-* caused being. This is a contradictory concept. Rather, theists define God as an *un* caused being, which is not contradictory. Even atheists believe that the universe is uncaused, having always existed. But if God is not defined as a self-caused being, then the disproof fails.

A Teleological Disproof of God. A teleological argument against God's existence can be stated (see Hume, Part 8):

1. The universe was either designed or else it happened by chance.
2. But chance is an adequate cause of the universe.
3. Therefore, the universe was not designed.

In support of the second premise, two lines of argument have been offered. First, in an infinite amount of time every combination will occur, no matter what the odds against it. Second, no matter what the odds against something happening, it can still happen and sometimes does.

Theists note that this falls short of a disproof, since it is not logically necessary. Second, even as an argument (but not a disproof) it has serious problems. The evidence is much stronger that the universe had a beginning, since it is running out of usable energy (*see* THERMODYNAMICS, LAWS OF ; BIG BANG THEORY), and since an infinite number of moments before today could not have elapsed, no infinite series can be traversed (*see* KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). Further, science is not based on chance but on observation and repetition. These principles inform us that anything as complex as life does not occur without an intelligent cause.

A Moral Disproof of God. The moral argument against God is by far the most popular (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF). A common version of this argument goes this way (see Bayle, 157f.):

1. An all-good God would destroy evil.
2. An all-powerful God could destroy evil.

3. But evil is not destroyed.
4. Therefore, as such God does not exist.

This argument also falls short of being a disproof because the first premise is ambiguous and the third premise fails to fully state the actual conditions. First of all, *destroy* is ambiguous. If it means “annihilate,” then God cannot destroy all evil without destroying all freedom (*see* FREE WILL). But no atheist wants freedom to disbelieve in God taken away. Second, if *destroy* means “defeat,” the third premise fails to add the important word *yet* : “Evil is not *yet* destroyed.” Once this is stated, the argument does not follow, since God may yet defeat evil in the future. If the atheist (*see* ATHEISM) responds by claiming “Evil is not yet defeated *and never will be*,” there is no basis for the statement. Only God knows the future with certainty. So the atheist must be God in order to eliminate God by this kind of reasoning.

The Existential Disproof of God. Existentialist philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, argued:

1. If God exists, then all is determined.
2. But if all is determined, then I am not free.
3. But I am free.
4. Therefore, God does not exist.

My freedom is undeniable. For even the attempt to deny it, affirms it. But if freedom is undeniable, then God cannot exist. For an omniscient being (God) who exists knows everything that will come to pass. Thus, everything is determined, for if it did not come to pass as he knew it would, then God would have been wrong. But an omniscient being cannot be wrong. Therefore, if God exists, everything is determined. But all is not determined, because I am free. Hence, there is no God.

Theists challenge the second premise. There is no contradiction between determination and free choice. God can determine things in accordance with our free choice. They can be determined with respect to his (fore)knowledge and yet free with regard to our choice (*see* DETERMINISM). Just as every event in a video replay of a game is determined, yet it was free (*see* FREE WILL) when the game was played, every event in the world can be determined from God’s perspective, yet free from ours.

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God, Coherence of. See GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR ; PANENTHEISM .

God, Evidence for. The best known arguments for God’s existence are the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, the moral argument , and the ontological argument. Respectively, these are the arguments from *creation* (Gk., *cosmos* , “universe, world”), *design* (Gk., *telos* , “end, purpose”), and the idea of a perfect *being* (Gk., *ontos* , “reality, being”). In addition to these the axiological argument, the anthropological argument, and the argument from religious experience are often used. The axiological argument (Gk., *axios*, “value, worth”) is the argument from making value judgments. It is closely associated with the moral argument, the argument from a moral law to a Moral Law Giver.

The Cosmological Argument. There is a universe rather than none at all, which must have been caused by something beyond itself. The law of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF) says that every finite thing is caused by something other than itself.

There are two basic forms of this argument. The first says that the cosmos or universe needed a cause at its *beginning* , the second form argues that it needs a cause to *continue* existing.

A Cause at the Beginning. The argument that the universe had a beginning caused by something beyond the universe can be stated this way:

1. The universe had a beginning.
2. Anything that had a beginning must have been caused by something else.
3. Therefore the universe was caused by something else (a Creator).

Scientific evidence. Both scientific and philosophical evidence can be used to support this argument. According to the second law of thermodynamics, in a closed, isolated system, such as the universe is, the amount of usable energy is decreasing. The universe is running down, hence cannot be eternal. Otherwise, it would have run out of usable energy long ago. Things left to

themselves, without outside intelligent intervention, tend toward disorder. Since the universe has not reached a state of total disorder, this process has not been going on forever.

Another set of evidence comes from the widely accepted big bang cosmology. According to this view, the universe exploded into being some 15–20 billion years ago. Evidence offered for this includes the (1) “red shift” or Doppler effect noticed in the light from stars as they move away; (2) the radiation echo from space, which has the same wavelength that would be given off by a gigantic cosmic explosion; (3) discovery of a mass of energy such as was expected from an explosion.

Agnostic Robert Jastrow, founder-director of NASA’s Goddard Institute of Space Studies, said, “A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist’s pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation.” But if the universe was created, then it is reasonable to conclude there was a Creator. For everything that has a beginning needs a Beginner.

Philosophical evidence. Time cannot go back into the past forever, for it is impossible to pass through an actual infinite number of moments. A theoretically infinite number of dimensionless points exists between my thumb and first finger, but I cannot get an infinite number of sheets of paper between them no matter how thin they are. Each moment that passes uses up real time that we can never again experience. Moving your finger across an infinite number of books in a library would never get to the last book. You can never finish an infinite series of real things.

If this is so, then time must have had a beginning. If the world never had a beginning, then we could not have reached now. But we have reached now, so time must have begun at a particular point and proceeded to today. Therefore the world is a finite event after all and needs a cause for its beginning. The argument can be summarized:

1. An infinite number of moments cannot be traversed.
2. If an infinite number of moments had to elapse before today, then today would never have come.
3. But today has come.
4. Therefore, an infinite number of moments have not elapsed before today (i.e., the universe had a beginning).
5. But whatever has a beginning is caused by something else.
6. Hence, there must be a Cause (Creator) of the universe.

A Cause Right Now. The previous version of the cosmological argument has been called the “horizontal argument,” since it argues in a linear fashion back to a beginning. This argument is also known as the *kalam* cosmological argument. It was formulated by the Arab philosophers of the Middle Ages and employed by Bonaventure (1217–1274). The contemporary philosopher,

William Craig, has widely published on it. One problem with the argument is that it only argues that there was once a Creator at the beginning of the universe. It does not show the continuing need for a Creator. This is the point of the vertical form of the cosmological argument. The most famous proponent of this argument was Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

Something is keeping us in existence right now so we don’t just disappear. Something not only caused the world to come into being (Gen. 1:1), but something causes it to continue to be (cf. Col. 1:17). The world needs both an originating cause and a conserving cause. This argument answers the basic question: “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 for existence right now on some Independent Being.

Critics respond 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 answer that sometimes there is a necessary connection between the parts and the whole. If every piece of a floor is oak, then the whole floor is oak. And while putting two triangles together does not necessarily make another triangle, putting two triangles together will necessarily make another geometric figure. Being a geometric figure is part of a triangle’s nature, just as being dependent is the nature of everything in the universe. One dependent being cannot sustain another dependent being.

Some critics argue that the whole is greater than the parts, so while the parts are dependent, the whole universe is not. However, this doesn’t work in the case of the universe. If the contingent parts, which together compose the whole, vanish then the universe vanishes. Evidently the entire universe is dependent.

The Teleological Argument. There are many forms of the teleological argument, the most famous of which derives from William Paley’s watchmaker analogy. Since every watch has a watchmaker, and since the universe is exceedingly more complex in its operation than a watch, it follows that there must be a Maker of the universe. In brief, the teleological argument reasons from design to an intelligent Designer.

1. All designs imply a designer.
2. There is great design in the universe.
3. Therefore, there must be a Great Designer of the universe.

Any time we have seen a complex design, we know by previous experience that it came from the mind of a designer. Watches imply watchmakers; buildings imply architects; paintings imply artists; and coded messages imply an intelligent sender.

Also, the greater the design, the greater the designer. Beavers make log dams, but they have never constructed anything like the Golden Gate Bridge. A thousand monkeys sitting at typewriters for millions of years would never produce *Hamlet* by accident. Shakespeare did it on the first try. The more complex the design, the greater the intelligence required to produce it.

It is important to note that by “complex design” is meant *specified complexity*. A crystal, for example, has specificity but not complexity. It, like a snowflake, has the same basic patterns repeated over and over. Random polymers, on the other hand, has complexity but no specificity. A living cell, however, has both specificity and complexity. This kind of complexity is never produced by purely natural laws. It is always the result of an intelligent being. It is the same kind of complexity that is found in a human language. Letter sequence in the four-letter genetic alphabet is identical to that in a written language. And the amount of complex information in a simple one-cell animal is greater than that found in Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary.

Agnostic astronomer, Carl Sagan, unwittingly provided an even greater example. He notes that the genetic information in the human brain expressed in bits is probably comparable to the total number of connections among neurons—about 100 trillion, 10¹⁴ bits. If written out in English, say, that information would fill some 20 million volumes, as many as are stored in the world’s largest libraries. The equivalent of 20 million books is inside the heads of every one of us. “The brain is a very big place in a very small space,” Sagan said. He went on to note that “the neurochemistry of the brain is astonishingly busy, the circuitry of a machine more wonderful than any devised by humans.” But if this is so, then why does the human brain not need an intelligent Creator, as does even the simplest computer?

The Ontological Argument. The ontological argument moves from the conception of a Perfect or Necessary Being to the existence of such a Being. The first philosopher known to have developed the ontological argument (though not the first to call it this) was Anselm (1033–1109). In its simplest form it argues from the *idea* of God to the *existence* of God. There are two forms of the argument: one from the idea of a Perfect Being and the other from the idea of a Necessary Being.

The Perfect Being. According to this statement of the argument the mere concept of God as an absolutely perfect being demands that he exist. Briefly put:

1. God is by definition an absolutely perfect being.
2. But existence is a perfection.
3. Therefore, God must exist.

If God did not exist, then he would be lacking one perfection, namely, existence. But if God lacked any perfection, then he would not be absolutely perfect. But God is *by definition* an absolutely perfect being. Therefore, an absolutely perfect being (God) must exist.

Since the time of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), it has been widely accepted that this form of the argument is invalid because existence is not a perfection. It is argued that existence adds nothing to the concept of a thing; it merely gives a concrete instance of it. The dollar in my mind can have exactly the same properties as the one in my wallet. There is, however, a second form of the ontological argument that is not subject to this criticism.

The Necessary Being. Anselm argued that the very concept of a Necessary Being demands its existence:

1. If God exists, we must conceive of him as a Necessary Being.
2. But by definition, a Necessary Being cannot not exist.
3. Therefore, if a Necessary Being can, then it must, exist.

Since there is no contradiction in the idea of a Necessary Being, it would seem to follow that one must exist. For the very idea of a Necessary Being demands that it must exist. For if it did not exist, then it would not be a necessary *existence*.

Critics to this argument point out a problem: This is like saying: *If* there are triangles, then they must have three sides. Of course, there may not be any triangles. But the argument never really gets past that initial “if.” It never gets around to proving the big question that it claims to answer. It merely *assumes*, but does not prove, the existence of a Necessary Being. It only says that, if a Necessary Being exists—and that is the open question—it must exist necessarily, since that is the only way a Necessary Being can exist, if it exists at all.

The Ontological Argument cannot prove the existence of God, but it can prove certain things about his *nature*. For example, God must necessarily exist, if he exists at all. He cannot cease to exist or exist contingently.

The Argument from Moral Law. The roots of the moral argument for God are found in Romans 2:12–15, in which humankind is said to stand unexcused since there is “a law written on their hearts.” Since the time of Kant this argument has been stated in various ways. The most popular form emanates from C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*. The heart of the argument follows this basic structure:

1. Moral laws imply a Moral Law Giver.
2. There is an objective moral law.
3. Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver.

The first premise is self-evident. Moral laws are different from natural laws. Moral laws don't *describe what is*, they *prescribe what ought to be*. They can't be known by observing what people do. They are what all persons should do, whether or not they actually do.

The weight of the argument rests on the second premise—there is an objective moral law. That is, there is a moral law that is not just prescribed by us but also *for* us. Humans do prescribe proper behavior for other humans. The question is whether there is evidence that a universal, objective prescription binds all humans. The evidence for such a law is strong. It is implied in our judgments that “The world is getting better (or worse).” How could we know unless there were some standard beyond the world by which we could measure it. Such statements as “Hitler was wrong” have no force if this is merely an opinion or Hitler's moral judgments are right or wrong depending on the cultural norms. If he was objectively wrong, then there must be a moral law beyond all of us by which we are all bound. But if there is such a universal, objective moral law, then there must be a universal Moral Law Giver (God).

The Argument from Religious Need. Many people claim not to need God. Sigmund Freud even considered the desire to believe in God an illusion. Is the desire for God based in reality, or is it based in unfulfillable human wishes? Is the basis for belief in God purely psychological, or is it factual? Whether humans feel a need for him, there is good evidence of God's existence. But the desire for God does exist, not as a psychological wish, but from real existential need. This need, in itself, is an evidence for the existence of God.

In skeleton form, the argument from the alleged need for God to his existence goes:

1. Human beings really need God.
2. What humans really need, probably really exists.
3. Therefore, God really exists.

For this argument to have a chance of standing, the second premise must be distinguished from the claim that what one really needs will be found. One may really need water and die of dehydration. However, that is quite different from arguing that one really needs water, and there is no water anywhere.

It would seem irrational to believe that there are real needs in the universe that are unfulfillable. There are many unfulfillable wants, but to suppose that there are unfulfillable needs is to assume an irrational universe. Likewise, it would seem reasonable to assume that, if human beings really need God, there probably is a God, even if not everyone finds him. As with other unfulfilled needs in life, it may be that some look in the wrong place or in the wrong way (cf. Prov. 14:12).

This leads us to the crux of the argument: Do human beings have a real need for God, or is it only a felt need? If there is a real need, then why do not all experience it? For example, most atheists claim that there is no real need for God.

Even Atheists Need God. Religious literature is filled with testimonies from believers who confess that they really need God. The psalmist wrote, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Ps. 42:1). Jeremiah 29:13 declares, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jesus taught that “man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Augustine summarized it well when he said the heart is restless until it finds its rest in God.

What is often not appreciated by unbelievers is the fact that the felt need for God is not limited to unthinking and uncritical religious people. Some of the greatest minds, including the founders of most areas of modern science, confessed their need. Not surprisingly this list includes theologians Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas. But it also includes Galileo Galilei, Nicolaus Copernicus, William Kelvin, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, Blaise Pascal, René Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, John Locke, and Søren Kierkegaard. One can hardly claim that intellectual deficiency led to their perceived need for God.

Dealing with the feelings. But if God is a need for everyone, why does everyone not reflect this need? Surprisingly, there is evidence that they do. Take, for example, the testimony of atheists and agnostics in their more candid moments. Julian Huxley, for example, frankly admitted a type of religious encounter:

On Easter Sunday, early in the morning, I got up at daybreak, before anyone else was about, let myself out, ran across to a favourite copse, penetrated to where I knew the wild cherry grew, and there, in the spring dew, picked a great armful of the lovely stuff, which I brought back, with a sense of its being an acceptable offering, to the house. Three or four Easters running I remember doing this. I was fond of solitude and of nature, and had a passion for wild flowers: but this was only a general basis. . . . But when sanctity is in the air, as at Easter, then it can have free play. [70]

Friedrich Schleiermacher defined religion as a feeling of absolute dependence on the All (Schleiermacher, 39). And even though Freud did not wish to call this feeling religious, he admits to feeling such a dependence. Paul Tillich defined religion as an ultimate commitment (Tillich, 7–8, 30). In this sense of the word *religion* most humanists have a commitment to humanism. *Humanist Manifesto II* says, “commitment to all humankind is the highest commitment of which we are capable” (Kurtz, 23). This is, to borrow Tillich's phrase, an “ultimate commitment.” John Dewey defined the religious as any ideal pursued with great conviction because of its general and enduring value. In this sense humanism certainly involves a religious experience.

Erich Fromm was even willing to use the word *God* of the feeling of ultimate commitment to all humankind. And while he wished to disassociate himself from what he called “authoritarian” beliefs, he did admit that his humanist beliefs were religious. He felt that his devotion to humanity as a whole was a religious devotion. The humanistic object of that devotion he called “God” (Fromm, 49, 54, 87). Jewish existentialist Martin Buber said that the word *God* is the most heavily laden in our vocabulary but insisted that, by loving other persons, one has fulfilled personal religious obligations (Buber, *I and Thou*, 55).

Even the atheistic humanists (*see* HUMANISM, SECULAR) who deny having any religious experience often admit that they once did. Jean-Paul Sartre tells of experiences as a child. He wrote, “Nevertheless, I believed. In my nightshirt, kneeling on the bed, with my hands together, I said my prayers every day, but I thought of God less and less often” (Sartre, 102). Bertrand Russell admitted to once believing in God; so did Friedrich Nietzsche .

The secular religion. Whether past or present experience of devotion to God, to the “All” or to humankind, many humanists admit to some sort of experience that would be called “religious.” And although *Humanist Manifesto I* calls for giving up the belief in any form of extraterrestrial being (see Kurtz, 14–16), many atheistic humanists do insist that they have not thereby forsaken religion. In fact, the religious urge is so great, even in humanists, that August Comte set up a humanist cult with himself as the high priest. In the sense in which the word *religious* is currently defined by dictionaries, philosophers, theologians, and humanists themselves, humanism is a religion.

Due to an interesting series of events the United States Supreme Court has come to recognize secular humanism as a religion. Their ruling in *United States v. Kauten* (1943) allowed exemption to the military draft on the basis of conscientious objection, even if the person did not believe in a deity. The Second Circuit Court stated: “[Conscientious objection] may justly be regarded as a response of the individual to an inward mentor, call it conscience or God, that is for many persons at the present time the equivalent of what has always been thought a religious impulse” (Whitehead, 10).

In 1965 the Supreme Court in *United States v. Seeger* ruled that any belief is valid if it is “sincere and meaningful [and it] occupies a place in the life of its possessor parallel to that filled by the orthodox belief in God” (ibid., 14). Having consulted the theologian Tillich, the Court defined religion to be belief “based upon a power or being or upon a faith, to which all else is subordinate or upon which all else is ultimately dependent” (ibid.).

In a very revealing article in *Humanist Magazine* (1964) the finger was placed on several weaknesses in this regard. In the article “What’s Wrong with Humanism?” the indictment is made that the movement is too intellectual and almost “clinically detached from life.” To reach the masses with their message, the writer suggests that an effort be undertaken to develop a humanist Bible, a humanist hymnal, ten commandments for humanists, and even confessional practices (testimonies)! In addition, “the use of hypnotic techniques—music and other psychological devices—during humanist services would give the audience that deep spiritual experience and they would emerge refreshed and inspired with their humanist faith” (cited in Kitwood, 49). Rarely do humanists speak so freely about the psychological inadequacies of their system and the need to borrow Christian practices to rectify them.

Weaknesses in the humanist religion. T. M. Kitwood has summarized the deficiencies when he observed that secular humanism “does not evoke a response from the whole person, intellect, will and emotion.” Further, humanists “lack originality when making positive statements about man’s life, and easily descend to the platitudinous” (Kitwood, 48).

Another weakness of humanism may be that it fails to reckon with human nature. Some humanists have reflected an incredible naiveté about life. John Stuart Mill wrote that his father “felt as if all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read” (ibid., 50). Even Russell thought that “if we could learn to love our neighbor the world would quickly become a paradise for us all” (ibid.). Finally, Kitwood charges humanists with being “an aristocratic body, and as such insulated from some of the more terrible realities of life” (ibid., 51). One conclusion emerges clearly: Secular humanism does not measure up to the psychological realities of life. William James pointed out in his classic treatment on religious experience that those who set this world afire are themselves set aflame from another world. They are the saints not the secularists. They believed in a supernatural world, which secular humanism denies (James, 290).

Although secular humanists often confess to having religious, even mystical, experiences, they deny that these involve a personal God. But this is inadequate, first, because their experience is strangely personal for having no personal object. They speak of “loyalty,” “devotion” and “love” as basic values. But these are terms that make proper sense only when they have a personal object. Who, for example, can fall in love with the Pythagorean theorem? Or who would be religiously moved by the exhortation: “Prepare to meet thy E = MC²?” As Elton Trueblood insightfully observed, “The joy and wonder which men feel in the search for truth, including the quality of feeling of those scientists who think of themselves as materialists is the *same kind of feeling we know best when there is real communication between two finite minds*” (Trueblood, 115).

Only a personal object can really satisfy personal devotion. Perhaps this is what accounts for the lack of a satisfying religious experience among humanists. Huxley said his religious experience became dimmer over the years. He wrote, “I had been used, ever since the age of fifteen or sixteen, to have such moments come to me naturally. . . . But now . . . they were vouchsafed in diminishing measure, and (although sometimes with great intensity) more fleetingly” (Huxley, 77). Sartre confessed that his religious experiences ceased when he dismissed God from his life. He said, “I had all the more difficulty of getting rid of Him in that he had installed himself at the back of my head. . . . I collared the Holy Ghost in the cellar and threw him out; atheism is a cruel and long-range affair; I think I’ve carried it through” (Sartre, 252–53). Sartre’s confession of the difficulty and even cruelty of the life without God should not be surprising to anyone who truly understands the human person. Satisfaction originates in the personal. Human beings are fulfilled in what Buber called an “I-Thou” experience, not an “I-it” experience. That is, persons are satisfied best by persons (subjects), not by things (objects). Hence, it is not strange that a personal religious experience is not going to be fully satisfied in anything less than a personal object.

Tillich recognized that not every ultimate commitment was to something ultimate. In fact, he believed that to be ultimately committed to what is less than ultimate is idolatry (see Tillich, 57). Buber pointed out that idols can be mental as well as metal (Buber, *Eclipse of God*, 62). Combining these two insights from their own thinkers, we may note, that when humanists make some finite ideal or goal the object of their religious commitment, they are idolaters.

Humanists recognize human life to be mortal. The race may be annihilated or become extinct. Why then do humanists treat humankind as eternal? Why an unswerving commitment to

that which is changing and even perishing, the product of a blind evolutionary process? Is it not the height of humanistic arrogance for humanity to endow itself with divinity (see Geisler, chap. 15)? Such unlimited devotion humanists give to humanity is due only to the Infinite. The only thing worthy of an ultimate commitment is the Ultimate.

The confessed need of the atheist. One of the strongest indications that human beings need God is found in the very men who deny the need for God. The confessed needs of atheistic humanists is eloquent testimony to this point.

Nietzsche bemoaned his intolerable loneliness as compared to other poets who believed in God. He wrote,

I hold up before myself the images of Dante and Spinoza, who were better at accepting the lot of solitude. . . . and in the end, for all those who somehow still had a 'God' for company. . . . My life now consists in the wish that it might be otherwise . . . and that somebody might make my 'truths' appear incredible to me. [Nietzsche, 441]

Sartre admitted his own personal need for religion, saying, "I needed God." He added, "I reached out for religion, I longed for it, it was the remedy. Had it been denied me, I would have invented it myself" (Sartre, 97, 102). The French atheist Albert Camus added, "Nothing can discourage the appetite for divinity in the heart of man" (*The Rebel*, 147). Freud undermined the reality basis for God but admitted that he too felt the Schleiermachean sense of absolute dependence. He admitted that he experienced "a sense of man's insignificance and impotence in the face of the universe" (Freud, 57). Freud further admitted that this sense of absolute dependence is inescapable and cannot be overcome by science.

The same need for the divine is dramatized in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a play with a title reminiscent of Martin Heidegger's phrase "waiting for God." Franz Kafka's novels express the futility of lonely, persistent attempts to find some meaningful cosmic otherness. Walter Kaufmann reaches the point that he confesses, "Religion is rooted in man's aspiration to transcend himself. . . . Whether he worships idols or strives to perfect himself, man is the God-intoxicated ape" (Kaufmann, 354–55, 399).

Other such nonbelievers as Julian Huxley have likewise taken a positive attitude toward man's apparently incurably religious needs. Huxley spoke of "the possibility of enjoying experiences of transcendent rapture, physical or mystical, aesthetic or religious . . . of attaining inner harmony and peace, which puts a man above the cares and worries of daily life" (cited in Kitwood, 38). What is this but another description of reaching out for a God?

If the need for God is so eradicable, even in humanists, why do so many seem capable of living without God? Some have suggested that the unbeliever is *inconsistent* at this point. The atheistic philosophy (see ATHEISM) of John Cage drove him to suicide when he tried to live in a purely random way. Jackson Pollock, on the other hand, chose to be inconsistent and live. His hobby was mushrooms and he wisely decided not to approach the question as to which are poisonous in a random manner, as was his view of the world.

In a frank interview with the *Chicago Sun Times* Will Durant, admits that the common man will fall to pieces morally if he thinks there is no God. But "a man like me," said Durant, "I survive morally because I retain the moral code that was taught me along with the religion, while I have discarded the religion, which was Roman Catholicism." Durant continued,

You and I are living on a shadow . . . because we are operating on the Christian ethical code which was given us, unfused with the Christian faith. . . . But what will happen to our children . . . ? We are not giving them an ethics warmed up with a religious faith. They are living on the shadow of a shadow. [Durant, 1B:8]

It is difficult to live on a shadow and more so to dwell on a shadow's shadow. But this is precisely where humanists attempt to live without God.

Often ethics or aesthetics becomes a surrogate for God, but even this is satisfying only in so far as it rides piggyback on some belief in God. As Martin Marty noted, atheism "occurs and can occur only where belief is or has been. [This] explains why atheism . . . is itself a proof, by reason of its invariably polemical character" (Marty, 119–20). One who tries to overthrow everything—even the aesthetic and ethical shadows, finds with Camus that "for anyone who is alone, without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful" (Camus, *The Fall*, 133).

Sartre found atheism "cruel," Camus "dreadful," and Nietzsche "maddening." Atheists who consistently try to live without God tend to commit suicide or go insane. Those who are inconsistent live on the ethical or aesthetic shadow of Christian truth while they deny the reality that made the shadow. But believers and unbelievers evidence a definite need for God. Viktor Frankl, in *The Unconscious God*, contends that "man has always stood in an intentional relation to transcendence, even if only on an unconscious level." In this sense, he says, all men seek the "Unconscious God" (cited in Macdonald, 43).

The Argument from Joy. C. S. Lewis developed an argument from joy or the anticipation of heavenly bliss. This argument was stated by Lewis in *Mere Christianity* (12), *The Problem of Pain* (133), and *Surprised by Joy* (16–18). It was defended by Peter Kreeft in *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* and *The Heart's Deepest Longing*.

The argument from joy goes like this: Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger; food can satisfy. A duckling wants to swim; water fills its need. Men and women feel sexual desire; sexual intercourse fulfills that desire. If I find myself with a desire that no experience in this world can satisfy, I probably was made for another world. If no earthly pleasures satisfy the need, it does not mean the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it (Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 120).

The Logic of the Argument from Joy. The logic for the argument from joy goes like this:

1. Every natural innate desire has a real object that can fulfill it.
2. Human beings have a natural, innate desire for immortality.

3. Therefore, there must be an immortal life after death.

In defense of the first premise, it is argued that “If there is hunger, there is food; if thirst, drink; if eros, sex; if curiosity, knowledge; if loneliness, society” (Kreeft, *Handbook*, 250). Nature rushes to fill a vacuum. The second premise is supported by appeal to a mysterious longing that differs from all others in two ways: First, its object is indefinable and unobtainable in this life. Second, the mere presence of this desire in the soul is felt to be more precious and joyful than any other satisfaction. However inadequately we express it, what we long for is paradise, heaven, or eternity (ibid.). Even atheists experience this longing.

If these premises are true, then there is “more” than this life; there is a life to come. The fact that we complain about this world, pain, and death—but never about eternity—reveals a deep-seated desire for it. We may never attain it, but this no more disproves its existence than life-long singleness proves there is no marital bliss or starvation proves there is no such thing as food (ibid.).

Evaluation. This argument is not logically air-tight. Few if any of the arguments are. However, it has a certain existential force to it that cannot be denied. Even great unbelievers have admitted a longing for God. The famous unbeliever, Bertrand Russell, admitted in a letter to Lady Otto: “Even when one feels nearest to other people, something in one seems obstinately to belong to God, and to refuse to enter into any earthly communion—at least that is how I should express it if I thought there was a God. It is odd, isn’t it? I care passionately for this world and many things and people in it, and yet . . . what is it all for? There must be something more important, one feels, though I don’t believe there is” (*Autobiography*, 125–26).

Of course, it is possible that the universe is irrational, that it is mocking our most basic needs. But there is something in one that refuses to accept that. The desire for joy can be disbelieved, but it is harder to eradicate.

Conclusion. Few theists would rest their case for God on any one argument. Each argument seems to demonstrate a different attribute of God along with his existence. For example, the cosmological argument shows that God is infinitely powerful; the teleological argument reveals that he is intelligent; the moral argument demonstrates that he is moral and, if he exists, the ontological argument shows that he is a Necessary Being.

Some theists offer other arguments for the existence of God, such as the argument from religious need or the argument from religious experience (*see* EXPERIENTIAL APOLOGETICS). Most nontheists claim they do not need God, but their own writings and experiences betray their position. But if there is a real need for God, it is far more reasonable to believe that there is a real God who can really fill this real need.

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God, Moral Argument for. See MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD .

God, Nature of. Natural theology deals with what can be known about the existence (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT) and nature of God by natural reason (*see* REVELATION, GENERAL), apart from any supernatural revelation (*see* REVELATION, SPECIAL). According to classical Christian theists (*see* THEISM), such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), all of the essential metaphysical attributes of God can be known by natural reason. This includes God's aseity, simplicity, immutability, eternity, simplicity, unity, infinity, and morality.

Aseity (Self-Existence). Most classical theists see God's Aseity or Pure Existence as a key attribute. The early Church Fathers, as well as Augustine (354–430), Anselm (1033–1109), and Aquinas, continually cite the Bible in support of this position. In defending God's self-existence (aseity) classical theists such as Aquinas are fond of citing Exodus 3:14 where God identifies himself to Moses as "I Am that I Am." This they understand to refer to God as Pure Being or Existence.

God is Pure Actuality, with no potentiality in his being whatsoever. Whatever has potentiality (potency) needs to be actualized or effected by another. And since God is the ultimate Cause, there is nothing beyond him to actualize any potential (i.e., ability) he may have. Nor can God actualize his own potential to exist, since this would mean he caused his own existence. But a self-caused being is impossible, since it cannot create itself. Something has to exist before it can do anything. Even God cannot lift himself into being by his own ontological bootstraps. Thus, God must be Pure Actuality in his Being.

Of course, God has the potential to create other things. But he cannot bring himself into being. He always was. And while God has the potential to *do* other things, he cannot *be* anything other than what he is. He has the power to *create* other things (active potency), but he does not have the power (passive potency) to *exist* in any other way than he does, namely, as an infinite, eternal, necessary, and simple Being.

God's aseity means that he *is* Being; everything else merely *has* being. God is Pure Actuality; all other things have both actuality and potentiality. Thus, God cannot not exist. All creatures can be nonexistent. That is, they have the potentiality for nonexistence. Only God is a Necessary Being. All other beings are contingent.

Simplicity (Indivisibility). Since God is not composed in his Being, but is Pure Existence, Pure Actuality with no potentiality; it follows that he is simple and indivisible. A Being that by nature is not composed cannot be decomposed. One that has no parts cannot be torn apart. Hence, God has absolute simplicity with no possibility of being divided. He is literally indivisible.

Likewise, a God of Pure Actuality with no potentiality cannot be divided. For if it were divisible, then it would have to have the potential to be divided. But Pure Actuality has no potentiality in its Being whatsoever. Hence, it must be absolutely simple or indivisible.

God's indivisibility follows also from his immutability (see below). For if God could be divided, he could change. But God is unchangeable by nature. Thus he cannot be divided. He must be absolutely simple in his nature.

Necessity (Noncontingency). God is by nature an absolutely necessary Being. That is, he cannot not exist. God is not a may-be but a must-be kind of Being. He is not contingent, since he does not have the possibility not to exist. If he has no potentiality not to exist, then he must exist.

This is not to say that the ontological argument is valid. Aquinas considered and rejected Anselm's proof for God. If God (i.e., Pure Actuality) exists, then he must exist necessarily. But one cannot simply define him into existence. Aquinas offered his famous cosmological arguments for God's existence (*Summa Theologica*, 1.2.3). And once we know, from reason and revelation, that God exists, then we can be sure that he must exist necessarily. Such a Being has no potential not to exist.

Immutability (Unchangeability). In his epic *Summa Theologica* (1a.9.1), Aquinas offers three basic arguments in favor of God's unchangeability. The first argument is passed on the fact that a God of Pure Actuality ("I-Am-ness") has no potentiality. It follows, therefore, that God cannot change (Exod. 3:14). Whatever changes has to have the potential to change. But as pure Actuality, God has no potential, so he cannot change.

The second argument for God's immutability follows from his simplicity. Everything that changes is composed of what changes and what does not change. God cannot change because an absolutely simple being has no composition. If everything about a being changed, then it would be an entirely new being. In fact, it would not be change but annihilation of one thing and a

creation of something entirely new. Now if, in every change in a being something remains the same and something does not, then it must be composed of these two elements. So an absolutely simple Being with no composition cannot change.

The third argument for God's unchangeability argues from his absolute perfection. Whatever changes acquires something new. But God cannot acquire anything new, since he could not be better or more complete. Therefore, God cannot change. If he did, he would not be God for he would have lacked some perfection.

Aquinas also argues that God alone is immutable (*Summa Theologica*, 1a.9.2). All creatures exist only because of the will of the Creator. His power brought them into existence, and it is his power that keeps them in existence. Therefore, if he withdrew his power they would cease to exist. Whatever can cease to exist is not immutable. Therefore, God alone is immutable; everything else could cease to exist.

Impassability (without Passions). A long-recognized attribute of God that has recently come under attack is *impassability*. God is without passions. Passion implies desire for what one does not have. But God, as an absolutely perfect Being, lacks nothing. To lack something he would have to have a potentiality to have it. But God is Pure Actuality with no potentiality whatsoever. Therefore, God is completely and infinitely satisfied in his own perfection.

However, to say that God is impassable in the sense that he has no passions or cravings for fulfillment is not to say that he has no feelings. God feels anger at sin and rejoices in righteousness. But God's feelings are unchanging. He always, unchangingly, feels the same sense of anger at sin. He never ceases to rejoice in goodness and rightness. Thus, God has no changing passions, but he does have unchanging feelings.

Eternity (Nontemporality). God is not temporal (*Summa Theologica*, 1a. 10, 1). He is beyond time. Aquinas offers several arguments in support of this conclusion. The first argument goes:

1. Whatever exists in time can be computed according to its before and after.
2. Changeless being, as God is, has no before or after; it is always the same.
3. Consequently, God must be timeless.

Time is duration characterized by substantial and accidental changes. A substantial change is a change in what something *is*. Fire changes what a piece of wood is. An accidental change is a change in what something *has*. Growing knowledge is an accidental change in a being. Aquinas sees three levels of being in relation to time and eternity:

1. God in *eternity* is Pure Actuality, without essential or accidental change.
2. Angels and saints who dwell in the spiritual world of heaven live in *aeviternity* (or *aevum*).

3. Human beings, comprising soul and body, form and matter, live in *time*.

Eternity (God) endures without any potency. Aeviternity (angels) endure with completely actualized potency. Their changes are not essential but accidental. Spiritual beings in aeviternity do not change in their essence, though they do undergo accidental changes. Angels increase in knowledge by divine infusion, and they have changeableness with regard to choice, intelligence, affections and places (*ibid.*, 1a.10.6). But with no substantial changes in aeviternity, angels are immutable in their level of grace and charity. What is true of the angels is also true of the elect in heaven.

Time (humanity) endures with progressive actualized potency.

The second argument for God's eternity similarly follows from immutability. It begins with the premise that whatever is immutable does not change in the state of its being. Whatever is in time goes through a succession of states. So whatever is immutable is not temporal. This argument stresses another aspect of time; whatever is temporal has successive states, one after the other. God does not, so he is not temporal.

Total immutability necessarily implies eternity (*ibid.*, 1a.10.2). For whatever changes substantially is in time and can be computed according to before and after. Whatever does not change cannot be in time, since it has no different states by which before and after can be computed. It never changes. Whatever does not change is not temporal. Not only is God eternal, but he alone is eternal (*ibid.*, 1a.10.3), for he alone is essentially immutable.

Aquinas distinguishes eternity from endless time (*ibid.*, 1a.10.4). First, whatever is essentially whole (eternity) is essentially different from what has parts (time). Eternity is now forever; time includes past, present, and future, now and then. The implication of this is that God's eternity is not divided; it is all present to him in his eternal now. So it must be essentially different from time in successive moments.

Second, endless time is just more an elongation of time. But eternity differs qualitatively. It differs essentially, not merely accidentally. Eternity is an essential, changeless state of being that transcends moment-by-successive-moment reality. Time measures that reality, or rather the stage on which reality plays out.

Third, an eternal being cannot change, whereas time involves change. By change can the measurements of before and after be made. Whatever can be computed according to before and after is not eternal. Endless time can be computed according to before and after. Hence, endless time is not the same as eternity. The eternal is changeless, but what can be computed by its before and after has changed. It follows, then, that the eternal now cannot live in relation to endless before and after.

Obviously, Aquinas saw a crucial difference between the "now" of time and the "now" of eternity (*ibid.*). The now of time is movable. The now of eternity is not movable in any way. The eternal now is unchanging, but the now of time is ever changing. There is only an analogy

between time and eternity; they cannot be the same. God's now has no past or future; time's now does.

Some have mistakenly concluded that Aquinas did not believe in God's duration for eternity, because he rejected temporality in God. Aquinas argued that duration occurs as long as actuality exists. But eternity, aeviternity, and time endure in different ways.

It follows, therefore that the essential difference in the quality of the duration in time, aeviternity, and eternity comes from the condition of the actuality. God is *Pure Actuality*. Angels have received total actuality from God in their created spiritual forms. Human beings progressively receive actuality in both spiritual form and material body.

Since God endures without potentiality, he cannot endure progressively. He endures in a much higher way—as Pure Actuality.

Immensity. Along with eternity is the attribute of immensity (nonspatiality). God is not limited in time, nor is he limited in space. In God's immanence he fills space, but he is not spatial. Only material things exist in space and time, and God is not material. "God is spirit" (John 4:24). As spiritual, God is not material or spatial. It is part of God's transcendence that he is beyond both time and space.

Unity. Classical theists have offered three reasons for God's unity (ibid., 1a.11.3). The first argument is from the simplicity of God. An absolutely simple being cannot be more than one, since to be more than one there must be parts, but simple beings have no parts. Absolutely simple beings are not divisible. God is an absolutely simple being. Therefore, God cannot be more than one being.

God's perfection argues for his unity. If two or more gods existed, they would have to differ. In order to differ, one must have what the other lacks. But an absolutely perfect being cannot lack anything. Therefore, there can only be one absolutely perfect being. God's unity also can be inferred from the unity of the world. The world is composed of diverse things. Diverse things do not come together unless they are ordered. But the world has an ordered unity. Therefore, there must be one Orderer of the world.

Theists argue that essential unity is better explained by one Orderer than by many orderers. For one is the essential cause of oneness, but many is only the accidental cause of oneness. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that there is only one cause of the world, not many.

Relatability (to the World). One criticism of classical theism is that an eternal, unchanging God could not relate to a changing world. Aquinas anticipated this objection and treated it extensively.

There are three kinds of relations: One where both terms are ideas; one where both terms are real; and one where one term is real and one is an idea (ibid., 1a.13.7).

Now since creatures are dependent on God but God is not dependent on them, they are related as real to an idea. That is, God *knows* about the relationship of dependence but he does not *have* it. When there is a change in the creature there is no change in God. Just as when the man changes his position from one side of the pillar to the other, the pillar does not change; only the man changes in relation to the pillar. So, while the relationship between God and creatures is real, God is in no sense dependent in that relationship.

Aquinas is only denying *dependent* relationships, not all real ones. God never changes as he relates to the world, but real changes do occur in that relation with the world. The man's relation to the pillar really changes when he moves, but the pillar does not change.

The real but unchanging relation of God to the world is made even more clear when Aquinas considers how the eternal God relates to a temporal world (ibid., 1a.13.7, ad 2). God condescends to relate to humans as if he shared time with them. He can create a temporal relation that in no way changes him. Eternity can move in time, though time cannot move in eternity. To have a relationship with the temporal world, God does not have to be temporal. It makes no more sense to say God has to be temporal in order to relate to a temporal world than to say he has to be a creature in order to create.

God is really related to creatures as their Creator. But creatures are really related to God only because he is their Creator. They are dependent on that Creator-creature bond; he is not. Therefore, the relation of God to creatures is real and not merely ideal. However, it is a real relationship of dependence on the part of the creatures but not a relation of dependence on the part of God (ibid., 1a.13.7, ad 5).

God's Knowledge. God Knows Himself. If God is absolutely simple, can he know himself? All knowledge involves both a knower and a known. But God has no such duality. Aquinas argues that in self-knowledge the knower and known are identical. Hence, God can only know himself through himself (ibid., 1a.14.2). Since God is simple, he knows himself simply.

God also knows himself perfectly. Something is known perfectly when its potential to be known is completely realized. And there is no unactualized potentiality to know himself. Therefore, God's self-knowledge is completely actualized (ibid., 1a.14.3).

God's knowledge is identical with his essence. For if God's acts of knowledge were really distinct from his essence, then they would be related as actuality to potentiality. But there can be no potentiality in God. Therefore, God's knowledge and essence are really identical (ibid., 1a.14.4). This does not mean that God cannot know things other than himself. For God is the efficient cause of all things.

God Knows and Does. Even though God knows other things than himself, nonetheless, he knows them through himself. For God does not know other things through himself either successively or inferentially but simultaneously and intuitively (ibid., 1a.14.7, ad 2). God's knowledge is more perfect because he does not have to know things discursively through their causes but knows them directly and intuitively (ibid., 1a.14.7 ad 3, 4). God not only knows all things in and through himself, but he also causes all things by his knowledge. God causes all

things by his being, but God's being and his knowledge are identical (ibid., 1a.14.8). This does not mean that creation is eternal because he is eternal. For God causes all things as they are in his knowledge. But that creation should be eternal was not in God's knowledge (ibid., 1a.14.8, ad 2).

An effect pre-exists in the mind of its efficient cause. Hence, whatever exists must pre-exist in God, who is its efficient cause. God knows all of the various kinds of perfection in himself, as well as those which can participate in his likeness. Therefore, God knows whatever exists perfectly, insofar as it pre-exists in him (ibid., 1a.14.5).

God Knows Every Creature Ideally. God knows his own essence perfectly. And knowing his essence perfectly entails knowing it according to every mode by which it can be known, namely, in itself and as participated in by creatures. But every creature has its own proper form, in which it is like God. It follows, therefore, that God knows the form or idea of every creature as it is modeled after him. Perfect knowledge involves the ability to distinguish one thing from another. That is, he knows not only what things have in common (*esse*) but how they differ (*essence*). Therefore, God knows all things in their individual essences. But all things pre-exist in God's knowledge. Therefore, all things pre-exist in God's knowledge, not only with regard to their existence but also with regard to their individual essences.

The basis for what God knows is his own essence, but the extent of what he knows is not limited to that one essence but reaches to all things like it (ibid., 1a.15.2). God's knowledge of all things in himself does not mean that he only knows other things in general but not in particular. For God's knowledge extends as far as does his causality. And God's causality extends to singular things, since he is the cause of every individual thing. Therefore, God knows singular things (ibid., 1a.14.11). God has a perfect knowledge of everything. And to know something only in general but not in particular is improper knowledge. So, God knows everything properly. That is, he does not know the radii of circles merely by knowing the center; he knows the radii as well as the center.

God Knows Evil. For perfect knowledge of things must include knowing all that can occur to them. Evil can occur as a corruption of good things. Hence, God can know evil (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF). But things are knowable in the way in which they exist. Evil is a privation in good things. Therefore, God knows evil as a privation in a good (ibid., 1a.14.10).

God Knows Changing Things. Since God is unchanging and his knowledge is identical with his essence, he knows past, present, and future in one eternal now. Therefore, when time changes, God's knowledge does not change, since he knew it in advance. God knows change, but not in the way we know it, in successive time frames. From eternity God knows the whole of before and after the temporal now of human history (ibid., 1a.14.15).

God knows the same things we do, but he does not know them the same way we know them. Our knowledge is discursive, moving from premises to conclusions. In human knowledge there is twofold discursiveness: One thing is known *after* another, and one thing is known *through* another. But God cannot know things sequentially, since he is timeless and knows all things eternally at once. Nor can God know things inferentially, for he is simple and knows all things through the oneness of himself. Therefore, God cannot know anything discursively (sequentially,

from topic to topic), inasmuch as discursive knowledge implies a limitation to consider one thing at a time on the part of the knower (ibid., 1a.14.7).

God Knows All Possibilities. By knowing himself perfectly God knows perfectly all the different ways his perfections can be shared by others. For there is within the essence of God all the knowledge of all possible kinds of things his will could actualize. Hence, God knows all the particular things that could ever be actualized (ibid., 1a.14.6).

God's Knowledge Allows Free Will. Pulling these strands of thought about God's knowledge together shows us how God's sovereignty works alongside human free will. God's knowledge is not simply of the actual; he also knows all possible sorts of potential. He knows what is and ever could-be. For God knows whatever is in any way it can be known. Now both the actual and the potential are real. Only the impossible has no reality. Thus, whatever is potential is real. It follows that God can know what is potential as well as what is actual (ibid., 1a.14.9).

This means that God can know future contingents, that is, things that are dependent on free choice. For the future is a potential that pre-exists in God. And God knows whatever exists in himself as the cause of those things (ibid., 1a.14.13). Since God is a timeless being, he knows all of time in one eternal now. But the future is part of time. Therefore, God knows the future, including the free acts to be performed in it. Of course, whatever God knows is known infallibly, since God cannot err in his knowledge. Future contingents are known infallibly. They are contingent with regard to their immediate cause (human free choice) but necessary with regard to God's knowledge. God can do this without eliminating free choice, for an omniscient being can know whatever is not impossible to know. And it is not impossible for a timeless being to know a necessary end caused by a contingent means. God can know a *must-be* through a *may-be* but not a *can't-be*.

Therefore, an omniscient Being knows future actions as necessarily true events. If an action will occur and God knows it, then that event must occur, for an omniscient Mind cannot be wrong about what it knows. Therefore the statement "Everything known by God must necessarily be" is true if it refers to the statement of the truth of God's knowledge, but it is false if it refers to the necessity of the contingent events (ibid., 1a.14.5).

God's Will. Will can be defined as a being's rational inclination toward its own good. Whatever has intellect also has will, for will follows upon intellect. Further, every nature inclines to its own proper end or good. When the end is rational then the inclination is a rational inclination. God has rational inclination toward the good of his own nature. Therefore, God has will (ibid., 1a.19.1).

Having will does not mean that God changes. For the object of God's will is his divine Goodness. And whatever is in oneself necessitates no movement outside oneself to attain. Hence, God does not have to move outside himself to attain his own proper end. And will is an inclination toward one's own end. So, there is will in God, inasmuch as he inclines toward his own good. Will also involves love and delight in what is possessed. God loves and delights in the possession of his own nature. Therefore, God has will in the sense of delight but not in the sense of desire (ibid.).

God's Will Causes Things to Be. Simply because God wills things only in himself does not mean that he wills only himself. For it is in accord with the nature of being to communicate its good to others. And God is being par excellence; he is the source of all being. Hence, it is in accord with the nature of God to will other beings than himself (ibid., 1a.19.2). So God wills things other than himself in and through himself. God is not other than himself, but he can will things other than himself in himself. For will implies a relationship. Hence, although God is not other than himself, yet he wills things other than himself (ibid., 1a.19.2, ad 1).

God is not moved by anything outside himself when he wills to create through himself (ibid., 1a.19.2, ad 2). But in willing things other than himself, God is not moved by any insufficiency in himself but by the sufficiency in himself, that is, by his own goodness. Therefore, willing other things through his own sufficiency denotes no insufficiency in God (ibid., 1a.19.2, ad 3). Just as God knows many things through the oneness of his essence, he can will many things through the oneness (good) of his will (ibid., 1a.19.2, ad 4).

God Must Will and Can Will. God wills things in two ways. Some things—his own goodness, for example—he must will. He cannot choose to will otherwise. These things he wills with *absolute* necessity. Other things God wills with *conditional* necessity—the goodness of creatures, for example. Whatever is willed by conditional necessity is not absolutely necessary. Creation is willed by conditional necessity.

Of course, God wills other things *because of* his own goodness but not as *necessitated by* it. For God can exist without willing other things. God need only will his own goodness necessarily and other things contingently. Therefore, these other things need not be willed with absolute necessity. Of course, it is necessary to God's will that he will his own nature necessarily. But God need not will anything other than himself. When God did will things other than himself, he must have willed these things voluntarily (ibid., 1a.19.3, ad 3).

It would seem that God must will things necessarily. As a Necessary Being he must know necessarily whatever he knows. It would seem then that he must will necessarily what he wills.

Aquinas responds that divine knowing is necessarily related to the created thing known, because the knowledge in the Knower is one with his essence. But divine willing is not necessarily related to the created thing willed. Willing relates to things as they exist in themselves, outside of the divine essence. God knows necessarily what he knows but does not will necessarily what he wills. Further, all things exist necessarily in God, but nothing exists necessarily outside him. But God need only will what is necessarily of his own nature. Therefore, God need only will other things as they exist in him but not as they exist in themselves outside of himself (ibid., 1a.19.3).

All Created Effects Pre-exist in God's Will. God's will is the cause of all things, so all created things pre-exist in God's knowledge. Will is the inclination to put into action what one knows. Therefore, all created effects flow from God's will (ibid., 1a.19.4). Of course, God must bestow good on all he chooses to create; God cannot create evil. But it is not necessary that God should will any other being or good than himself. Therefore, God need only bestow good on what he chooses to create (ibid., 1a.19.4, ad 1).

God's Will Is Uncaused. As to whether God's will is caused, Aquinas says that, rather, God's will is the cause of all things. What is the cause of all needs no cause. For in God the means and the end pre-exist in the cause as willed together. Human will looks to a desired end and what may be done to reach that goal. God's will causes both the end willed and the means to that end. And since all things pre-exist in the First Cause (God's will), there is no cause for God's will (ibid., 1a.19.5).

God's Will Can Never Fail. The will of God is the universal cause of all things. Therefore, the will of God is always fulfilled. What fails to accomplish God's will in one order does so in another order. For example, what falls from the order of his favor returns to the order of his justice. When particular causes fail, the universal cause does not fail. God cannot fail (ibid., 1a.19.6).

One may speak of an *antecedent* and *consequent* will of God. God wills antecedently that all should be saved (2 Peter 3:9). But God wills consequently that some will be lost, namely, those whom justice demands. But what is willed antecedently is not willed absolutely but conditionally. Only the consequent is willed absolutely in view of all the circumstances. Of course, God wills some things through secondary causes. And first causes are sometimes hindered through defects in secondary causes. The movement of the body is hindered by a bad leg. Likewise, God's antecedent will is sometimes hindered by a defect in a secondary cause. But his consequent will is never frustrated. For first universal causes cannot be hindered by defective secondary causes, any more than goodness, as such, can be hindered by evil. However, God is the universal first cause of being, and his will cannot be hindered in his causing of being (ibid., 1a.19.6, ad 2).

God Does Not Change His Mind. Neither can God's will be changed, for God's will is in perfect accord with his knowledge. He is omniscient, so what he knows will be will be. Therefore, God's will is unchangeable. This does not mean that God does not will that some things change. But God's will does not change, even though he does will that other things change (ibid., 1a.19.7). When the Bible speaks of God "repenting," it means that from where we stand it looks as if he has changed his mind. God knew from eternity how it would fall out. And God's will includes intermediate causes, such as human free will. So God knows what the intermediate causes will choose to do. And God's will is in accord with his unchangeable knowledge. Therefore, God's will never changes, since he wills what he knows will happen. What is willed by conditional necessity does not violate human freedom, since what is willed is conditioned on their freely choosing it. God wills the salvation of human beings conditionally. Therefore, God's will to salvation does not violate human free choice, but uses it.

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God, Need for. *See* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR .

God, Objections to Proofs for. Most of the traditional objections to arguments for God's existence developed out of issues first posed by David Hume and Immanuel Kant . Some of these are treated more fully under the specific apologetic framework to which they are related, such as the moral argument, the ontological argument, and the teleological argument. This overview lists arguments and objections to the existence of God. These are responses to points raised by Christian apologists. Arguments against the existence of God raised by nontheists themselves are discussed in God, Alleged Disproofs of.

Finite Causes for Finite Beings. The cosmological argument reasons from a finite effect to an infinite Cause (God). This conclusion is challenged by those who insist that all one needs to account for a finite effect is a finite cause. Positing an infinite Cause is metaphysical overkill.

However, *every* finite being or effect is limited, and *every* limited being is only adequately explained if it were caused by some Being that is not limited. The first Cause is the unlimited limiter of every limited thing. If this Cause were limited (i.e., caused), it would need a cause beyond itself by which to ground its limited existence. Inescapably, *every* limited being is caused. But Pure Actuality, or Existence as such, is unlimited. And the Actuality that provides the limits for everything else that is actualized must itself be unlimited in its existence. The first Cause must be uncaused, and an Uncaused Cause must be the unlimited or infinite Cause of everything else.

No Necessary Being. It is urged that such terms as *Necessary Being* and *Uncaused Cause* are meaningless, since nothing in our experience corresponds to them. This is not a valid objection. The very sentence, "A Necessary Being has no meaning," is meaningless unless the words *necessary being* can be defined. The claim is self-defeating.

There is nothing incoherent among such terms if they are not contradictory. We know what *contingent* means, and *necessary* is the opposite, namely, "noncontingent." The meanings of these terms are derived from their relationship to what is dependent upon them. And these meanings are twofold: First, the terms *necessary* and *infinite* are negative. *Necessary* means "not contingent." *Infinite* means "not finite." We know what these limitations mean from experience, and, by contrast, we know that God does not have any of them. A negative term does not denote a negative attribute. It is not the affirmation of nothing; rather, it is the negation of all contingency and limitation in the first Cause. The positive content of what God is derives from the causal principle. He is Actuality because he causes all actuality. He is Being since he is the Cause of all being. However, as Cause of all being his being cannot be caused. As the Ground of all contingent being, he must be a Necessary (noncontingent) Being.

Unprovable Causality. Since all forms of the cosmological argument depend on the principle of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF), it would fail without the principle. But can that

principle be proved? Normally we think it is obvious, based on experience. But experience may be illusion. Everything not based on experience is simply a tautology, that is, true only by definition and so not proof in itself.

This critique springs from Hume's epistemological atomism—that all empirical impressions are "entirely loose and separate." Hume believed necessary causal connection could not be established empirically from sensible experience. But causality is supported by metaphysical necessity. We need not rely solely on empirical observation. Hume himself never denied that things have a cause for their existence. He said, "I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause" (Hume, 1:187).

It would be ontologically ill-advised to suppose that something could arise from nothing. The principle of causality used by Aquinas is that "every limited being has a cause for its existence." This principle is based in the fundamental reality that nonexistence cannot cause existence; nothing cannot produce something. It takes a producer to produce (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF).

The need for a cause of existence is rooted in the nature of finite, changing beings as composed of *existence* (actuality or act) and *essence* (potentiality or potency). Existence as such is unlimited; all limited existence is being limited by something distinct from existence itself (this limiting factor will be called "essence"); whatever is being limited is being caused, for to be limited in being is to be caused to be in a certain finite way. A limited existence is a caused existence.

Rather, all limited beings are composed beings, composed of existence and essence. Their essence limits the kind of existence they can have. Likewise, an unlimited Being is an uncomposed Being (i.e., a Simple Being). Such a Being has no limiting essence as such. Its essence is identical to its unlimited existence. The need for causality, then, is derived from an analysis of what finite being is. Upon examination, finite being is seen to be caused being, and caused being must have a cause.

Contradictions from Causality. Many nontheists misunderstand the principle of causality. They assume the principle insists that "every *thing* has a cause." If this were true it would follow that one should never stop seeking a cause, even for God. However, the principle should not be stated: "Every *being* has a cause." Rather, it is "Every *finite* , *contingent being* has a cause." In this way there is no contradiction between a First Cause, which is not contingent, and the principle of causality, which holds that all finite beings need a cause. Once one arrives at an infinite and necessary being, there is no need to seek a further cause. A necessary being explains (grounds) its own existence. It exists because it must exist. It cannot not exist. Only what *can* not exist (namely, a contingent being) needs an explanation. To ask of a necessary being why it exists is like asking why necessity must be necessary, or why circles must be round.

An Infinite Series of Causes. One objection to the cosmological argument is that a First Cause is unneeded because an infinite series of causes is possible. Infinite series are common to mathematics.

The suggestion of an infinite series is only raised in the horizontal (*kalam*) form of the cosmological argument (*see* KALAM, COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). In the vertical form of Thomas Aquinas, the very first cause outside of a finite, contingent, changing being must be infinite and uncaused (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). This is so, because *every* finite being needs a cause. Hence, one finite being cannot cause the existence of another. There cannot be even one intermediate link between the Creator and his creatures. The very first cause outside of beings whose existence is being actualized must be the Actualizer of being.

Mathematically infinite series are possible, but not actual ones. The former are abstract; the latter are concrete. It is possible to have an infinite number of points on one line on this page. But one cannot get an infinite number of letters on this line, no matter how small they are (*see* INFINITE SERIES). Points are abstract or theoretical entities; a series of causes of existence is comprised of actual entities. An infinite number of the former are possible, but not of the latter. The reason for this is simple: No matter how many dominos one has in a line, one more could be added. The number cannot be infinite.

Furthermore, an infinite series of simultaneous and existentially dependent causes is not possible. There must be a here-and-now ground for a simultaneous series of causes, none of which would otherwise have a ground for its existence. An ungrounded infinite regress is tantamount to affirming that the existence in the series arises from nonexistence, since no cause in the series has a real ground for its existence. Or, if one cause in the series grounds the existence of the others, then it must be a First Cause, but then the series is not infinite. Otherwise the cause causes its own existence, while it is causing the existence of everything else in the series. That is impossible.

The Invalid Ontological Argument. Kant believed that ontological sleight-of-hand imports a Necessary Being into every cosmological argument. Such a move invalidly argues from experience to necessity. This criticism is not applicable to the metaphysical form of the cosmological argument (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; THOMAS AQUINAS).

Since the cosmological argument begins with existence, not thought, it does not have to smuggle existence into the equation. The first premise is, "Something exists." There is no beginning with "that from which nothing greater can be conceived," by which Anselm began his ontological argument.

The cosmological argument proceeds with principles grounded in reality, not in thought. They are ontologically grounded principles, rather than rationally inescapable ideas. It is based on metaphysical truth that "Nothing cannot cause something," rather than the rational assertion that "Everything must have a sufficient reason" (*see* SUFFICIENT REASON, PRINCIPLE OF). The argument concludes with "Pure Actuality is the cause of existence for all limited existence," rather than with "a Being which logically cannot not be."

The Concept of Necessity. One objection is that the principle of necessity applies only to logical constructs or ideas, not to real-life existence. In fact *necessary* is misapplied to the "Necessary Being" of the cosmological argument.

This argument fails because the objection is self-defeating. Either the statement "Necessity does not apply to real life" is itself a statement about existence, or else it is not. If it is a statement about existence, it is self-defeating, for it claims to be both necessary and about reality, while it is saying no necessary statements can be made about reality. If it is merely a metastatement, or statement about statements (and not really a statement about reality), then it is uninformative about what kind of statements may or may not be made about reality.

This criticism also begs the question. Critics claim to "know" that necessity does not apply to being because there is no Necessary Being. There is no valid way in advance, while looking at the argument for God's existence, to know if a Necessary Being exists. The concept is not contradictory. It simply means not-contingent, which is a coherent idea. But if there is no *a priori* way to know that a Necessary Being cannot exist, then it is possible that necessity truly *may apply* to being, namely, if a Necessary Being does, in fact, exist.

Metaphysical Contradictions. Kant offered several alleged contradictions or antinomies that he thought result from applying cosmological argumentation to reality. At least three of these antinomies apply to the cosmological argument.

The Antinomy about Time. If we assume that time applies to reality, a contradiction seems to result that the world is *both* temporal and eternal. *Thesis:* The world must have begun in time, or else an infinity of moments have elapsed before it began, and this is impossible (since an infinity of moments can never be completed). *Antithesis:* The world could not have begun in time, for that implies that there was a time before time began, and this is contradictory.

Kant's view of time is incorrect. Time is not a continuum of successive moments that exist without beginning or end. Thus, creation did not begin in time that was already there; creation *was* the beginning of time. The only thing "prior" to time is eternity, and eternity is prior in a causal, not a temporal, way.

Further, this argument overlooks the possibility of an eternal creation, which some theists, such as Aquinas, thought philosophically possible. In any event, Kant's objection, if valid, would charge only the horizontal (*kalam*) form of the cosmological argument (*see* KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). It does not touch the vertical form of the argument based on a here-and-now cause of existence. This type of cosmological argument is not dependent on a specific view about the origin of creation, but only its present conservation in existence. The finite world demands a cause right now, regardless of whether it began in time or is eternal.

The Antinomy of Causality. Theists are charged with arguing that the world both has a First Cause and does not have a First Cause. *Thesis:* Not every cause has a cause or else a series of causes would not begin to cause as they in fact do. *Antithesis:* A series of causes cannot have a beginning, since everything demands a cause. Hence, the series must go on infinitely.

The antithesis of this alleged dilemma is incorrect in stating that *every* cause needs a cause. According to the principle of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF), only *finite*, contingent things need causes. Thus the Cause of finite being is not finite. Only finite causes need a cause; the first uncaused Cause needs no cause, because it is not finite.

The Antinomy of Contingency. Kant insists that everything must be both contingent and not be contingent, if we assume that these concepts apply to reality. *Thesis:* Not everything is contingent or else there would be no condition for contingency. The dependent must be depending on something that is not dependent. *Antithesis:* Everything must be contingent, for necessity applies only to concepts, not to things.

This objection fails because there is no way to deny that necessity can apply to reality without making a necessary statement about reality. Only an ontological disproof could establish Kant's point. And ontological disproofs (*see* GOD, ALLEGED DISPROOFS OF) are self-defeating. Further, the cosmological argument has already concluded that something necessarily exists. The validity of this argument is the refutation of Kant's contention that necessity does not apply to existence.

Cosmological God. The objection is made that the cosmological argument does not prove a theistic God. There are many other concepts of God besides theism (*see* WORLDVIEW). This First Cause may not be identified with a theistic God any more than with polytheistic gods, a pantheistic god, a panentheistic god, a deistic god, or even the material universe of *atheism* (*see* ATHEISM ; DEISM ; FINITE GODISM ; PANENTHEISM ; PANTHEISM ; POLYTHEISM).

God Is Not the Gods of Polytheism. There cannot be more than one unlimited existence as such. More than the Most is not possible. Such a Cause is pure Act or Actuality, an Act that is unlimited and unique. Only actuality as conjoined with potency is limited, such as is found in contingent beings. To differ, one being would have to lack some characteristic found in the other. But any being that lacked some characteristic of existence would not be an unlimited, perfect existence. In other words, two infinite beings cannot differ in their potentiality, since they have no potentiality; they are pure actuality. And they cannot differ in their actuality, since actuality as such does not differ from actuality as such. Hence, they must be identical. There can be only one unlimited Cause of all limited existence.

God Is Not the God of Pantheism. Pantheism affirms that an unlimited and necessary Being exists but denies the reality of limited and finite beings. But change is a fundamental fact of finite existence. Pantheism is contrary to our experience of change. If all change, including that in our minds and consciousness, is unreal, then no river moves, no tree grows, and no human ages. If there is any real change, there must really be changing beings distinct from God, for God is an unchanging Being.

God Is Not the God of Panentheism. Panentheism, also known as dipolar theism or process theology, asserts that God has two poles: an *actual pole* (which is identified with the changing temporal world) and a *potential pole* (which is eternal and unchanging). Such a conception of God must be rejected. The conclusion of the cosmological argument demonstrates the need for a God of pure Actuality with no potentiality (pole) at all. Further, God cannot be subject to limitations, composition, or spatiotemporality as an unlimited being. Moreover, the theistic God cannot have poles or aspects, since he is absolutely simple (i.e., uncomposed) with no duality at all (premise 5). A partly limited unlimited existence is a contradiction.

Nor can God be subject to change. For anything that changes must be composed of actuality and potentiality for change. Change is a passing from potentiality to actuality; from what can be to what has actually become. But since existence as such has no potentiality, it cannot change. Anything that changes proves thereby that it possessed some potentiality for the change it underwent. A pure and unlimited actuality cannot change.

Finally, the God of panentheism is a confusion of the world process with the God who grounds that process. God is in the process as the unchanging basis for change, but God is not of the process. God is the cause of all finite, changing existence, but he is beyond all finitude and change. God changes relationally (by entering changing relationships with the world), but he does not change essentially. When the person moves from one side of the pillar to the other, there is a real change in relationship, but there is no change in the pillar.

God Is Not the God of Deism. A deistic God is not the here-and-now cause of the universe, as is the theistic God. Since the universe is a dependent being, it needs something Independent on which to depend—at all times. The universe never ceases to be dependent or contingent. Once contingent, always contingent. A contingent being cannot become a Necessary Being, for a Necessary Being cannot come to be or cease to be. So, if the universe ever ceased being contingent, it would become a Necessary Being, which is impossible.

God Is Not the God of Finite Godism. An uncaused cause is not finite. For every finite being needs a cause, that is, it is caused. But this cause is uncaused. Hence, it cannot be finite or limited. Rather, it is the unlimited Limiter of every limited being. In short, everything limited is caused. Thus, this uncaused Being must be unlimited.

God Is Not the God of Atheism. The uncaused Cause cannot be identical with the material universe, as many atheists believe. As ordinarily conceived, the cosmos or material universe is a limited spatiotemporal system. It is, for example, subject to the second law of thermodynamics and is running down. But an Uncaused Cause is unlimited and not running down. Further, since space and time imply limitations to a here-and-now kind of existence and an uncaused Cause is not limited, then it cannot be identical to the space-time world. The theistic God is in the temporal world as its very ground of continuing existence, but he is not of the world in that it is limited and he is not.

If, in response, one claimed that the whole of the material universe is not temporal and limited, as are the parts, this would only demonstrate what theism claims. For his conclusion is that there exists, beyond the contingent world of the limited spatiotemporality, a “whole” reality that is eternal, unlimited, and necessary. In other words, it agrees with theism that there is a God beyond the limited, changing world of experience. It is a substitute for God which admits that there is a “whole” reality that is “more” than the experienced part of reality and that has all the essential metaphysical attributes of the theistic God.

Therefore, the conclusion of the cosmological argument must be the God of theism, namely, the one, indivisible, infinite, necessary, uncaused Cause of everything that exists, both when it came to exist and right now as it continues to exist.

No Here-and-Now Cause. But much of the above reasoning comes to naught if, as some critics argue, there could be a beginning cause without the need for one now. Either such a Cause has long since gone out of existence, or at least it is not necessary to sustain the universe.

A God who caused the universe and subsequently ceased to exist could not be the theistic God demonstrated by the cosmological argument. 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 without three sides.

A necessary being must cause a contingent being at all times. For a contingent being must always be contingent as long as it exists, since it cannot become a Necessary Being. But if a contingent being is always contingent, then it always needs a Necessary Being on which it can depend for its existence. Since no contingent being holds itself in existence, it must be held in existence at all times by a Necessary Being.

For a complete discussion of this argument, see the “objections” section of COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT . As is explained in that article, existing is a moment-by-moment process. No thing receives all of its being at once, nor even the next instant of it. Existence comes one moment at a time. At each moment of dependent being there must be some independent Being by whom the moment of being is given. God as Pure Actuality is actualizing everything that is actual.

Arbitrary Models. This objection states that it is only because we have modeled reality as contingent or composed of actuality and potentiality that we are, therefore, forced to conclude that there is a Necessary Being or Pure Actuality. This, they insist, is an arbitrary and loaded way to view reality.

Theists point out that the contingency/necessity model is not arbitrary but is logically exhaustive. Either there is only a Necessary Being, or else there is a contingent being(s) as well as a Necessary Being. But there cannot be merely a contingent being(s). For contingent beings do not account for their own existence, since they are but might not be.

Likewise, either everything is one undifferentiated Pure Actuality or pure potentiality or a combination of actuality and potentiality. No other possibility exists. But there cannot be two Pure Actualities, since actuality as such is unlimited and unique. There cannot be two ultimates or two infinite beings. So whatever else exists must be a combination of actuality and potentiality. But since no potentiality can actualize itself, then beings composed of actuality and potentiality must be actualized by Pure Actuality.

Modal Fallacies. Modal logic is based on the distinction between the possible and the necessary. This form of reasoning has developed its own list of fallacies. Some modal logicians would argue that it is possible for all the parts of my car to break down at one time, but this does not mean that all the parts necessarily will break down at one time. Thus, though all contingent beings possibly do not exist, they do not necessarily not exist at one time and thus would need no universal cause of existence.

As far as modal logic is concerned, this objection is correct and would cast doubt on some forms of the argument from contingency. However, this objection does not apply to Aquinas’s argument, since it is not concerned with showing that all things that could *not exist* needed a single cause to produce their existence, but that all things that *do exist* (though possibly could not exist) need a cause for their present existence, both individually and in toto.

A second possible charge of committing a modal fallacy is that it is illegitimate to infer from the fact that the world necessarily needs a being as First Cause that the world needs a *Necessary Being* as First Cause. Again, as it is stated, that charge would be correct, but the cosmological argument of Aquinas does not make that inference. God is not considered a Necessary Being because the argument necessarily demonstrates his being. He is called Necessary Being because ontologically he cannot not be. We learn of his Necessary Being, not from the rigor of our premises, but because the cause of all contingent being cannot be a contingent being, but must be a Necessary Being.

The mistake of many theists, especially since Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), is to cast the cosmological argument in a context of *logical necessity* based on the principle of *sufficient reason* . This ultimately leads to contradictions and an invalidated argument. In contrast, other theists (including Aquinas) used the principle of existential causality to infer the existence of unlimited Cause or Actualizer of all existence. This conclusion is not rationally inescapable, but it is actually undeniable. If any contingent being exists, then a Necessary Being exists; if any being with the potentiality not to exist does exist, then a Being with no potentiality not to exist must exist.

Imperfect World, Imperfect Cause. It is also objected that, if there is a cause of the universe, it need not be perfect, since the world is imperfect. If a cause resembles its effects, then it would seem that the world must be caused by an imperfect, finite, male and female group of gods. For this is what we know as the causes of like imperfect things in our experience.

The ultimate cause, however, cannot be imperfect, since the not perfect can only be known if there is ultimately a Perfect by which it is known not to be perfect. Nor must the cause be identical to its effect. The cause cannot be less than the effect, but it can be more. The cause of finite being cannot be imperfect, since it is Being itself or Pure Actuality. Only Pure Actuality can actualize a potency (potentiality). No potency can actualize itself. Hence, the Cause of being must be perfect in its Being, since it has no potency, limitations, or privation that can constitute an imperfection.

The Explanation of Chance. Why posit an intelligent cause (designer) of the world when chance can explain the apparent design? Given enough time, any “lucky” combination will result. The universe may be a “happy accident” (*see* CHANCE).

For one thing, there has not been enough time for chance to work. One former atheist, Fred Hoyle, calculated that, given the geological time span of billions of years, the chances are still only one to 1030,000 that so complex a form as even a one-celled animal would emerge by purely natural forces (Hoyle). The chances are virtually zero that chance was responsible.

Second, chance does not “cause” anything; only forces do. And it is known that natural forces do not produce specified complexity, such as that found in living things. Chance is only an abstraction that describes the intersection of two or more lines of causes.

Finally, it is unscientific and irrational to appeal to chance. As even the skeptic David Hume noted, science is based on observation about regularly recurring events. And the only kind of cause known to rational beings that can cause the specified complexity found in living things is an intelligent cause (*see* EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL).

A Possible Nonexistence. According to this objection, it is always possible to conceive of anything, including God, as not existing. Hence, nothing exists necessarily. Since God is said to be a Necessary Being, then even he must not exist necessarily; therefore God must not exist at all.

This is a valid objection to the ontological argument, but not against the cosmological and teleological arguments. It is possible that nothing would ever have existed, including God. So a total state of nothingness is not an impossible state of affairs. However, something does undeniably exist, and so this objection is irrelevant. For as long as something finite does exist there must be a Cause for its existence.

Only a Logical Existence. Some antitheists argue that it is logically necessary for a triangle to have three sides, but it is not necessary for any three-sided thing to exist. Even if it were logically necessary for God to exist, that does not mean he actually does exist.

At best, this is an objection only to the ontological argument. Theists need not, and most theists do not, conceive of God as a *logically* necessary being but as an *actually* necessary being.

It is logically possible that no triangle exists, but if it does exist, it actually necessarily has three sides. It is logically possible that there is no Necessary Being. But if a Necessary Being exists, then it is actually necessary for it to exist. For a Necessary Being must exist necessarily.

Inferring Cause from Experience. There is an unsurpassable gulf between the thing-to-me (*phenomena*) and the thing-in-itself (*noumena* or real), Kant said. We cannot know the noumena; we know things only as they appear to us, not as they really are. Therefore, we cannot validly infer a real cause from effects we experience.

This objection begs the question and is self-defeating. It begs the question by supposing that our senses do not provide us information about the real world. It wrongly assumes that we sense only sensation rather than sense reality. It mistakenly believes that we know only our ideas, rather than knowing reality through our ideas. Second, in claiming that one cannot know reality, one is making a statement about reality. The agnostic claims to know enough about reality to be sure that nothing can be known about reality. This is a self-defeating claim.

How can Kant know that reality causes our experiences unless there is a valid causal connection between the real (noumenal) world of the cause and the apparent (phenomenal) world of the experience? What is more, one could not even know his own ideas were the result of his

mind unless there were real connections between cause (mind) and effect (ideas). Nor would he write books, as agnostics do, assuming that readers would look at the phenomenal effects (words) and be able to know something about the noumenal (real) cause (mind).

The Cause of God. Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) argued that if everything needs a cause, then so does God. And if all things do not need a cause, then neither does the world. But in neither case do we need a First Cause.

The major premise is false. Theists do not claim that *everything* needs a cause. The principle of causality states only that everything that *begins* (or is finite) needs a cause. If something does not have a beginning, then it obviously does not need a Beginner. Nontheists such as Russell acknowledge that the universe does not need a cause—it is just “there.” If the universe can just “be there” without a cause, why can’t God?

Arbitrary or Not Ultimate. Russell believed that the moral law is either beyond God or else it results from his will. But if it is beyond God, then God is not ultimate, since he is subject to it (and hence, is not the Ultimate good). And if God decided what would be moral, then he is arbitrary and not essentially good, in which case he would not be worthy of our worship. So, in either case no God worthy of the name exists.

Theists respond in two ways. Voluntarists take the dilemma by the horn and agree that the moral law flows from God’s will but deny that this is arbitrary. God is the source of all good. What he wills to be right, is right. And what he wills to be regarded as wrong, is wrong. God’s will is the ultimate court of appeal.

Essentialists go through the horns of a dilemma, pointing out that there is a third alternative: God’s will is subject to what is essentially good, but this Good is his own unchangeable nature. That is, something is not good simply because God wills it (voluntarism). Rather, God wills it because it is good. It is good because it is in accord with his unchangeably good nature. In this way God is neither arbitrary nor less than ultimate.

All-Powerful Existence. Theists claim God is all powerful. But many nontheists insist this is impossible. The logic of their argument is:

1. If God were all powerful, then he could do anything.
2. And if he could do anything, then God could make a rock so big that he can’t move it.
3. But if God could not move this rock, then he could not do everything.
4. Hence, an all-powerful God that can do anything cannot exist.

Put in this form, the theist rejects the first premise as an improper definition of omnipotence. God cannot literally do anything. He can only do what is possible to do consistent with his being as God. He cannot do what is logically or actually impossible. God cannot do some things. He cannot cease being God. He cannot contradict his own nature (cf. Heb. 6:18). He cannot do what

is logically impossible, for example make a square circle. Likewise, God cannot make a rock so heavy that he cannot lift for the simple reason that anything he can make is finite. Anything that is finite he can move by his infinite power. If he can make it, he can move it.

Both Good and Evil, Being and Nonbeing. Nontheists say that, if God is infinite, then he is everything, including opposites. He is both good and evil. He is both perfect and imperfect. He is also both Being and nonbeing. But these are opposites, and God cannot be opposites. Further, the theist cannot admit that God is evil or nonexistent. Therefore, no theistic God exists.

The theist rejects the premise that God is everything; he is only what he is—an absolutely perfect Being. And God is not what he is not—an imperfect being. He is the Creator and not a creature. God is pure and necessary existence. So, he cannot be nonexistent. God cannot be opposite of what he is, any more than a triangle can be a square or a circle can be a rectangle.

When we say that God is unlimited or infinite, we do not mean that he is everything. It does not mean, for example, that God is limited and finite. The unlimited cannot be limited. The uncreated Creator cannot be a created creature. The standard for all good cannot be evil.

A Projection of Imagination. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) argued that humans made God in their image. God is only a projection of what we think of ourselves. Ideas of God come from our ideas of human beings. Hence, God is only a projection of these ideas. He does not exist beyond them.

This kind of argument makes a serious error: Who can know that God is “nothing but” a projection without “more than” knowledge? The essence of his argument can be stated this way:

1. God exists in human consciousness.
2. But humans cannot go beyond their own consciousness.
3. Therefore, God does not exist beyond our consciousness.

The problem with this argument is the second premise. Simply because we cannot go beyond our consciousness does not mean nothing exists beyond our consciousness. I cannot go beyond my mind, but I know there are other minds beyond mine with whom I converse. If we cannot go beyond our consciousness, then Feuerbach could not make the statement that no God is there. How does he know there is no God out there, unless his knowledge can go beyond his consciousness? To make “nothing-but” statements (such as, “God is nothing but a projection of our imagination”) implies “more-than” knowledge.

Simply because we do not go beyond our own consciousness does not mean that our consciousness is not aware of things that are beyond us. We cannot *get* outside of ourselves, but we can *reach* outside of ourselves. This is precisely what knowledge does. Consciousness is not simply consciousness of itself. We are also conscious of others. When we read a book we are not simply conscious of our own ideas; we are conscious of another mind who wrote the words from

which we got those ideas. Consciousness does reach beyond itself. That is what the senses and mind enable us to do.

An Illusion. Sigmund Freud insisted that God is an illusion—something we wish to be true but have no basis for believing, beyond our wish. This argument is developed in the article, Freud, Sigmund. His apparent reasoning:

1. An illusion is something based only in wish but not in reality.
2. The belief in God has the characteristics of an illusion.
3. Therefore, belief in God is a wish not based in reality.

Of course, in this form the theist challenges the minor premise. Not all who believe in God do so simply because they wish for a Cosmic Comforter. Some find God because they thirst for reality; others because they are interested in truth, rather than feeling good. God is not only a comforting Father; he is also a Judge who punishes. Christians believe in hell, and yet no one really wishes this to be true. Freud, in fact, may have it backwards: perhaps our image of earthly fathers is patterned after God, rather than the reverse. Certainly the desire for God is not the only basis for believing that God exists (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). Freud’s argument would, at best, apply only to those who had no other basis than their own wish that God exists.

What is more, the reality of God’s existence is independent of the reasons people do or do not wish him to exist. Either God does not exist or he does. Desires cannot draw the truth an inch either way. Freud’s disbelief might itself be an illusion, based on his own desire not to follow God and obey God (cf. Ps. 14:1 ; Rom. 1:18–32).

Chance and Origins. If chance can explain the origin of the universe (*see* EVOLUTION), there is no need for a cause. This objection to proofs for God’s existence is subject to several criticisms.

An effect cannot be greater than its cause. The Cause of intelligent beings must be intelligent. It cannot give perfections it does not have to give (*see* FIRST PRINCIPLES ; TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT).

It is unscientific to speak of chance causing the incredibly complex and intelligent patterns found in the structure of life (*see* TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT) and the universe (*see* BIG BANG). Only intelligent intervention adequately explains the organization of DNA in the simplest organism.

Chance is only a statistical *description* of the likelihood of events. Only forces or powers can cause events. Chance merely describes the likelihood of a force (or forces) producing a given event.

Chance cannot be a cause in terms of the cosmological argument. Chance is not a power, and a nonpower cannot cause anything.

Even the critic who proposes chance explanation of the entire universe would not agree that the very words used to express his ideas were a product of chance.

The Possibility of Nothing. Some critics object to the cosmological argument on the ground that it is logically possible that nothing ever existed, including God. If it is logically possible that God never existed, then it is not logically necessary that he does exist.

The theist can readily admit that it is possible for a Necessary Being not to exist so long as nothing else ever existed either. However, *if* there is a Necessary Being then it is not possible that he does not exist. A *logically* Necessary Being need not necessarily actually exist. But an *actually* Necessary Being must necessarily actually exist. The atheists' objection to the concept of a necessary being applies only to a logically necessary being, not to an actually necessary being.

While it is *logically* possible that nothing ever existed, including God, it is not *actually* possible. Something does exist. As long as it is not actually possible for a total state of nothingness, then something must necessarily and eternally exist (e.g., God), since nothing cannot produce something. And if there were ever a total state of nothingness, then there would always be a total state of nothingness. For nothingness cannot produce anything.

A Necessary (Uncaused) Being. But perhaps the whole idea of an uncaused Being is meaningless. It is a coherent concept in the sense of being noncontradictory. A contingent being is one that *can* not exist. A necessary being is one which *cannot* not exist. Since the latter is logically (and actually) opposite of the other, then to reject the coherence of a necessary being would involve rejecting the coherence of a contingent being. But those are the only two kinds of being there can be. Hence, to reject the meaningfulness of the concept of a necessary being would be to reject the meaningfulness of all being. But to say "all being is meaningless" is to make a statement about being which purports to be meaningful. This is self-defeating.

Another way to show the meaningfulness of the concept of an uncaused Being is to point to the atheist's concept of an uncaused universe. Most atheists believe it is meaningful to speak of a universe which had no cause. But if the concept of an uncaused universe is meaningful, so is the concept of an uncaused God.

An Uncaused Universe. Meaningful though an uncaused universe may be, pulling one together in practical terms is something else. The universe is a collection of parts, each contingent and so needing a cause. Either the whole universe is *equal* to all its parts or else it is *more* than all its parts. If it is equal to them, then it too needs a cause. The sum of many dependent parts will never equal more than a dependent whole, no matter how big it is. Adding up *effects* never yields a cause; it produces only a big pile of effects. Only if the universe is *more* than all its effects can it be uncaused and necessary. But to claim that there is a something more, uncaused and necessary on which everything in the universe is dependent is to claim exactly what the theist means by a Necessary Being on which all contingent beings depend for their existence.

The whole issue can be clarified by asking the nontheist this question: If everything in the universe (i.e., every contingent being) suddenly ceased to exist, would there be anything left in existence? If not, then the universe as a whole is contingent too, since the existence of the whole is dependent on the parts. But if something remained after every contingent part of the universe suddenly ceased to exist, then there really is a transcendent necessary uncaused Something which is not dependent on the universe for its existence. But in either case, the atheists' claim fails.

Unconvincing Arguments. Some object that theistic arguments persuade only those who already believe, and who do not need them. Therefore, they are useless. But, whether anyone is convinced by an argument depends on several factors. For one thing, even if the argument is sound, persuasiveness will depend in part on whether the argument is understood.

Once the mind understands the argument, giving assent to it is a matter of the will. No one is ever forced to believe in God simply because the mind understands that there is a God. Personal factors may lead a person to remain uncommitted to belief. Theistic arguments do not automatically convert unbelievers. But persons of good will who understand the argument ought to accept it as true. If they do not, it does not prove that the argument is wrong; rather, it shows their reluctance to accept it.

Conclusion. Many objections have been proposed against the proofs for the existence of God. They are usually based on a misunderstanding of the proofs. None succeed in falsifying the arguments. If they did they would be a proof that you cannot have a proof. That is a self-defeating argument in itself.

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Gospel of Thomas, The. *The Claim of the Critics.* Some radical critics of the New Testament claim that the Gnostic (*see* GNOSTICISM) Gospel of Thomas is equal or superior to the New Testament and that it does not support the resurrection of Christ. The so-called Jesus Seminar places the Gospel of Thomas in their otherwise severely truncated Bible. Both stances are serious challenges to the historic Christian faith.

The Gospel of Thomas was discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, near Cairo in 1945 and was translated into English in 1977. While some have attempted to date parts of it earlier, the Gospel of Thomas is most reliably dated no earlier than A.D. 140–170. It contains 114 secret sayings of Jesus. Defenders of the Gospel of Thomas include Walter Baur, Frederick Wisse, A. Powell Davies, and Elaine Pagels.

An Evaluation of the Credibility of the Gospel of Thomas. The best way to evaluate the credibility of the Gospel of Thomas is by way of comparison to the New Testament Gospels, which often the same critics have grave doubts about (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS, RELIABILITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS). When this comparison is made, the Gospel of Thomas comes up seriously short.

The Canonical Gospels Are Much Earlier. Assuming the widely accepted dates of the Synoptic Gospels (ca. A.D. 60–80), the Gospel of Thomas falls nearly a century short. Indeed, there is evidence of even earlier dates for some Gospels (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF), as even some liberal scholars admit (see Robinson, John A., all). O. C. Edwards asserts of the Gospel of Thomas and the canonical Gospels that “As historical reconstructions there is no way the two can claim equal credentials” (27). And Joseph Fitzmyer adds, “Time and again, she is blind to the fact that she is ignoring a good century of Christian existence in which these ‘gnostic Christians’ were simply not around” (123).

The Gospel of Thomas Is Dependent on the Canonical Gospels. Even if the Gospel of Thomas could be shown to contain some authentic statements of Jesus, “no convincing case has been made that any given saying of Jesus in the Gospels depends on a saying in the Gospel of Thomas” (Boyd, 118). Rather, the reverse is true since the Gospel of Thomas presupposes truths found earlier in the canonical Gospels.

The Gospel of Thomas Portrays a Second-Century Gnosticism. The Gospel of Thomas is influenced by the kind of Gnosticism prevalent in the second century. For instance, it puts into

the mouth of Jesus these unlikely and demeaning words: “Every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (cited by Boyd, 118).

The Gospel of Thomas’s Lack of Narrative Does Not Prove Jesus Did No Miracles. The fact that the author(s) of the Gospel of Thomas did not include narratives of Jesus does not mean they disbelieved in Jesus’ miracles. The book seems to be a collection of Jesus’ sayings rather than his deeds.

The Canonical Gospels Are More Historically Trustworthy. There are numerous reasons why the New Testament Gospels are more trustworthy than the Gnostic ones. First, the earliest Christians were meticulous in preserving Jesus’ words and deeds. Second, the Gospel writers were close to the eyewitnesses and pursued the facts (Luke 1:1–4). Third, there is good evidence that the Gospel writers were honest reporters (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; WITNESSES, HUME’S CRITERIA FOR). Fourth, the overall picture of Jesus presented in the Gospels is the same.

The Basic New Testament Canon Was Formed in the First Century. Contrary to claims of the critics, the basic New Testament canon was formed in the first century. The only books in dispute have no apologetic effect on the argument for the reliability of the historical material used to establish the deity of Christ.

The New Testament itself reveals that a collection of books existed in the first century. Peter speaks of having Paul’s epistles (2 Peter 3:15–16). In fact, he considered them on a par with Old Testament “Scripture.” Paul had access to Luke’s Gospel, and quotes it in 1 Timothy 5:18 . The churches were instructed to send their epistle on to other churches (Col. 4:16).

Beyond the New Testament, there are extrabiblical canonical lists that support the existence of a New Testament canon (see Geisler and Nix, 294). Indeed, all the Gospels and Paul’s basic epistles are represented on these lists. Even the heretical canon of the Gnostic *Marcion (ca. A.D. 140) had the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul’s epistles, including 1 Corinthians.

The Second-Century Fathers Support the Canonical Gospels. The second-century Fathers cited a common body of books. This includes all the crucial books that support the historicity of Christ and his resurrection, namely, the Gospels, Acts, and 1 Corinthians. Clement of Roman (A.D. 95) cited the Gospels (*Corinthians* , 13, 42, 46). Ignatius (ca. 110–115) cited Luke 24:39 (*Smyrnaeans* 3). Polycarp (ca. 115) cited all the Synoptic Gospels (*Philippians* 2 , 7). The *Didache* often cites the Synoptic Gospels (1, 3, 8, 9, 15–16). The Epistle of Barnabas (ca. 135) cites Matthew 22:14). Papias (ca. 125–140) in the *Oracles* speaks of Matthew, Mark (following Peter), and John (last) who wrote Gospels. He says three times that Mark made no errors. What is more, the Fathers considered the Gospels and Paul’s epistles to be on a par with the inspired Old Testament.

Thus the Fathers vouched for the accuracy of the canonical Gospels in the early second century, well before the Gospel of Thomas was even written.

The Resurrection Account. The Gospel of Thomas does acknowledge Jesus' resurrection. In fact, the living, resurrected Christ himself speaks in it (34:25–27; 45:1–16). True, it does not stress the resurrection, but this is to be expected since it is primarily a “sayings” source rather than historical narration. Furthermore, the Gnostic theological bias against matter would downplay the bodily resurrection.

Conclusion. The evidence for the authenticity of the Gospel of Thomas does not even compare with that for the New Testament. The New Testament dates from the first century; the Gospel of Thomas, the second. The New Testament is verified by many lines of evidence, including self-references, early canonical lists, thousands of citations by the early Fathers, and the well-established dates for the Synoptic Gospels.

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Greenleaf, Simon. Simon Greenleaf (1783–1853) was one of the great minds in American legal history. He not only taught law at Harvard University and produced the standard three-volume study of legal evidence (*A Treatise on the Law of Evidences*, 1842–53) used to teach lawyers the rules of legal evidence and the means by which the authenticity of documents and witnesses can be tested.

When challenged to apply these rules to the New Testament documents, Greenleaf produced a volume (*The Testimony of the Evangelists*) which defends the authenticity of the New Testament. It defends an important link in the overall apologetic argument for Christianity—the trustworthiness of the New Testament witnesses.

An Authentic New Testament. Greenleaf's conclusions include strong points of evidence. The following quotations are from throughout his work:

“Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise,” Greenleaf wrote. According to this “Ancient Document Rule” the New Testament would qualify as authentic, since it bears no marks of forgery and has been in the proper custody of the church down through the centuries, as shown by manuscript evidence (*see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS).

“In matters of public and general interest, all persons must be presumed to be conversant, on the principle that individuals are presumed to be conversant with their own affairs.” Applied to the New Testament witnesses, this would mean that the books coming from them must be presumed authentic, since they were speaking of their own affairs, with which they were conversant.

“In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is not whether it is possible that the testimony may be false, but whether there is sufficient probability that it is true.” Since there is probable evidence that the New Testament witnesses told the truth (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF), the possibility that they could have been lying does not outweigh the truth of their witness.

“A proposition of fact is proved, when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence.” There is competent and satisfactory evidence for the facticity of the New Testament record (*see* ARCHAEOLOGY, NEW TESTAMENT).

“In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed credible, until the contrary is shown; the burden of impeaching his credibility lying on the objector.” The New Testament, like other books, must be presumed innocent. This is just the opposite of the “presumed guilty until proven innocent” principle used by negative critics (*see* BIBLE CRITICISM).

“The credit due to the testimony of witnesses depends upon, firstly, their honesty; secondly, their ability; thirdly, their number and the consistency of their testimony; fourthly, the conformity of their testimony with experience; and fifthly, the coincidence of their testimony with collateral circumstances.” In accordance with these principles the New Testament is an authentic record (*see* also RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ; WITNESSES, HUME'S CRITERIA FOR).

Moral Certainty. Of the nature of moral certainty, Greenleaf wrote (24):

But the proof of matters of fact rests upon moral evidence alone; by which is meant not merely that species of evidence which we do not obtain either from our own senses, from intuition, or from demonstration. In the ordinary affairs of life we do not require nor expect demonstrative evidence, because it is inconsistent with the nature of matters of fact, and to insist on its production would be unreasonable and absurd.

On the whole, Greenleaf found himself persuaded of a high level of probability that the accounts are true:

Thus the force of circumstantial evidence is found to depend on the number of particulars involved in the narrative; the difficulty of fabricating them all, if false, and the great facility of detection; the nature of the circumstances to be compared, and from which the dates and other facts are to be collected; the intricacy of the comparison; the number of the intermediate steps in the process of deduction; and the circuitry of the investigation.

The narratives of the sacred dwellers, both Jewish and Christian, abound in examples of this kind of evidence, the value of which is hardly capable of being properly estimated. It does not, as has been already remarked, amount to mathematical demonstration; nor is this degree of proof justly demandable in any moral conduct. In all human transactions, the highest degree of assurance to which we can arrive, short of the evidence of our own senses, is that of probability. The most that can be asserted is, that the narrative is more likely to be true than false; and it may be in the highest degree more likely, but still be short of absolute mathematical certainty. [45]

Conclusion. Greenleaf's conclusion speaks for itself:

The narratives of the evangelists are now submitted to the reader's perusal and examination, upon the principles and by the rules already stated. . . . His business is that of a lawyer, examining the testimony of witnesses by the rules of his profession, in order to ascertain whether, if they had thus testified on oath, in a court of justice, they would be entitled to credit; and whether their narratives, as we now have them, would be received as ancient documents, coming from the proper custody. If so, then it is believed that every honest and impartial man will act consistently with that result, by receiving their testimony in all the extent of its import.

Sources

S. Greenleaf, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidences*

———, *The Testimony of the Evangelists*