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**Hadith, Alleged Miracles in.** See MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED MIRACLES OF .

**Healings, Psychosomatic.** Healings occur in various religions. So they have no apologetic value. Furthermore, many events claimed to be supernatural are only psychosomatic. Whether something actually happens in the body, these fall into the category of false miracles ( *see* MIRACLES, FALSE ) and must be differentiated from true ones ( *see* MIRACLES, DEFINITION OF ). So it is in the interest of the apologetic enterprise to differentiate supernatural and psychological healings.

It has been demonstrated that the mind has an incredible influence on the body. Psychosomatic or “mind-body” sicknesses and cures do occur. Psychosomatic illnesses are not imaginary. Illnesses with no basis in the body are called conversion disorders or other forms of neurosis. An ulcer is a psychosomatic illness if it was caused at least in part by nervousness that disrupted the digestive process and induced overproduction of acids or other enzymes. Since they have an emotional basis, such sicknesses are prone to healing by the mind. This is used by some to argue that healings are always psycho-emotional phenomena.

**Mind over Matter.** People have become sick and even hospitalized simply because a group of friends (doing an experiment) have suggested to them they were ill. They have been “cured” the same way—when the friends later suggested that they looked better. This is an example of emotion-caused illness and “healing” that is only peripherally related to the body.

Physician and Christian apologist Paul Brand gives examples of the mind’s power to heal the body. The mind can effectively control pain by stimulating production of endorphins, simple mental discipline, flooding the nervous system with other stimuli. Acupuncture is an example of adding sensations to disrupt pain.

In the placebo effect, faith in simple sugar pills stimulates the mind to control pain and even heal some disorders. In some experiments among those with terminal cancer, morphine was an effective painkiller in two-thirds of patients, but placebos were equally effective in half of those. The placebo tricks the mind into believing relief has come, and the body responds accordingly.

Through biofeedback, people can train themselves to direct bodily processes that previously were thought involuntary. They can control blood pressure, heart rate, brain waves, and body temperature.

Under hypnosis, 20 percent of patients can be induced to lose consciousness of pain so completely that they can undergo surgery without anesthetics. Some patients have even cured warts under hypnosis. The hypnotist suggests the idea, and the body performs a remarkable feat of skin renovation and construction, involving the cooperation of thousands of cells in a mental-directed process not otherwise attainable.

In a false pregnancy, a woman believes so strongly in her pregnant condition that her mind directs an extraordinary sequence of activities: It increases hormone flow, enlarges breasts, suspends menstruation, induces morning sickness, and even prompts labor contractions. All this without fertilization and a growing fetus (Brand, 19).

Dr. William Nolen explains that “the patient who suddenly discovers . . . that he can now move an arm or leg that was previously paralyzed had that paralysis as a result of an emotional, not a physical disturbance.” It is known that “Neurotics and hysterics will frequently be relieved of their symptoms by the suggestions and ministrations of charismatic healers. It is in treating patients of this sort that healers claim their most dramatic triumphs” (Nolen, 287). “There is nothing miraculous about these cures. Psychiatrists, internists, G.P.’s and M.D.’s who do psychiatric therapy, relieve thousands of such patients of their symptoms every year” (ibid.).

Christian psychiatrist Paul Meyer, revealed that he healed a young woman of blindness by merely instructing her that when she awoke from sleep in another room, she would be able to see. The cure came just as the doctor ordered. Her sight was restored by the power of suggestion. Other doctors have recorded cures of chronic diarrhea by prescribing placebos. Severe skin disease and even lameness have been cured by such means.

It is commonly known that up to 80 percent of disease is stress related (Pelletier, 8). These emotionally induced diseases can often be reversed by psychological therapy or “faith healings” where the proper mental attitude occasions a healing effect.

None of these cures are supernatural. The effect of the mind on the body is a natural process. It involves no suspension of natural laws. One can learn to do it. When performed by a person who claims to be a channel for God, it is no less natural. Faith in various kinds of gods or just faith in another person (the doctor or healer) will do the same thing.

Christians should not be surprised that natural psychosomatic cures occur. God created the mind with wonderful abilities and the body’s curative powers. The Bible recognizes the effect of the mind on one’s health: “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” ( Prov. 17:22 ). In his book, *Anatomy of an Illness* , Norman Cousins described in detail how he literally laughed himself well from cancer. One can actually get sick when saddened by tragedy or well upon hearing good news.

Since God has created us as mind-body unities, he should get the credit when this marvelous relationship of mind affecting body is used to bring healing. However, it is a serious overclaim to call these cures supernatural.

**What the Mind Cannot Do.** There are some conditions “faith” alone cannot cure. The power of positive thinking cannot avoid death, raise the dead, give sight to a body without eyes, grow amputated limbs, or heal quadriplegics. Dr. Nolen observes that no paralyzing spinal cord injury has been or ever will be cured through faith-healing (Nolen, 286). Joni Earickson Tada suffered such an injury in a swimming accident and was left a quadriplegic. In spite of fervent prayers, she remains unhealed by all the faith she could muster. Joni concludes “God certainly can, and sometimes does, heal people in a miraculous way today. But the Bible does not teach that He will always heal those who come to Him in faith. He sovereignly reserves the right to heal or not to heal as He sees fit” (Tada, 132).

**Supernatural Intervention.** Mrs. Tada recognizes that, if God heals her spinal cord, a different kind of healing would take place, one that suspends natural processes. Miracles, in contrast to natural healings, are the way God works on special occasions. The way God usually heals is slowly. But in a miracle he works immediately. When Jesus healed the man with leprosy, the cure was instantaneous—not the result of self-rejuvenation of skin tissues ( Mark 1:42 ).

Many of Jesus’ miracles involved a speeding up of a natural process. The farmer puts grain into the ground and it slowly multiplies into more grain by harvest time. Jesus, however, took bread (grain) and immediately multiplied it to feed 5000 ( John 6:10–12 ).

We refer to the “miracles” of birth or life. God is the one who causes both. But it confuses the issue to speak of natural, gradual, and repeatable events as “miracles.” They are simply the way God works regularly. They are marvelous but not miraculous ( see MIRACLE ).

A true miracle is not a natural activity but a direct supernatural act ( see MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ). This is why one of the biblical words for miracle is “wonder.” It attracts our attention. A bush burning is not unusual, but when it burns without being consumed and the voice of God speaks from it, it is not a natural event ( Exod. 3:1–14 ).

From an apologetic standpoint, how do we distinguish a normal cure from a miraculous one? Can we tell a psychological cure from a supernatural one? Only the latter has apologetic value ( see MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ).

Faith is an essential ingredient of a psychosomatic healing, but not for a supernatural healing, though it may accompany it. Someone can be healed who does not believe healing is possible. Thirty-five miracles of Jesus are recorded in the Gospels. Of these the faith of the recipient is only mentioned in ten: (1) the lame man ( John 5:1–9 ); (2) a leper ( Matt. 8:2–4 ); (3) a withered hand ( Matt. 9:2–8 ); (4) the man born blind ( John 9:1–7 ); (5) blind Bartimaeus ( Matt. 20:29–34 ); (6) the hemorrhaging woman ( Matt. 9:20–22 ; Mark 5:24–34 ; Luke 8:43–48 ); (7) the ten lepers ( Luke 17:11–19 ); (8) Peter walking on water ( Matt. 14:24–33 ); (9) first miraculous catch of fish ( Luke 5:1–11 ); (10) the second miraculous catch of fish ( John 21:1–11 ).

In most of these cases faith was not explicitly demanded as a precondition. In the few cases where faith was required, it was probably faith in Christ as Messiah that was needed, not faith that the person could be healed. So even in these cases faith may not be required in order to be healed.

In at least eighteen of Jesus’ miracles, faith is not present explicitly or implicitly. In some cases the faith is a result of the miracle, not a condition of it. When Jesus turned water to wine, “He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him” ( John 2:11 ).

Jesus’ disciples did not believe he could feed the 5000 by multiplying loaves and fishes ( Luke 9:13–14 ; cf. Matt. 14:17 ). Even after they had seen Jesus feed 5000, they disbelieved he could do it again for 4000 ( Matt. 15:33 ). In the case of the paralytic, Jesus healed him when he saw the faith of the four who carried him to Jesus, not the faith of the man himself ( Mark 2:5 ).

In seven miracles Jesus could not have required faith. This is certainly true of the three he raised from the dead. Yet Jesus raised Lazarus ( John 11 ), the widow’s son ( Luke 7 ), and Jairus’ daughter ( Matthew 9 ). The same is true of the cursed fig tree ( Matt. 21 ), the miracle of the tax money in the fish ( Matt. 17:24–27 ), the two times Jesus multiplied loaves ( Matt. 14:15 ), and his calming of the sea ( Matt. 8:18–27 ).

Neither can it be shown that faith of the disciples was required. In most cases the disciples lacked faith. In the miracle of raising Lazarus, Jesus prayed that those present might believe that God has sent him ( John 11:42 ). Just before Jesus rebuked the waves, he said to the disciples, “Where is your faith?” ( Luke 8:25 ). After he calmed the waters he asked, “Do you still have no faith?” ( Mark 4:40 ).

Sometimes Jesus performed miracles in spite of unbelief. The disciples lacked faith to cast the demon out of the boy ( Matt. 17:14–21 ). Even the passage most often used to show that faith is necessary for miracles proves just the opposite. Matthew 13:58 tells us that “Jesus did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.” However, in spite of the unbelief present, Jesus laid “his hands on a few sick people and healed them” ( Mark 6:5 ).

**Distinguishing Healings.** There is a clear distinction between supernatural and psychological healing. A truly miraculous cure is distinguished from a mental one by several characteristics. Only religions manifesting these characteristics can use them as a confirmation of truth claims.

**Miracles Do Not Require Faith.** God is in sovereign control of the universe, and he can and does perform miracles with or without our faith. Miracles are “according to his will” ( Heb. 2:4 ). Miraculous gifts were distributed to New Testament believers “according to his will” ( 1 Cor. 12:11 ). As shown, Jesus performed miracles even where there was unbelief.

On the other hand, psychological healings require faith. Those who suffer from psychosomatic illnesses must believe, whether in God, in a physician, or in an evangelist. Their faith makes the healing possible. But there is nothing supernatural about that kind of healing. It happens to Buddhists ( see BUDDHISM ), Hindus ( see HINDUISM ), Roman Catholics, Protestants,

and even atheists. Healers claiming supernatural powers can do it. So can psychologists and psychiatrists.

*Miracles Do Not Require Personal Contact.* Sometimes the apostle laid hands on those whom God miraculously healed (cf. Acts 8:18). However, it was not essential to the miracles. Jesus never touched many of those who were healed. Jesus raised the nobleman's son from the dead from a long distance (John 4:50–54). Jesus never touched Lazarus when he brought him back to life (John 11:43–44). The apostle laid hands on the Samaritan believers so that they could receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18; 19:6). Yet the apostles themselves received the Spirit without anyone laying hands on them (Acts 2:1).

By contrast, faith healings depend on the laying on of hands or some other physical contact or personal influence. Some healers use prayer cloths. Others ask listeners to place their hands on the radio or TV as a point of contact. One evangelist asks people to stand on the Bible with their hands on the television. The personal contact or at least the psychological build up seem to be conditional to the healing itself.

*Miracles Involve No Relapses.* Biblical miracles last; there were no relapses. When Jesus healed a disease, it did not return. Of course, everyone eventually died, even those he raised from the dead. But this was a result of the natural process of mortality, not because the miracle was canceled. But when Jesus performed a miracle, it lasted. Whatever other eventual problems the body had, it was not because that miracle did not immediately and permanently repair that problem.

Psychological cures do not always last, whether induced by hypnotism, placebo pills, or faith healers. In fact, those "healed" and the healers eventually succumb to bad health. Radio preacher Chuck Smith relates that he knows some of the chief exponents of positive faith in the health and prosperity gospel who have spent time in the hospital for nervous exhaustion (Smith, 136–37).

*Miracles Are Always Successful.* Jesus never failed in a miracle he attempted. Since a miracle is an act of God, it is impossible for it to fail. It is true that Jesus did not always attempt to do a miracle. Sometimes he stated why (cf. Matt. 13:58). Since he was not in the entertainment business, Jesus did not always satisfy the fancy of his audience. God does miracles according to his will (Heb. 2:4) and purposes, not ours. But when God attempts a supernatural event, he does it.

Psychological attempts to heal are by no means all successful. As noted, some kinds of physical problems are not curable by faith. Psychological cures are most frequently successful on more suggestible personality types. Some studies show that the vast majority of people in the healing movement have these personality types.

*Miracles Are on Organic Sickesses, Not Just Functional Illness.* Jesus healed people born blind (John 9), and lame (John 5). The apostles cured a man lame from birth (Acts 3:2). Jesus restored a withered hand immediately (Mark 3:1–5). Psychological healings do not take place on any of these kinds of organic healings or conditions of nature. They are usually effective only

on functional diseases. Most often they only aid or speed recovery. Never do they instantaneously cure or restore the incurable.

Dr. Brand stated flatly that he has never heard an account of miraculous healing of pancreatic cancer, cystic fibrosis, a major birth defect, or amputation (interview, *Christianity Today*, 25 November 1983). George Bernard Shaw once caustically commented that the healings at Lourdes, France, left him unconvinced. He saw many crutches and wheel chairs on display "but not one glass eye, wooden leg, or toupee" (ibid.).

*Miracles Are Always Immediate.* As mentioned earlier, Jesus healed people "immediately" (Mark 1:42). When he spoke the sea was calmed "completely" (Matt. 18:26). When the apostle healed the man lame from birth, "instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong" (Acts 3:7). Even in the one case of a two stage miracle, each stage was accomplished immediately (Mark 8:22–25).

*Summary.* The mind can aid in the healing process. Positive mental attitude often hastens the natural curative process. When the sickness is psychologically caused, there can be a dramatic reversal when the person suddenly believes he can be healed. In this sense some psychosomatic cures can be immediate. But they cannot be done on all diseases, especially organic and incurable kinds. "Faith" cures of functional diseases are not supernatural. They lack the characteristics of a true miracle. It is these marks that give miracles apologetic value. Indeed, only the Judeo-Christian prophets have verified unique examples of these kinds of cures (see MIRACLES, AS CONFIRMATION OF TRUTH; MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED MIRACLES OF).

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**"Heathen," Salvation of.** The fate of those who have never heard the Gospel, traditionally called "heathen" by missiologists and apologists, poses a problem for the benevolence of God. If God is all-loving, then how can he send people to hell who have never heard about Jesus and how to be saved? Some estimate that at the end of the twentieth century about one-half of the

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*CT Christianity Today*

more than 5 billion people alive had never heard the Gospel. Many more had technically “heard” the Gospel but not really been taught about Christ in any meaningful way.

Two answers to this problem have been offered. Some believe the heathen can be saved apart from the Gospel if they respond to the light of general revelation. Others believe that God provides the truth of the Gospel by special revelation to those who truly seek him.

**Salvation in General Revelation.** Those who believe a sinner can be saved apart from hearing that Jesus died for their sins and rose from the dead ( 1 Cor. 15:1–5 ) reason in the following manner:

*The Love and Justice of God.* The Bible affirms that God is just ( Ps. 33:5 ). He is no respecter of persons. For “God does not show favoritism” ( Rom. 2:11 ). Abraham declared: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” ( Gen. 18:25 ). Further, God is all-loving. He loves the whole world and sent his only Son to die for it ( John 3:16 ). For “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” ( 2 Peter 3:9 ). Arguing from the attributes of love and justice, some Christian apologists insist that such a God would not condemn those who have never heard the Gospel of Christ. They offer some Scriptures in support for their belief:

*Acts 10:35* . Peter told Cornelius, the Gentile who had never heard the Gospel, that God “accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” ( Acts 10:35 ). The text indicates that he had “feared God” ( vs. 2 ) and was accepted by him, even though he had not yet heard the Christian message.

*Acts 19:2–6* . Acts 19:2–6 tells of believers who were saved many years after the time of Christ, even though they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Paul asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul declared the truth to them and “On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” ( Acts 19:5 ). But they were called “disciples” (believers) even before Paul preached to them ( vs. 1 ).

*Romans 2:6–7* . Paul declared that “God ‘will give to each person according to what he has done.’ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” ( Rom. 2:6–7 ). This is in the context of “Gentiles who have not the law” ( 2:14 ), that is, heathen. But this would mean that heathen can receive “eternal life” apart from special revelation through God’s law.

*Galatians 3:8* . According to Paul, “The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you’ ” ( Gal. 3:8 ). But the “Gospel” Abraham heard did not have the explicit content that Christ, the Son of God, died and rose from the dead. For when Abraham believed, the text simply says that, “He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be’ ” ( Gen. 15:5 ).

*Hebrews 11:6* . According to this verse, “anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” ( Heb. 11:6 ). This would seem to include those who have never heard the Gospel as well.

*Revelation 14:6* . John the apostle said: “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the *eternal gospel* to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” ( Rev. 14:6 ). If the Gospel by which they were saved is eternal, then it was the same one proclaimed in the Old Testament. The next text indicates that this text did not have the same content as the New Testament Gospel ( 1 Cor. 15:1–5 ). Yet people were saved by believing the good news that God is gracious.

*Jonah 3:1–5* . The Old Testament relates an explicit story as to how the heathen were saved—at least from physical destruction. The Jewish prophet Jonah was told to go to Nineveh (Assyria) and proclaim: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.” And “The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth” ( Jonah 3:4–5 ). And “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened” ( Jonah 3:10 ). Jonah later said of their conversion, “I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity” ( Jonah 4:2 ).

There is no indication whatsoever that the content they believed was any more than belief in a gracious God who forgives those who turn from their sins to him in faith.

*Psalms 19:1–4* . The very heavens proclaim the Gospel, according to Psalm 19 : “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” This passage appears to teach that everyone everywhere has heard the “Gospel” of creation by which they can be saved. Interestingly, this is the very passage referred to by the apostle Paul when he says no one can hear without a preacher ( Rom. 10:14 , 18 ).

*An Important Distinction.* All evangelicals believe it is necessary that Christ died and rose in order for anyone to be saved. Those who hold that salvation can be obtained through general revelation insist, however, that it is not necessary to *know* about this fact. They point out that one could receive a gift of new shoes from an unknown benefactor without knowing what animal died to provide the leather or who gave them the shoes. Hence, all verses that indicate Christ’s death and resurrection were necessary for salvation are taken to refer to the *fact* of Christ’s death, not to explicit *knowledge* of that fact.

**Salvation through Christ.** The standard orthodox position of Martin Luther and John Calvin and their disciples was that salvation is not possible apart from belief in the death and resurrection of Christ, at least not since the time of Christ.

*Salvation by Knowledge of Christ.* The standard orthodox position that salvation comes only through knowledge of Christ raises an even more serious problem about God’s justice and

benevolence with regard to the destiny of those who have never heard. Nonetheless, there are many Scriptures that point in this direction.

*Acts 4:12* . The apostles in Acts 4:12 declared that “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Since there is explicit reference to the “name” of Christ, it is difficult to believe that explicit knowledge of Christ is not demanded as a condition of salvation. It is not simply the *fact* of Christ but the *name* of Christ that is necessary for salvation.

*Romans 10:9* . Paul insists that “if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9 would seem to demand that confession of the very name of “Jesus” is necessary for salvation.

*Romans 10:13–14* . The apostle follows up by adding in 10:13–14 : “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” The emphasis on the fact that the unbeliever must “call” on Christ and that they must “hear” the Gospel by someone who is “preaching” to them would seem to eliminate the possibility that anyone can be saved today apart from hearing the Gospel of Christ.

*John 3:18* . Jesus himself said emphatically in John 3:18 : “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe [in him] stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” Explicit belief “in the name of Godone and only Son” is laid down as the condition of salvation.

*John 3:36* . John 3:36 makes it clear that “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” This seems to point clearly to knowledge of the “Son” (Christ) as necessary for salvation.

*John 10:9 , 11 , 14* . Jesus said in John 10:9–14 , “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. . . . I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. . . . I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” The fact that the sheep (believers) must “know” Christ and “enter” the gate indicates that an explicit knowledge of Christ is necessary for salvation.

*1 John 5:10–13* . John repeats the same truth in 1 John 5:10b–13 : “Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the *testimony* God has given about his Son. And this is the *testimony* : God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who *believe in the name of the Son of God* so that you may know that you have eternal life.” The emphasized words make clear that John is teaching that explicit knowledge of Christ is necessary for salvation.

*A Response to General Revelationists*. Proponents of salvation only through special revelation are well aware of proof texts used by those who believe salvation of the heathen is possible through general revelation alone.

*Acts 10:35* . Two things are often mentioned about the case of Cornelius. First, Cornelius is a proof that those who seek God in view of the light they have will be given special revelation by which they can come to know Christ. After all, the whole point of the story is that God sent Peter with a special revelation and that Cornelius did not become a Christian until after he heard and believed this special revelation. Second, some point out that the book of Acts is a transitional period between the Old Testament and the New Testament, during which those who were saved on Old Testament grounds were provided with the light of Christ by which they could become Christians. Cornelius may fit this category.

*Acts 19:2–6* . This passage is about disciples of John the Baptist who had not yet heard about the coming of the Holy Spirit. It has nothing to do with those who have never heard the Gospel. The episode illustrates the transitional nature of the time, during which those who had not yet heard the Christian message (or the full message) were saved on the grounds of the special revelation they had received.

*Hebrews 11:6* . According to Hebrews 11:6 , “anyone who comes to him [God] must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” While the reference is to knowledge of God, not of Christ, one includes the other. Since the context is Old Testament saints, not New Testament believers, it is understandable why the broader statement about explicit knowledge of Christ was not included. This is a statement of the minimal requirement to be saved in any age. It does not exclude belief in Christ as an explicit requirement of salvation.

*Galatians 3:8* . Proponents of special revelation respond in two ways to Galatians 3:8 . Some hold that even in Old Testament times believers did have an explicit knowledge of the coming Christ. Paul said the “seed” of Abraham was Christ ( Gal. 3:16 ). Jesus said to the Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” ( John 8:56 ). This may indicate that Abraham knew Christ personally (perhaps as the Angel of the Lord). Other proponents simply take Galatians 3:8 to describe the more minimal content (exclusive of explicit knowledge of Christ’s death and resurrection) necessary for salvation in the Old Testament. The content of what Abraham believed was clearly spelled out in the Old Testament ( Gen. 15:5–6 ) and it said nothing about Christ’s death and resurrection, only that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars of the heavens.

*Revelation 14:6* . John’s reference to the “*eternal gospel*,” whatever it may mean, does not support the view that salvation of the “heathen” is based on only general revelation. This message came to them by special revelation. God sent an angel to preach it. Further, the content of this Gospel was about those who believed in the “lamb of God” who “redeemed” them by his blood ( 14:1 , 4 ). That the Gospel is everlasting may mean no more than that Christ was “the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” ( Rev. 13:8 ). There is certainly no indication John is speaking about an eternal Gospel known only by general revelation.

*Jonah 3:1–5* . Old Testament saints did not necessarily have the same content knowledge required for salvation in the New Testament. The doctrine of progressive revelation indicates that God progressively unfolded his plan on earth by giving more and more revelation until the full and final revelation in Christ ( Heb. 1:1–2 ).

*Psalms 19:1–2* . The psalmist is not speaking of God’s special revelation but of general revelations through the “heavens” which are the “work of his [creative] hands.” He is not speaking of the cross, which is the work of God’s redemptive love ( Rom. 10:14 , 18 ). According to Romans, general revelation informs us about God’s “eternal power and Godhead” ( Rom. 1:20 ). It is sufficient for condemnation, since it finds all men “without excuse” (ibid.) but not for salvation.

*Romans 2:6–7* . This text does not affirm that heathen are saved by general revelation, but only those who “seek . . . for immortality.” Later Paul said it is only Christ “who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” ( 2 Tim 1:10 ). General revelation and other means are part of the “goodness of God that leads . . . to repentance” (vs. 4 ). Those who respond to the light of general revelation are given special revelation by which they can be saved.

***A Vindication of God’s Justice.*** But is it fair for God to send people to hell who have never heard the only Gospel by which they can be saved? This question is really several questions in one. They will be broken down and analyzed one by one.

*Are The Heathen Lost?* The biblical answer to this question is clear: All human beings are born in sin ( Ps. 51:5 KJV ) and are “by nature the children of wrath” ( Eph. 2:3 KJV ). For “. . . just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned [in Adam]” ( Rom. 5:12 ). Addressing explicitly the heathen who have only general revelation, the apostle Paul declared “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, *so that men are without excuse* ” ( Rom. 1:20 ). Likewise, he adds, “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law” ( Rom. 2:12 ). Then, summing up his conclusion from the whole section, Paul pronounces that “There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” ( Rom. 3:22–23 ). Yes, sinful rebels from God remain lost apart from knowing about Christ.

*Is There Salvation Apart from Christ?* All orthodox Christians agree that there is no salvation apart from Christ’s redemptive work. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” ( John 14:6 ). The apostle Paul added “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” ( 1 Tim. 2:5 ). Further, the writer of Hebrews agreed, affirming that “Christ . . . has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself” ( Heb. 9:26 ). And “this priest [Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God . . . because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy” ( Heb. 10:12 , 14 ).

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kjv King James Version

Literally, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” ( Acts 4:12 ).

*Is It Fair to Condemn Those Who Have Not Heard?* Yes, it is just to condemn those who have never received God’s special revelation. First, through general revelation they know about his “eternal power and Godhead” ( Rom. 1:20 ). They are aware that he “made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them” ( Acts 14:15 ). They are aware that God “has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons” ( Acts 14:17 ). Although they do not have the Law of Moses, “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law. . . . Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law [of Moses], since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts” ( Rom. 2:12–15 ).

Even though God has revealed himself to the heathen in creation and in conscience, fallen humanity has universally rejected that light. Hence, God is not obligated to give them any more light, since they have turned from the light they have. In fact, although they have the truth, “the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” ( Rom. 1:18 ). Someone lost in the darkness of a dense jungle who sees one speck of light should go toward it. If that person turns away from the little light and becomes forever lost in darkness, there is only one person to blame. The Scriptures say, “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” ( John 3:19 ).

If any unbeliever truly sought God through the general revelation, God would provide the special revelation sufficient for salvation. After God led Peter to the Gentile Cornelius, Peter declared: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” ( Acts 10:35 ). The writer of Hebrews tells us that those who seek, find. “He rewards those who earnestly seek him” ( Heb. 11:6 ).

God has many ways at his disposal through which he can get the truth of the Gospel to lost souls. The normative way is through preachers of the Gospel ( Rom. 10:14–15 ), whether in person or on radio, TV, or some recording. On one occasion God will use an angel to preach the Gospel “to every nation, tribe, language and people” ( Rev. 14:6 ). Many people have been given a Bible, read it, and been saved. Others have been saved through Gospel literature. We have no way of knowing whether God has conveyed special revelation through visions, dreams, and in other miraculous ways. The truth is that God is more willing that all be saved than we are. For “the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” ( 2 Peter 3:9 ). God’s justice demands that he condemns all sinners, but his love compels him to provide salvation for all who by his grace will believe. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” ( Rom. 10:13 ).

One thing is important to keep in mind. To send people to hell who have never heard is not unjust. To think so is like claiming that it is not right for someone to die of a disease for which there is a cure of which he or she has not yet heard. The crucial question is how one got the

disease, not whether he or she has heard of a cure. What is more, if one desires neither to know there is a cure or to do what is necessary to get cured, then he or she is most certainly culpable.

*Will There Be People Saved from Every Nation?* Those who reject the view that special revelation is necessary for salvation generally point to those in non-Christian lands. What about China, India, Africa, and many formerly Communist countries? Surely it is not fair to have so many in heaven from Western countries and so few from Eastern lands.

There is no reason why the percentage of people saved must be the same from all countries. Who is saved will depend on who believes, and that will vary from place to place. Just as in farming and fishing, some areas are more fruitful than others. The Scriptures assure us that there will be “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb” ( Rev. 7:9a ). Indeed, while the percentage may understandably vary, it would seem strange if there were no one from one country that desired to be saved (just as it would if everyone from another country wanted to be saved). People have free choice, and free choice is exercised freely. Some will believe and some will not.

There are ways by which people might go to heaven, even where the Gospel has not gone out. Perhaps all (or at least some) children who die in infancy are saved ( *see* INFANTS, SALVATION OF ). Others may come into contact with the Gospel through Christian radio, literature, or recordings. Perhaps God reveals himself in miraculous ways. A window might be opened for the Word. Countries with a large percentage of Christians were once pagan.

*Is There a Second Chance?* A few Christian apologists and many cults believe that God will give a second chance after death to those who never heard the Gospel. Orthodox Christians reject this. The Bible declares that “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” ( Heb. 9:27 ). The urgency with which Scripture speaks of making one’s decision now in this life ( Prov. 29:1 ; John 8:24 ; Heb. 3:7–13 ; 2 Peter 3:9 ) is strong evidence that there is no second chance. The fact that people immediately go to either heaven or hell ( Luke 16:19–31 ; 2 Cor. 5:8 ; Rev. 19:20 ) indicates that a decision must be made in this life. Since God has so many ways to reveal himself to unbelievers before death, it is unnecessary that he do so after they die. Belief in a second chance undermines the missionary mandate. Why have the Great Commission ( Matt. 28:18–20 ), if people can be saved apart from receiving Christ in this life?

Interpretations of Scripture used to support second-chance salvation are, to say the least, highly disputed (for example, 1 Peter 3:18–19 ). Clear texts are unambiguous in teaching that hell awaits the unrepentant. There is no real evidence that God will give anyone a second chance to be saved after death. Jesus said, “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins” ( John 8:24 ).

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**Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich.** *Life and Works of Hegel.* Hegel (1770–1831) was born in Wurtemberg, Germany, to a Lutheran family. His father was a government official. Hegel was bored by dull teachers and often cut classes. He taught at the University of Jena, where he and F. W. J. Schelling fought against the tide of skepticism. Hegel was Lutheran and apparently attended church regularly.

His main writings include *Philosophy of History*, *Philosophy of Nature*, *Encyclopedia*, *Logic*, *Philosophy of Religion*, his major work, *Phenomena of Spirit*, and *Philosophy of Aesthetics*.

**Influences on Hegel.** Like most other great figures, Hegel stood on the shoulders of many who had come before him. To mention a few major ones, from Plato he learned that man’s meaning is found in the state; that philosophy is the highest expression of reality, and that all determination is by negation. From Plotinus Hegel came to understand that the world and consciousness are a manifestation of the Absolute—a form of pantheism . From Benedict Spinoza he learned of the inseparability of God and nature and, hence, antisupernaturalism. From Immanuel Kant Hegel concluded that we must begin with the phenomena of experience and use the transcendental method to arrive at truth. Of course, his Judeo-Christian training provided him with a linear view of history.

**Hegel’s Epistemology.** Hegel’s theory of knowledge is not easy to spell out in a brief form. However, some aspects of it are clear.

**Hegel’s Dialectic.** To begin, a word is necessary about what Hegel did not believe. Although he used the word “dialectic,” he did not believe in a Marxist ( *see* MARX, KARL ) kind of dialecticalism of thesis–antithesis–synthesis. This triad does not appear once in the body of eight volumes of his published works (Mueller, 411). It appears once in the “Preface” of his

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*Phenomenology of Mind* where he claimed it came from Kant and rejected it calling it “a lifeless schema” (Mueller, 412). Hegelian expert Gustav Mueller asserted that “The most vexing and devastating Hegel legend is that everything is thought in ‘thesis, antithesis, and synthesis’ ” (Mueller, 411). The legend was spread by Karl Marx’s distorted understanding of Hegel.

*The Law of Non-Contradiction.* Hegel is not clear as to the status of the law of non-contradiction ( see FIRST PRINCIPLES ). At times he appears to deny it, claiming that “all things are themselves contradictory,” that “movement is existing contradiction itself,” and that “only insofar as something has contradiction in itself does it move, have impulse or activity (H. B. Acton, 443–44). Indeed, he does not even mention it as a separate category of thought in his *Science of Logic* . Some understand him as claiming only that there are contradictions on the finite level that are resolved in the Absolute. Others believe he is not using the term in its technical logical sense, but only in the practical sense in the outworking of the dialectic in history. Others take it to refer to a necessary disease of thought on its way to absolute truth. Hegel does claim that a “square circle” or a “many-sided circle” is contradictory (Acton, 444). Of course, if Hegel meant that the law of non-contradiction ( see *First Principles* ) did not apply to all truth-claims, then his view was self-refuting .

*The Transcendental Argument.* Following Kant, Hegel argued transcendently, though he believed it yielded absolutes in content as well as the form of knowledge. He believed there were two options; realism and transcendentalism. That is, we can ignore Kant and return to naive realism or extend Kant and develop a transcendentalism ( see TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENT ). He chose the latter. Like Kant he held that a priori forms in the mind guarantee certainty. But unlike Kant, Hegel believed that even the content of our knowledge is absolute. He argued that partial (relative) knowledge is impossible because it presupposes knowledge of the whole (the absolute).

The transcendental process of knowing begins with knowledge as it appears to us (in the phenomena of our experience) and then proceeds to find the necessary conditions of it. The test for knowledge is consistency and coherence. But our knowledge cannot persist unless it is based on some higher form of knowledge. And the regress cannot be infinite (or else we would not know anything). Hence, we must eventually arrive at absolute knowledge, which is the underpinning of all other (lower knowledge).

*Hegel’s View of God. Proofs for God’s Existence.* Hegel believed he had overcome Kant’s objections to the existence of God ( see GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOF FOR HIS EXISTENCE ). In a series of lectures, he defended the ontological argument for God’s existence (see Acton, 449).

*Developmental Pantheism.* Hegel’s metaphysics is a kind of developmental pantheism worked out in the historical process. It may also be viewed as a form of pantheism, since there is a bipolarity of God and the world. In any event, history is the “footprints” of God in the sands of time. Better, history is God’s self-unfolding in the temporal world. It is the progressive overcoming of the world by Absolute Spirit.

*Dialectical Metaphysics.* Hegel’s metaphysics is an example of how his dialectic worked. First, he begins with logic, which posits the eternal idea. This is emptiest of all notions, devoid of all content. It represents God as he is in his eternal essence prior to the creation of finite spirit.

Next, there is the philosophy of nature. This is creation apart from God. Yet creation must stand in relation to God. How, then, can these two be reconciled?

Hegel’s answer is in the philosophy of spirit wherein there is an overcoming duality. The two poles of duality are God and world. Hegel believed that God and world must be merged and thus give up their separate identities. This is a root idea of the later pantheism of Alfred North Whitehead . The point of contact is in man, who is the translator between nature and spirit. Thus, man has the spirituality of God and the materiality of the world.

This overcoming is in three stages: subjective spirit, objective spirit, and Absolute Spirit (God). In subjective spirit the subject–object duality is overcome. Hegel begins with man as conscious (the spiritual dimension). He then moves to man as corporeal (the material dimension). Finally, he turns to man as integrated, self-conscious being (the ethical dimension).

In objective spirit the subject–subject distinction is overcome. All are part of a greater unity—the human spirit. So in man as a whole the duality is overcome as the whole is over parts and unites them. In short, there is no God apart from nature. God is dependent on nature.

*Hegel’s View of Christianity. The Incarnation.* Hegel viewed Christianity (Lutheranism) as the absolute religion, the highest manifestation of the Absolute to date. This is particularly manifest in the incarnation of God in Christ in which God appeared on earth in a particular man at a particular time. Here the Infinite is identified with the finite.

The core of religion is the incarnation. Absolute Spirit is where the God–man duality is overcome. This is done in three stages: art, religion, and philosophy. Art is only a limited manifestation (in images) of the Absolute. Religion realizes a higher manifestation of Absolute Spirit in true freedom revealed in symbols. So, the essence of religion is Christology—the God-man who died and rose. When he died both God and man died. But when he rose neither God nor man rose but Absolute Spirit unto which God and man merged.

Hegel believed that the highest manifestation of the Absolute is in philosophy. It is the eternal Idea, the epitome, the fullest and most complete of all concepts. This is only the highest “category” of all thought and existence, not the highest point of achievement. We can never “reach” Absolute Spirit, it always vanishes, leaving only the long road of argument leading to it. So, while God becomes man in religion, man becomes God in philosophy.

*The Trinity.* The final reconciliation of the Infinite and finite, of God and man, is found in the Trinity. For God existed before the world as Father, was manifested in his embodiment in the world as Son, and as reconciling both God and the world in the Holy Spirit. So while God cannot exist without negation and opposites, both are finally reconciled in the Trinity.



**Hegel's View of the Bible.** *Early Desupernaturalized Life of Christ.* In an early attempt at a life of Jesus, Hegel presented a desupernaturalized view of Jesus and formulated the teachings of Jesus in terms of a Kantian ethic, something he had learned from Kant's famous *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Here Jesus is depicted by Hegel as narrow-minded and obscurantist as opposed to Socrates. Further, Jesus is not virgin-born (see VIRGIN BIRTH). All miracles mentioned are interpreted naturalistically. The prologue of John's Gospel is reinterpreted to state: "Pure Reason incapable of all limitations is the Deity itself."

Later, in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, Hegel contrasted the Gospel ethic of love with the Jewish and Kantian ethics of law, but he never gave up either his antisupernaturalism or his moral-centered view of the Gospels. Hegel also reinterpreted the Gospel stories of the redemptive death and resurrection of Christ in terms of Greek tragedy.

In *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* Hegel affirms that in claiming to be the Messiah Jesus was merely using the language of his listener, a form of the accommodation theory. Instead of revering him for his teaching about virtue, they revered his teaching about virtue because of the miracles he is supposed to have performed. Here Hegel argues that Greek religion was overcome by Christianity because "The despotism of the Roman emperors had chased the human spirit from the earth and spread a misery which compelled men to seek and expect happiness in heaven." Thus, "robbed of freedom, their spirit, their eternal and absolute element, was forced to take flight to deity." In this way, God's objectivity is a counterpart to the corruption and slavery of man ( *Early Theological Writings*, 162–63).

**Hegel's Later Transcendentalism ( Pantheism ).** Even later in his *Encyclopedia*, dominated by his transcendental idealism (i.e., developmental pantheism), Hegel was a radical revisionist of the literal, historical truth of the death and resurrection of Christ. The core of revealed religion is Christology: Jesus Christ is the God-man. As such, he died on the cross; thus both God and man died there. The resurrection was of neither God nor man. Rather, in the resurrection both God and man merge in Absolute Spirit. Thus, in Hegel's developmental pantheism is found the highest manifestation of Absolute Spirit.

**Interpretation of Scripture.** All Scripture must be understood in terms of Absolute Spirit which Hegel identifies as the Holy Spirit. In interpreting Scripture we must avoid both literalism and rationalism. True understanding is based on Spirit. Orthodox beliefs must be reinterpreted in the light of Hegel's (pantheistic) understanding of Spirit triumphing over all literalism. He quotes 2 Corinthians 3:6: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life." With this theology is converted into philosophy—Hegelian philosophy.

**Hegel's Influence on Others.** Hegel had an immense influence on others after him. This includes the atheism of Ludwig Feuerbach, who argued that "God" is man's self-understanding. Professor Winfried Corduan divides these into Left, Center, and Right. On the left are those who believe that Hegel's thought leads consistently to an impersonal atheism. On the right are those who understand Hegel's philosophy in a theological sense. In the center are those who believe core belief in Absolute Spirit allows room for religion. This includes Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Marx (see Corduan).

**Hegel's Influence on Atheism.** Hegel had a significant influence on modern atheism. Several young left-wing Hegelians were his students, including Karl Marx with his \*dialectical materialism derived from his misunderstanding of Hegel's "dialectic." Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Altizer, and the "Death of God" theologians were influenced by Hegel's assertion that God and man died in the death of Christ.

**Hegel's Influence on Existentialism.** Hegel influenced existentialists of various stripes: theistic, atheistic, pantheistic, and panentheistic. In spite of his obvious rejection of much of Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard's theistic existentialism is dependent on Hegel's idea that the essence of consciousness is liberty; that truth is lived, not known (praxis); that existence is a concrete, dynamic process; and a realistic valuation of the individual's predicament in the process of history. Likewise, the atheistic existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre is also dependent on Hegel's ideas that consciousness is negativity (absolute freedom); that the self is condemned never to know itself; and that man imposes meaning on things. Husserl's phenomenology is rooted in Hegel's phenomenological (descriptive) method of analyzing human experience. And Martin Heidegger's pantheistic existentialism is an offspring of Hegelianism.

**Hegel's Influence on Modern Biblical Criticism.** Of special interest to Christian apologetics is Hegel's significant influence on negative Bible criticism. For example, following Hegel, F. C. Baur and his Tübingen school claimed that the first-century tension between Peter's Judaistic form of Christianity opposed by Paul's anti-Judaistic form found its reconciliation in John's Gospel in the second century, thus insisting on a late date for John's Gospel (see NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF). Also, David Strauss's desupernaturalized version of the life of Christ springs from Hegel's idea that spiritual reality is higher than the historical. Thus, as Rudolph Bultmann was to later affirm: Christianity is myth (see MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT).

**Hegel's Influence on Hermeneutics.** Likewise, Martin Heidegger's mystical pantheism and hermeneutic developed by Bultmann and Gadamer are rooted in Hegel's stress on the spiritual interpretations of Scripture. This gave rise to the whole subjectivistic "new hermeneutic."

**An Evaluation of Hegel's Thought.** From an apologetic standpoint Hegel's system of thought has both positive and negative aspects. First, some of the positive elements will be briefly noted.

**Positive Values.** Without elaboration (which is done in the other articles noted), Hegel affirmed the value of metaphysics; of absolute truth (see TRUTH, NATURE OF); of a Christian linear view of history; of understanding humans in their concrete life situations; of human freedom (see FREE WILL); of an a priori dimension of knowledge (see *First Principles*); of a transcendental argument; and other things.

**Negative Critique.** Hegel's good points notwithstanding, his overall philosophy has had a very negative effect on orthodox Christianity. Some of these include his pantheism or panentheism, as the case may be; his denial of realism (see); his foundations for Bible criticism; his antisupernaturalism (see MIRACLES), which involves the denial of the physical resurrection (see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR); his idea that determination is by negation (

see ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF ); his “spiritual” interpretation, which anticipates postmodernism and the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida and others ( see also MYSTICISM ); and his failure to ground knowledge in an unchanging God, thus undermining the absolute truth he claimed ( see TRUTH, NATURE OF ).

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**Hell.** Hell has been called cruel, inhuman, and barbarous. Bertrand Russell said anyone who threatens people with eternal punishment, as Jesus did, is inhumane (Russell, 593–94). Unbelievers in general have questioned both the existence and justice of hell. Orthodox Christians, however, both Catholic and Protestant, have defended both the reality and equity of hell.

**The Existence of Hell.** The existence of hell has been defended by arguments both from Scripture and from human reason.

*Jesus Taught the Existence of Hell.* Scripture emphatically affirms the doctrine of hell. Some of the strongest assertions that there is a hell come from Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity . He had more to say about hell than concerning Heaven. Jesus warned, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” ( Matt. 10:28 ). He added of those who reject him, “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age” ( Matt. 13:40 ).

In the Olivet Discourse our Lord said that at the final judgment God will say “to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’ ” ( Matt. 25:41b ). Of the seriousness of the danger of hell, Jesus warned, “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out” ( Mark 9:43 ). The reality of hell is obvious from a vivid story told by Jesus in Luke 16 . This story is unlike a parable, since in it Jesus uses the actual name of a person (Lazarus). The story concerned the fate after death of a rich man and a beggar, Lazarus:

The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, “Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.” But Abraham replied, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.” He answered, “Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.” Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.” “No, father Abraham,” he said, “but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.” He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” [ Luke 16:19–31 ]

*The Bible Teaches That There Is a Hell.* Other inspired writings of the New Testament affirm the existence of hell. Perhaps the most graphic is found in the Revelation of John:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. [ 20:11–15 ]

The apostle Paul spoke of everlasting separation from God, saying: “This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish

those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power” ( 2 Thess. 1:7b-9 ). The writer of Hebrews adds a note of finality: “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” ( Heb. 9:27 ).

*God’s Justice Demands a Hell.* In addition to direct affirmations, Scripture offers reasons for the existence of hell. One is that justice demands the existence of hell, and God is just ( Romans 2 ). He is so pure and untainted that he cannot even look upon sin ( Hab. 1:13 ). God is no respecter of persons, “For God does not show favoritism” ( Rom. 2:11 ). As Abraham declared, “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” ( Gen. 18:25 ). Psalm 73 is representative of passages teaching that not all justice is accomplished in this life. The wicked seem to prosper ( Ps. 73:3 ). Thus, the existence of a place of punishment for the wicked after this life is necessary to maintain the justice of God. Surely, there would be no real justice were there no place of punishment for the demented souls of Stalin and Hitler, who initiated the merciless slaughter of multimillions. God’s justice demands that there is a hell.

Jonathan Edwards argued that even one sin deserves hell, since the eternal, holy God cannot tolerate any sin. Each person commits a multitude of sins in thought, word, and deed. This is all compounded by the fact that we reject God’s immense mercy. And add to this man’s readiness to find fault with God’s justice and mercy, and we have abundant evidence of the need for hell. If we had a true spiritual awareness, we would not be amazed at hell’s severity but at our own depravity ( Edwards, 1.109).

*God’s Love Demands a Hell.* The Bible asserts that “God is love” ( 1 John 4:16 ). But love cannot act coercively, only persuasively. A God of love cannot force people to love him. Paul spoke of things being done freely and not of compulsion ( 2 Cor. 9:7 ). Forced love is not love; it is rape. A loving being always gives “space” to others. He does not force himself upon them against their will. As C. S. Lewis observed, “the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of his scheme forbids him to use. Merely to override a human will . . . would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo” ( Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 38). Hence, those who do not choose to love God must be allowed not to love him. Those who do not wish to be with him must be allowed to be separated from him. Hell allows separation from God.

*Human Dignity Demands a Hell.* Since God cannot force people into heaven against their free will, human free choice demands a hell. Jesus cried out, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” ( Matt. 23:37 ). As Lewis said, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done’ ” ( *Screwtape Letters*, 69).

*God’s Sovereignty Demands a Hell.* Unless there is a hell there is no final victory over evil ( see EVIL, PROBLEM OF ). For what frustrates good is evil. The wheat and tares cannot grow together forever. There must be an ultimate separation, or else good will not triumph over evil. As in society, punishment for evil is necessary that good might prevail. Even so, in eternity good must triumph over evil. If it does not, then God is not in ultimate control. God’s sovereignty

demand a hell, otherwise he would not be the ultimate victor over evil that the Bible declares him to be ( cf. 1 Cor. 15:24–28 ; Revelation 20–22 ).

*The Cross of Christ Implies Hell.* At the center of Christianity is the cross ( 1 Cor. 1:17–18 ; 15:3 ). Without it there is no salvation ( Rom. 4:25 ; Heb. 10:10–14 ). It is the very purpose for which Christ came into the world ( Mark 10:45 ; Luke 19:10 ). Without the cross there is no salvation ( John 10:1 , 9–10 ; Acts 4:12 ). Only through the cross can we be delivered from our sins ( Rom. 3:21–26 ). Jesus suffered great agony and even separation from God on the cross ( Heb. 2:10–18 ; 5:7–9 ). Anticipating the cross, Jesus “sweat as it were great drops of blood” ( Luke 22:44 ). But why the cross and all this suffering unless there is a hell? Christ’s death is robbed of its eternal significance unless there is an eternal separation from God from which people need to be delivered.

*The Nature and Location of Hell.* The Bible describes the reality of hell in forceful figures of speech. It is said to be a place of darkness ( Matt. 8:12 ; 22:13 ), which is “outside” [the gate of the heavenly city] ( Rev. 22:14–15 ). Hell is away from the “presence of the Lord” ( Matt. 25:41 ; 2 Thess. 1:7–9 ). Of course, these are relational, not necessarily spatial, terms. God is “up” and hell is “down.” God is “inside” and hell is “outside.” Hell is the other direction from God.

The nature of hell is a horrifying reality. It is like being left outside in the dark forever ( Matt. 8:12 ). It is like a wandering star ( Jude 13 ), a waterless cloud ( Jude 12 ), a perpetually burning dump ( Mark 9:43–48 ), a bottomless pit ( Rev. 20:1 , 3 ), a prison ( 1 Peter 3:19 ), and a place of anguish and regret ( Luke 16:28 ).

To borrow the title of the book by Lewis, hell is the “great divorce”—an eternal separation from God ( 2 Thess. 1:7–9 ). There is, in biblical language, “a great gulf fixed” between hell and heaven ( Luke 16:26 ) so that no one can pass from one side to the other.

Nowhere does the Bible describe it as a “torture chamber” where people are forced against their will to be tortured. This is a caricature created by unbelievers to justify their reaction that the God who sends people to hell is cruel. This does not mean that hell is not a place of torment. Jesus said it was ( Luke 16:24 ). But unlike torture which is inflicted from without against one’s will, torment is self-inflicted.

Even atheists ( see SARTRE ; ATHEISM ) have suggested that the door of hell is locked from the inside. We are condemned to our own freedom from God. Heaven’s presence of the divine would be the torture to one who has irretrievably rejected him. Torment is living with the consequences of our own bad choices. It is the weeping and gnashing of teeth that results from the realization that we blew it and deserve the consequences. Just as a football player may pound on the ground in agony after missing a play that loses the Super Bowl, so those in hell know that the pain they suffer is self-induced.

Hell is also depicted as a place of eternal fire. This fire is *real* but not necessarily *physical* ( as we know it ), because people will have imperishable physical bodies ( John 5:28–29 ; Rev. 20:13–15 ), so normal fire would not affect them. Further, the figures of speech that describe hell

are contradictory, if taken in a physical sense. It has *flames*, yet is outer *darkness*. It is a dump (with a *bottom*), yet a *bottomless* pit. While everything in the Bible is literally true, not everything is true literally.

**The Duration of Hell.** Many unbelievers would be willing to accept a temporary hell, but the Bible speaks of it as everlasting.

*Hell Will Last as Long as Does God.* The Bible declares that God will endure forever (Ps. 90:1–2). Indeed, he had no beginning and has no end (Rev. 1:8). He created all things (John 1:3; Col. 1:15–16), and he will abide after this world is destroyed (2 Peter 3:10–12). But God, by his very nature, cannot tolerate evil (Isaiah 6; Hab. 1:13). Hence, evil persons must be separated from God forever. As long as God is God and evil is evil, the latter must be separated from the former.

*Hell Will Last as Long as Heaven Does.* Heaven is described as “everlasting” in the Bible. But the same Greek word (*aionion*), used in the same context, also affirmed that hell is “everlasting” (Matt. 25:41; cf. vs. 46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:10). So, if heaven is forever, so is hell. There is absolutely no ground in Scripture for supposing that hell is temporal and heaven is eternal.

Nor is there a possibility of getting out of hell. A great gulf is fixed so no one can leave (Luke 16:26). Judgment begins immediately after death (John 8:21; Heb. 9:27). This is not unlike the fact that some decisions in life are irreversible. Suicide is a one-way street.

People are conscious after they die, whether they are in heaven (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil 1:23; Rev. 6:9) or in hell (Luke 16:23). The Beast was still conscious after a thousand years in hell (Rev. 19:20; 20:10). It makes no sense to resurrect unbelievers to everlasting judgment (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28–29) before the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11–15) unless they are conscious.

**Objections about Hell.** Unbelievers have offered many objections to the doctrine of hell (see Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, chap. 8).

*Hell Is Annihilation.* The Bible clearly affirms that there is conscious suffering in hell, such as will cause “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12). Annihilated persons are not conscious of any suffering. The beast and false prophet in hell will be conscious after a thousand years of suffering (Rev. 19:20; 20:10; see ANNIHILATIONISM).

Annihilation would not be a punishment but a release from all punishment. Job appeared to prefer annihilation to suffering (Job 3), but God did not grant his desire. Jesus speaks of degrees of punishment (Matt. 5:22), but there can be no degrees of nonexistence.

Annihilation of the wicked is contrary to both the nature of God (see GOD, NATURE OF) and the nature of humans made in his image (see IMMORTALITY). It is not consistent with an all-loving God to snuff out those who do not do his wishes. Were God to annihilate human beings he would be attacking himself, for we are made in his image (Gen. 1:27), and God is immortal. The fact that these persons are suffering no more justifies annihilating them than it does for a

parent to kill a child who is suffering. Even some atheists have insisted that annihilation is not to be preferred to conscious freedom.

*Hell Is Temporal, Not Eternal.* Hell could not be just a long imprisonment. Hell must exist as long as a righteous God does against whom all hell is opposed.

While the word *forever* can mean a long time in some contexts, in this context it is used of heaven as well as hell (cf. Matthew 25). Sometimes the emphatic form of “forever and forever” is used. This phrase is used to describe heaven and God himself (Rev. 14:11; 20:10). And God cannot be temporal; he is eternal (Edwards, 2.85–86).

The suggestion that temporal suffering will lead to ultimate repentance is unrealistic. People in hell are gnashing their teeth which does not indicate a more godly and reformed disposition but a more rigid and stubborn rebellion. Hence, after the people have been in hell for some time there is more justification for God’s punishment of them, not less. If hell had a reformational effect on people, then Jesus would not have pronounced woe on those who reject him and are headed for hell (Matt. 11:21–24). No sin would be unforgivable if people in hell were reformable (Matt. 12:31–32). Likewise, Jesus would never have said of Judas that it would have been better if he had never been born.

How can a place devoid of God’s restraining grace accomplish what no efforts of his grace could accomplish on earth, namely, a change of the heart? If hell could reform wicked sinners, then they would be saved without Christ, who is the sole means of salvation (Edwards, 2.520). Suffering has no tendency to soften a hard heart; it hardens it more (see PHARAOH, HARDENING OF). The recidivism and hardened criminality in modern prisons confirms Edwards’ point.

God’s justice demands eternal punishment. “The heinousness of any crime must be gauged according to the worth or dignity of the person it is committed against” (Davidson, 50). Thus, a murder of a president or pope is deemed more heinous than that of a terrorist or Mafia boss. Sin against an infinite God is an infinite sin worthy of infinite punishment (Edwards, 2.83).

*Why Not Reform People?* Why eternal punishment? Why doesn’t God try to reform sinners? The answer is that God does try to reform people; the time of *reformation* is called life. Peter declared that “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9; cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). However, after the time of reformation comes the time of reckoning (Heb. 9:27). Hell is only for the unreformable and unrepentant, the reprobate (cf. 2 Peter 2:1–6). It is not for anyone who is reformable. If they were reformable, they would still be alive. For God in his wisdom and goodness would not allow anyone to go to hell whom he knew would go to heaven if he gave them more opportunity. As C. S. Lewis observed, the soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will never miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened (Lewis, *Great Divorce*, 69).

God cannot force free creatures to be reformed. Forced reformation is worse than punishment; it is cruel and inhumane. At least punishment respects the freedom and dignity of the person. As Lewis insightfully notes, “To be ‘cured’ against one’s will . . . is to be put on a

level with those who have not yet reached the age of reason or those who never will; to be classed with infants, imbeciles, and domestic animals” (Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 226). Humans are not objects to be manipulated; they are subjects to be respected because they are made in God’s image. Human beings should be punished when they do evil because they were free and knew better. They are *persons* to be punished, not *patients* to be cured.

*Is Damnation for Temporal Sins Overkill?* To punish a person eternally for what he did for a short time on earth seems at first like a gigantic case of overkill. However, on closer examination it turns out to be not only just but necessary. For one thing, only eternal punishment will suffice for sins against the eternal God ( *see* GOD, NATURE OF ). The sins may have been committed in time, but they were against the Eternal One. Furthermore, no sin can be tolerated as long as God exists, and he is eternal. Hence, punishment for sin must also be eternal.

What is more, the only alternative to eternal punishment is worse, namely, to rob human beings of freedom and dignity by forcing them into heaven against their free choice. That would be “hell” since they do not fit in a place where everyone is loving and praising the Person they want most to avoid. Or, God’s other choice is to annihilate his own image within his creatures. But this would be an attack of God on himself.

Further, without eternal separation, there could be no heaven. Evil is contagious ( 1 Cor. 5:6 ) and must be quarantined. Like a deadly plague, if it is not contained it will continue to contaminate and corrupt. If God did not eventually separate the tares from the wheat, the tares would choke out the wheat. The only way to preserve an eternal place of good is to eternally separate all evil from it. The only way to have an eternal heaven is to have an eternal hell.

Finally, if Christ’s temporal punishment is sufficient for our sins eternally, then there is no reason why eternal suffering cannot be appropriate for our temporal sins. It is not the *duration* of the action but the *object* that is important. Christ satisfied the eternal God by his temporal suffering, and unbelievers have offended the eternal God by their temporal sins. Hence, Christ’s temporal suffering for sins satisfies God eternally ( 1 John 2:1 ), and our temporal sins offend God eternally.

*Hell Has No Redeeming Value.* To the objection that there is no redemptive value in the damning of souls to hell, it can be pointed out that hell satisfies God’s justice and glorifies it by showing how great and fearful a standard it is. “The vindictive justice of God will appear strict, exact, awful, and terrible, and therefore glorious” (Edwards, 2.87). The more horrible and fearful the judgment, the brighter the sheen on the sword of God’s justice. Awful punishment fits the nature of an awe-inspiring God. By a majestic display of wrath, God gets back the majesty he has been refused. Those who give God no glory by choice during this life will be forced to give him glory in the afterlife.

All people, thus, are either actively or passively useful to God. In heaven believers will actively praise his mercy. In hell unbelievers will be passively useful in bringing majesty to his justice. Just as a barren tree is useful only for firewood, so the disobedient are only fuel for an eternal fire ( *ibid.*, 2.126). Since unbelievers prefer to keep at a distance from God in time, why should we not expect this to be their chosen state in eternity?

*Hell Is Only a Threat, Not a Reality.* Some critics believe hell is only a threat that God will not carry out. But it is blasphemy to hold that a God of truth uses deliberate lies to govern human beings. Further, it implies that “those who think hell is a deception have outwitted God Himself by uncovering it” (Davidson, 53). As Edwards stated it, “They suppose that they have been so cunning as to find out that it is not certain; and so that God had not laid His design so deep, but that such cunning men as they can discern the cheat and defeat the design” (Edwards, 2.516).

*Can Saints Be Happy if a Loved One Is in Hell?* The presupposition of this question is that we are more merciful than is God. God is perfectly happy in heaven, and he knows that not everyone will be there. Yet he is infinitely more merciful than are we. What is more, if we could not be happy in heaven knowing anyone was in hell, then our happiness is not in our hands but someone else’s. But hell cannot veto heaven. We can be happy in heaven the same way we can be happy eating knowing others are starving, if we have tried to feed them but they have refused the food. Just as we can have healing of bad memories here on earth, even so God will “wipe away all tears” in heaven ( Rev. 21:4 ).

Edwards noted that to suppose God’s mercy does not permit suffering in hell is contrary to fact. God allows plenty of suffering in this world. It is an empirical fact that God and creature-pain are not incompatible (Gerstner, 80). If God’s mercy cannot bear eternal misery, then neither can it bear lesser amounts (Edwards, 2.84). God’s mercy is not a passion or emotion that overcomes his justice. Mercy so construed is a defect in God. It would make him weak and inconsistent with himself, not fit to be a Judge.

The attitudes and feelings of the saints in heaven will be transformed and correspond more to God’s. Hence, we will love only what God loves and hate what he hates. Since God is not miserable at the thought or sight of hell, neither will we—even if it holds people we loved in this life. Edwards devoted a sermon to this: “The End of the Wicked Contemplated by the Righteous.” In Gerstner’s digest of it, “it will seem in no way cruel in God to inflict such extreme suffering on such extremely wicked creatures” (Gerstner, 90).

*Why Did God Create People Bound for Hell?* Some critics of hell argue that if God knew that his creatures would reject him and eventuate in such a horrible place as hell, then why did he create them in the first place? Wouldn’t it have been better to have never existed than to exist and go to hell?

It is important to note that nonexistence cannot be said to be a better condition than any kind of existence, since nonexistence is nothing. And to affirm that nothing can be better than something is a gigantic category mistake. In order to compare two things, they must have something in common. But there is nothing in common between being and nonbeing. They are diametrically opposed.

Some one may *feel* like being put out of a life of misery, but such a one cannot even consistently think of nonbeing as a better state of *being* . True, Jesus said it would have been better if Judas had never been born ( Mark 14:21 ). But this is simply a strong expression indicating the severity of his sin, not a statement about the superiority of nonbeing over being. In a parallel condemnation on the Pharisees, Jesus said Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented

had they seen his miracles ( Matt. 11:20–24 ; *see* MIRACLE ). This does not mean that they actually would have repented (or God would surely have shown them these miracles— 2 Peter 3:9 ). It is simply a powerful figure of speech indicating that their sin was so great that “it would be *more tolerable* ” (vs. 24 ) in the day of judgment for Sodom than for them.

Further, simply because some will lose in the game of life does not mean it should not be played. Before the Super Bowl ever begins both teams know that one of them will lose. Yet they all will to play. Before every driver in America takes to the road each day we know that people will be killed. Yet we will to drive. Parents know that having children could end in great tragedy for their offspring as well as for themselves. Yet the foreknowledge of evil does not negate our will to permit the possibility of good. Why? Because we deem it better to have played with the opportunity to win than not to have played at all. It is better to lose in the Super Bowl than not to be able to play in it. From God’s standpoint, it is better to love the whole world ( John 3:16 ) and lose some of its inhabitants than not to love them at all.

*But People Can’t Help Being Sinners.* The Bible says we are born sinners ( Ps. 51:5 ) and are “by nature the children of wrath” ( Eph. 2:3 ). If sinners cannot avoid sinning, is it fair to send them to hell for it?

People go to hell because they are born with a bent to sin, and they choose to sin. They are born on a road that leads to hell, but they also fail to heed the warning signs along the way to turn from destruction ( Luke 13:3 ; 2 Peter 3:9 ).

While human beings sin because they are sinners (by nature), their sin nature does not force them to sin. As Augustine correctly said, “We are born with the propensity to sin and the necessity to die.” Notice, he did not say we are born with the necessity to sin. While sin is *inevitable*, since we are born with a bent in that direction, sin is not *unavoidable* .

The ultimate place to which sinners are destined is also avoidable. All one needs to do is to repent ( Luke 13:3 ; Acts 17:30 ; 2 Peter 3:9 ). All are held responsible for their decision to accept or reject God’s offer of salvation. And responsibility always implies the ability to respond (if not on our own, then by God’s grace). All who go to hell could have avoided going there if they had chosen to. No pagan anywhere is without clear light from God so that he is “without excuse” ( Rom. 1:19–20 ; cf. 2:12–15 ; *see* “HEATHEN,” SALVATION OF ). As God sent a missionary to Cornelius ( Acts 10:35 ), so he will provide the message of salvation for all who seek it. For “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” ( Heb. 11:6 ).

***Reasonableness of Hell.*** While many believe hell is unreasonable, following Jonathan Edwards , a good argument can be made for its rationality:

It is a most unreasonable thing to suppose that there should be no future punishment, to suppose that God, who had made man a rational creature, able to know his duty, and sensible that he is deserving punishment when he does it not; should let man alone, and let him live as he will, and never punish him for his sins, and never make any difference between the good and the bad. . . . How unreasonable it is to suppose, that he who made

the world, should leave things in such confusion, and never take any care of the governing of his creatures, and that he should never judge his reasonable creatures. [Edwards, 2.884]

***Reasons Hell Is Rejected.*** As surveys show, people are far more willing to believe in heaven than in hell. No good person wants anyone to go to hell. But, as Sigmund Freud would say, it is an illusion to reject something simply because we *wish* not to believe in it. Indeed, as even some atheists have observed, the belief in hell eliminates the charge that it is merely an illusion. Whether there is a hell must be determined on the basis of evidence, not desire. The evidence for the existence of hell is strong.

If the evidence for hell is substantial, why then do so many people reject it? Edwards listed two main reasons for the unwillingness to accept hell: (1) It is contrary to our personal preference; (2) we have a deficient concept of evil and its deserved punishment.

Actually, a denial of hell is an indication of human depravity. Edwards draws attention to our inconsistency. We are all aware of the heinous nature of wars and acts against humanity. Why are we not equally shocked at how we regularly show contempt for the majesty of God (Edwards, 2.83). Our rejection of hell and God’s mercy are an indication of our own depravity—and therefore we are deserving of hell. Edwards wrote, “Doth it seem to thee incredible, that God should be so utterly regardless of the sinner’s welfare, as to sink him into an infinite abyss or misery? Is this shocking to thee? And is it not at all shocking to thee that thou shouldst be so utterly regardless as thou hast been to the honour and glory of the infinite God?” (ibid., 2.82).

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**Hellenic Saviors. See APOTHEOSIS ; DIVINE BIRTH STORIES ; MITHRAISM ; RESURRECTION CLAIMS IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS .**

**Henotheism.** *Henotheism* is a type of polytheism that believes there is one supreme god among the many gods that exist, such as Zeus in Greek polytheism. It is not to be confused with theism or monotheism ( *see* MONOTHEISM, PRIMITIVE ) which believes there is only one supreme God and no other gods.

**Hick, John.** *The Life and Works of Hick.* John Hick is one of the most important philosophers of religion of the late twentieth century. His literary output and influence has been a strong force against orthodox Christianity at several crucial junctures. This includes the questions of the existence of God, the problem of evil, the destiny of human beings, and the deity of Christ.

**The Views of Hick.** Hick strongly defends pluralism and unitarianism. His theodicy ( *see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF ) involves both universalism and reincarnationism . All of these, including Hick's views, are discussed in other articles. Hick's main works and some evaluations of these are listed below.

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**Higher Criticism. See BIBLE CRITICISM ; REDACTION CRITICISM, OLD TESTAMENT ; SPINOZA, BENEDICT ; WELLHAUSEN, JULIUS .**

**Hinduism, Vedanta.** *Hinduism* represents a broad category of religious beliefs, most of which are pantheistic ( *see* PANTHEISM ) or panentheistic ( *see* PANENTHEISM ). One of the oldest forms of pantheism is found in the last section of the Vedas, the Hindu scriptures. This final section is called the *Upanishads* . Because the *Upanishads* came at the end of each of the four Vedas, the *Upanishads* came to be spoken of as the Vedanta, meaning end or goal of the Vedas. "Thus it is that when a modern Hindu speaks of the Vedanta he may have both senses more or less in mind, the scriptures referred to being for him that last part of the Vedas and at the same time their ultimate reason for existence, their perfect culmination—in a word, their highest wisdom" (Prabhavananda, *Spiritual Heritage*, 39).

The author and date of the *Upanishads* are unknown. They consist of the recorded experiences of Hindu sages (ibid., 39, 40). The *Upanishads* , along with the *Bhagavad-Gita* , lay the foundation for Vedanta Hinduism, which is a classic example of pantheism ( *see also* MONISM ; ONE AND MANY, PROBLEM OF ; PARMENIDES ; PLOTINUS ).

**Vedantic View of God.** Not all forms of Hinduism believe in an impersonal God. Bhakti Hinduism does not. Nor does Hare Krishna. However Vedanta pantheism teaches that only one God (Brahman) exists. This God is at once infinite in form, immortal, imperishable, impersonal, all-pervading, supreme, changeless, absolute, and indivisibly one, and at the same time none of these. For God is beyond all thought and speech:

Him [Brahman] the eye does not see, nor the tongue express, nor the mind grasp. Him we neither know nor are able to teach. Different is he from the known, and . . . from the unknown. He truly knows Brahman who knows him as beyond knowledge; he who thinks

that he knows, knows not. The ignorant think that Brahman is known, but the wise know him to be beyond knowledge. [see *Upanishads*, 30, 31]

Brahman is inexpressible and indefinable. Nothing can be truly said or thought of Brahman. This is graphically illustrated by the Hindu philosopher Sankara in his commentary on the *Upanishads*: “ ‘Sir,’ said a pupil to his master, ‘teach me the nature of Brahman.’ The master did not reply. When a second and a third time he was importuned, he answered: ‘I teach you indeed, but you do not follow. His name is silence’ ” (Prabhavananda, *Spiritual Heritage*, 45).

**Vedantic View of the World.** Vedanta pantheism also teaches that all is God and God is all. There is only one reality. The world that we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell does not actually exist. It appears to exist, but it is in fact an illusion, or *maya*. The universe we perceive is like walking through a dense forest at night and seeing what appears to be a snake. But when we return to the same spot in the light of the day, we see that the snake really was a rope. The rope looked like a snake, but it actually was not a snake. Just as the snake *appeared* to exist, so the universe *appears* to exist but it actually does not. Instead the universe is *maya*, an illusion superimposed upon the only true reality, Brahman.

As the *Upanishads* state: “Brahman alone is—nothing else is. He who sees the manifold universe, and not the one reality, goes evermore from death to death” (Prabhavananda, *Upanishads*, 21). “Meditate, and you will realize that mind, matter, and Maya (the power which unites mind and matter) are but three aspects of Brahman the one reality” (ibid., 119).

**Vedantic View of Humanity.** Vedanta pantheism says that humankind is Brahman. *Maya*, or the illusory universe, has deceived us into thinking that each person is a particular in the universe. But if the person would clear the senses and mind of *maya* and meditate upon the true Self (*Atman*), then the realization would come that Atman is Brahman, the one true reality. The depth of a person’s soul is identical to the depth of the universe.

Having attained to Brahman, a sage declared: “I am life. . . . I am established in the purity of Brahman. I have attained the freedom of the Self. I am Brahman, self-luminous, the brightest treasure. I am endowed with wisdom. I am immortal, imperishable” (ibid., 54).

**Vedantic View of Ethics.** According to Vedanta pantheism, people must transcend the world of illusion to discover the true Self (Prabhavananda, *Spiritual Heritage*, 55). This is accomplished by going beyond good and evil. “When the seer beholds the Effulgent One, the Lord, the Supreme Being, then, transcending both good and evil, and freed from impurities, he unites himself with him” ( *Upanishads*, 47). When a person unites himself with Brahman, he no longer will be plagued by such thoughts as “ ‘I have done an evil thing’ or ‘I have done a good thing.’ ” For to go beyond good and evil is to be troubled no more by what has been done (ibid., 111). It is to become unattached to personal (or anyone else’s) past, present, or even future actions. Even the results of any actions will be viewed with indifference. “When your intellect has cleared itself of its delusions, you will become indifferent to the results of all action, present or future” (Prabhavananda, *Bhagavad-Gita*, 41).

This drive toward indifference to any action is explained most clearly in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In the *Gita* a long dialogue occurs between Krishna, a manifestation of Brahman, and his friend and disciple, Arjuna. Arjuna tells Krishna of his reluctance to fight against a people among whom he has many friends. He asks Krishna how killing his friends could possibly be justified. Krishna tells Arjuna that he must detach himself from the fruits of his actions, no matter what they are. Thus states Krishna:

He whose mind dwells

Beyond attachment,

Untainted by ego,

No act shall bind him

With any Bond:

Though he slay these thousands

He is no slayer. [ibid., 122]

Krishna explains to Arjuna that this state of union with Brahman can be achieved by following one or any combination of the following paths:

1. *Raga yoga*— the path of union through meditation and mind control;
2. *Karma yoga* —the path of union through work;
3. *Jnana yoga* —the path of union through knowledge; or
4. *Bhakti yoga*— the path of union through love and devotion (Prabhavananda, *Spiritual Heritage*, 98, 123–29).

But any path one follows must be accompanied by unattachment or indifference to any action. Only then will good and evil be transcended and union with Brahman attained.

**Human Destiny.** Realizing one’s oneness with Brahman is essential in Vedanta pantheism, for apart from this realization one is doomed forever to the cycle of *samsara*. *Samsara* is the wheel of time and desire, or birth, death, and rebirth ( *see* REINCARNATION ). It is the wheel to which everything in the world of illusion is shackled. And *samsara* “itself is subject to and conditioned by endless cause, the *dharma* of the universe” (Corwin, 22).

One’s life is also determined by the law of *karma* or action. This is the moral law of the universe. Huston Smith explains that *karma* is “the moral law of cause and effect.” It is absolutely binding and allows no exceptions. *Karma* says that every decision made by an



individual in the present is caused by all prior decisions in past lives and will in turn affect every future decision (Smith, 76).

A person whose *karma* is good may follow one of two possible paths. One who manages to free self from *samsara*—the cycle of birth and rebirth—will attain to higher planes of existence or consciousness until becoming one with the divine being “in his impersonal aspect and so reaches at last the end of his journey” ( *Spiritual Heritage*, 70).

One who has been good, but not good enough to become free from *samsara* will go “to one or another heaven, where he enjoys the fruits of his good deeds which he has done in the body . . . and when these fruits are no more, he is born again, that is, reincarnated” on earth in “a new body appropriate to a new and higher realm of being” (ibid., 70–71). If a person’s *karma* is largely evil, then he “goes to the regions of the wicked, there to eat the bitter fruits of his deeds. These fruits once exhausted, he too returns to earth” in a reincarnated state (ibid., 71).

Concerning the law of *karma* and the cycle of *samsara*, “it is on this earth that a man determines his spiritual destiny and achieves his final realization” (ibid.). Salvation is solely of personal efforts. Higher states of existence offer rewards of happiness and lower states are punishments that each person earns on his own. “The history of a particular individual, the number of times he experiences rebirth, or reincarnation as it is called, depends entirely upon the quality of his will, upon the moral effort he puts forth” (ibid., 27) ( *see HELL* ).

Ultimately all humankind will achieve liberation from *samsara* and union with *Brahman*. Some people may return to earth often, but eventually they will all earn their salvation. As Prabhavananda says, “The Upanishads know no such thing as eternal damnation—and the same is true of every other Hindu scripture” (ibid., 71 [see HELL]).

Vedanta pantheism is the absolute pantheism of the East. Hinduism has found more popular expression and favor in the West through such religious groups and practices as Transcendental Meditation and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Vedanta pantheism is an absolute monism, declaring that God is all and all is One.

**Evaluation.** Like other worldviews, monism has positive and negative dimensions. Although its view of ultimate reality is wrong, Vedantic Hinduism can be commended for its quest to know ultimate reality. There is more to reality than the world of our senses perceive. The desire to negate all limitations of ultimate reality is also good. The ultimate cannot be limited by human sensations or perceptions. Hinduism grapples with the basic problem of evil ( *see EVIL, PROBLEM OF* ). It acknowledges that evil must be explained and dealt with.

Since Vedantic Hinduism is a form of monism and pantheism, it is evaluated under those topics.

Its basic metaphysical error lies in a rejection of the analogy of being ( *see ANALOGY* ). All being is not univocal—the same thing. There is Infinite Being, and there are finite beings, and these are different kinds of beings. There is an analogy of being.

Likewise, the denial of the reality of evil is a classic form of illusionism. But one cannot know the world is an illusion who does not know what is real. Knowing the real is a prerequisite for knowing what is not real.

In order to maintain an absolute pantheism, monists must deny the validity of sense knowledge. The senses tell us there are many things and that they are physical. The monist must deny both of these pieces of information about reality. But the denial of all sense knowledge is self-defeating. One could not know the senses were being deceptive without trusting in the senses to tell this. We see a crooked stick in the water and know that our senses are playing a trick on us. How do we know the stick is really straight? We must use our senses. The sense of sight tells what it looks like when out of the water and touch tells what it feels like in the water.

A monist expects us to trust our senses when we look at their books or listen to their lectures so that we will understand them. They fail to recognize that while knowledge is more than sensation, it begins with sensation. Everything in the mind was first in the senses except the mind itself. So, we know more than sensation, but we do not know the world without sensation. Sensation is basic to all understanding of reality.

Epistemologically, monistic Hinduism is subject to many of the same criticisms as agnosticism. It is self-defeating, for it uses the basic laws of thought in order to express its views about what it claims is inexpressible. It uses first principles in its rejections of first principles and finite reality.

The ethics of Vedantic Hinduism is a form of relativism, since it denies that there are moral absolutes ( *see MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF* ). This too is self-defeating. One cannot avoid all moral absolutes without affirming the moral absolute that there are no moral absolutes. The claim that one “ought” to avoid absolutes is a moral “ought” of its own. One cannot claim that ultimate reality goes beyond all good and evil unless there is an ultimate moral principle by which to measure good and evil. But in this case there is an ultimate moral standard.

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**Historical Apologetics.** Historical apologetics stresses the historical evidence as the basis for demonstrating the truth of Christianity ( *see* APOLOGETICS, TYPES OF ). At this point it overlaps with classical apologetics. The crucial difference between the two is that historical apologetics does not believe that it is necessary to first establish the existence of God. Historical apologists believe that the truth of Christianity, including the existence of God, can be proven from the foundation of historical evidence alone.

This assumption places historical apologetics within the broad class of *evidential apologetics*, but it differs in that it stresses the importance, if not necessity, of beginning with the historical evidence for the truth of Christianity. Usually, the historical apologist sees the resurrection of Christ as the linchpin of apologetics. In this sense, it can be called *resurrection apologetics*.

**Proponents of Historical Apologetics.** Christianity is an historical religion, so it is understandable that it would have an historic emphasis from the very beginning. The earliest apologists, including Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, defended the historicity of Christianity. Likewise, the classical apologists ( *see* CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS ), such as Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas, considered historical apologetics as an important part of their overall strategy in defending the Christian faith.

However, what distinguishes historical apologetics as a discipline is its belief that one can defend the whole of the Christian faith, including the existence of God and the fact of miracles, strictly from the historical evidence, without the necessity of any prior appeal to theistic arguments (although some use theistic evidences in a supplementary way). This emphasis appears to be largely a modern phenomenon. Contemporary apologists who fall into this category include John Warwick Montgomery and Gary Habermas ( *see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ; MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ).

**Contrast with Other Systems.** Historical apologetics differs from both presuppositional apologetics and classical apologetics, although it has things in common with them.

**Historical versus Presuppositional Apologetics.** Historical apologetics disagrees with the various forms of presuppositional apologetics ( *see* APOLOGETICS, PRESUPPOSITIONAL ) over the nature of evidence itself and the nature of historical evidence in particular.

The historical apologists, in agreement with the classical apologists, begin with evidence to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. Presuppositionalists, on the other hand, begin with the unbeliever's presuppositions. At issue is the validity of evidence to support truth. The pure (revelational) presuppositionalists insist that no evidence, historical or otherwise, makes any sense unless it is interpreted in the grid of one's overall Christian worldview. The historical apologist believes that the historical facts are self-interpreting in their historical context. Pure presuppositionalists, on the other hand, insist that no facts are self-interpreting; all facts are interpreted and require a Christian worldview framework for proper understanding.

**Historical versus Classical Apologetics.** Historical apologetics has much in common with classical apologetics. Both believe in the validity of historical evidence. Both see historical evidence to be crucial to the defense of Christianity. However, they sharply disagree over the need for theistic apologetics as logically prior to historical apologetics. Classical apologetics believes it makes no sense to speak about the resurrection as an act of God unless one had first established that a God exists who can first act. The historical apologists, on the other hand, argues that one can show that God exists by demonstrating from the historical evidence alone that an act of God occurred, as in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**The Historical Approach.** The basic approach of historical apologetics is to begin with the historicity of the New Testament documents and then to use the miracles of Christ, particularly the resurrection, to demonstrate that Christ is the Son of God (thereby establishing that a theistic God exists who can work miracles).

A typical approach of historical apologetics might begin by attempting to show the historicity of the New Testament documents. This usually includes arguments for the authenticity of the New Testament documents ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ) and the reliability of the New Testament witnesses ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES ).

The second step would be to examine the New Testament claims of Christ to be the Son of the theistic God who offers miraculous proofs for his claims. The most important of these proofs is that Christ was resurrected from the dead ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ).

Third, a defense of the miracles of Christ, particularly his resurrection, is given. Sometimes this is supported by historical arguments outside the New Testament, but the basic reliability of the New Testament documents is the usual (and essential) focus.

From these premises alone it is concluded that Jesus is the Son of the one, true, theistic God who alone can account for these miraculous events in Jesus' life. From the deity of Christ it can be, and often is, argued that the Bible is the Word of God, since Jesus (who is God) affirmed it to be so ( *see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ; BIBLE, JESUS' VIEW OF ). In this way, God, miracles, the deity of Christ ( *see* CHRIST, DEITY OF ), and the inspiration of the Bible are all supported by way of a historical argument.

**Evaluation.** Critiques of historical apologetics come from two sides, the presuppositionalists and the classical apologists.

**Bare Facts?** Presuppositionalists, and even some classical apologists, object that historical apologetics begin with the false assumption that the historical facts "speak for themselves." The historical approach wrongly assumes that there are "bare facts" that are "self-interpreting." These are facts which any fair-minded person can see and from which draw the proper conclusions. But all "facts" gain meaning from their ultimate worldview context. A worldview is like a pair of tinted glasses that color everything seen through their lenses. All facts are interpreted facts. So-called bare facts are like dots scattered over a sheet of paper. No connecting lines are there, and

the dots are meaningless unless the mind connects them. How the lines are drawn depends on one's perspective.

As noted among objections to classical apologetics, only a theist understands the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as a supernatural act of the theistic God and that this act demonstrates that Jesus is the unique Son of a theistic God ( *see* THEISM ). That only theists, or tacit theists, come to these conclusions indicates that a theistic worldview is logically prior to the identification even of a resurrection from the dead as supernatural ( *see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ). The event cannot be a special act of God unless there is a God who can perform such special acts ( *see* GOD, NATURE OF ).

This is not to say that *psychologically* an event like this could not trigger belief in God, were some skeptic or agnostic to come to believe it actually happened. It only means that only one who accepts at least the possibility, if not plausibility, of a theistic view would come to this conclusion. The vast majority of people who come to believe in Christianity because of the miracles of Christ and the apostles do so only because they already have an explicit or implicit theistic worldview. For example, members of preliterate people groups are often converted to Christianity after they come to believe in such miraculous events. But these people already held a tacit theism that worshiped a high god or sky God ( *see* MONOTHEISM, PRIMITIVE ). Even deists ( *see* DEISM ) believe God performed the big miracle of creating the world ( *see* CREATION AND ORIGINS ). Thus, a resurrection from the dead could evoke their belief that God could do other miracles as well. But the fact remains, both in principle and in practice, that belief in a miracle working God is logically prior to belief that any given event is a miracle, including the event of someone being raised from the dead.

*Whose Fingerprint?* Other gaps in the historical apologetic approach can only be filled if one holds a theistic worldview. For example, a crucial step in the overall apologetic is to be able to identify a given event as a miracle. But how does one know that a miracle is the “fingerprint of God” to confirm a truth claim of a prophet of God unless one already knows that there is a God and what his “fingerprints” are like? Only if one knows what God is like can he identify god-like acts. The very identifiability of an unusual act as a miracle depends on prior knowledge of such a God ( *see* MIRACLES, IDENTIFIABILITY OF ).

*What Sort of God?* Unless one assumes the existence of a theistic God (who is morally perfect and would not deceive), the historical argument does not work. Suppose there were not a morally perfect God who, nonetheless, had the ability to perform miracles. Could he not deceive people by performing miracles for an impostor? Crucial to the historical argument is the premise that *God would not perform a miracle through or for someone who is making a fraudulent claim in his Name* ( *see* MIRACLES AS CONFIRMATION OF TRUTH ). Unless one has prior assurance that the God who performs such miracles is an essentially perfect Being (i.e., a theistic God) who would not so deceive us, then one cannot be sure that the historical evidence for a miracle actually supports the claim of the one through whom or for whom the miracle is being performed.

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#### Historical Jesus. *See* CHRIST OF FAITH VS. JESUS OF HISTORY ; JESUS SEMINAR .

**History, Objectivity of.** The overall argument in defense of Christianity ( *see* APOLOGETICS, ARGUMENT OF ) is based on the historicity of the New Testament documents ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ). But this in turn is grounded in the assertion that history is objectively knowable. Since this is strongly challenged by contemporary historians, it is necessary to counter this claim in order to secure the defense of Christianity.

**Objections to Objective History.** Many arguments have been advanced against the position that history is objectively knowable. The discussion here follows generally an excellent summary found in an unpublished master's thesis by William L. Craig (see Craig). There are at least ten arguments against the objectivity of history to be examined (see Beard, 323–25).

If these arguments are valid, it will make verification of Christianity via a historical method impossible. These ten arguments fall into four broad categories: methodological, epistemological, axiological, and metaphysical.

**Epistemological Objections.** *Epistemology* deals with how one knows, and the historical relativist contends that the very conditions by which one knows history are so subjective that one cannot have an objective knowledge of history. Three main objections are offered.

**The nonobservability of history.** Historical subjectivists argue that the substance of history, unlike that studied by empirical science, is not directly observable. The historian does not deal with past events, but with statements about past events. This fact enables the historian to deal with facts in an imaginative way. Historical facts, they insist, exist only within the creative mind of the historian. The documents do not contain facts, but are, without the historian's understanding, mere ink lines on paper.

Further, once the event is gone it can never be fully recreated. The historian must impose meaning on the fragmentary and secondhand record. “The event itself, the facts, do not say

anything, do not impose any meaning. It is the historian who speaks, who imposes a meaning” (Becker, “What Are Historical Facts?” 131).

Two reasons allow the historian only indirect access to the past. First, the historian’s world is composed of records and not events. This is why the historian must contribute a “reconstructed picture” of the past. In this sense the past is really a product of the present. Second, the scientist can test his view, whereas experimentation is not possible with historical events. The empirical scientist has the advantage of repeatability; he may subject his views to falsification. The historian cannot. The unobservable historical event is no longer verifiable; it is part of the forever departed past. Hence, what one believes about the past will be no more than a reflection of imagination. It will be a subjective construction in the minds of present historians but cannot hope to be an objective representation of what really happened.

*The fragmentary nature of historical accounts.* At best a historian can hope for completeness of documentation, but completeness of the events themselves is never possible. Documents at best cover a small fraction of the events (Beard, 323). From only fragmentary documents one cannot validly draw full and final conclusions. The documents do not present the events but only an interpretation of the events mediated through their recorders. At best we have a fragmentary record of what someone else thought happened. So “what really happened would still have to be reconstructed in the mind of the historian” (Carr, 20). Because the documents are so fragmentary and the events so distant, objectivity becomes a will-o’-the-wisp for the historian. Too few pieces of the puzzle remain, and the partial pictures on the few pieces only suggest the mind of the one who passed the pieces down.

*Historians are historically conditioned.* Historical relativists insist that the historian is a product of a time and is subject to unconscious programming. It is impossible to stand back and view history objectively because the observer is part of the historical process. Historical synthesis depends on the personality of the writer as well as the social and religious milieu in which the writer lives (Pirenne, 97). In this sense one must study the historian before one can understand the historian’s history.

Since the historian is part of the historical process, objectivity can never be attained. The history of one generation will be rewritten by the next, and so on. No historian can transcend historical relativity and view the world process from the outside (Collingwood, 248). At best there can be successive, less than final, historical interpretations, each viewing history from the vantage point of its own generation of historians. There is no such person as a neutral historian.

*Methodological Objections.* Methodological objections relate to the procedure by which historians do their work. Three major methodological objections attack the concept that history is objective enough to establish the truth of Christianity.

*The selective nature of research.* Not only does the historian lack access to events and must work with their fragmentary interpretations; what makes objectivity more hopeless is that the historian selects from among these fragmentary reports. Historians do not even touch some volumes in archives (Beard, 324). The actual selection among the fragmentary accounts is influenced by subjective and relative factors, including personal prejudice, availability,

knowledge of languages, personal beliefs, and social conditions. The historian becomes inextricably a part of the history written. What is included and what is excluded in interpretation will always be a matter of subjective choice. No matter how objective a historian, it is practically impossible to present what really happened. A “history” is no more than an interpretation based on a subjective selection of fragmentary interpretations of past and unrepeatable events.

So, it is argued, the facts of history do not speak for themselves. “The facts speak only when the historian calls on them; it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context” (Carr, 32). Indeed, when the “facts” speak, it is not the original events that are articulating, but rather later fragmentary opinions about those events. The original facts or events have perished. So, by the very nature of the project, the historian can never hope for objectivity.

*The need to structure the facts.* Partial knowledge of the past makes it necessary for the historian to “fill in” gaping holes with imagination. As a child draws the lines between the dots on a picture, the historian supplies the connections between events. Without the historian the dots are not numbered, nor arranged in an obvious manner. Imagination provides continuity.

Furthermore, the historian is not content to tell us simply what happened, but feels compelled to explain why it happened (Walsh, 32). This makes history fully coherent and intelligible. Good history has both theme and unity, which are provided by the historian. Facts alone do not make history any more than do disconnected dots make a picture. Herein, according to the subjectivist, lies the difference between chronicle and history. The former is merely the raw material. Without the structure provided by the historian, the “stuff” of history would be meaningless.

The study of history is a study of causes. The historian wants to know *why*, to weave a web of interconnected events into a unified whole. So subjectivity is inevitably interjected. Even if there is some semblance of objectivity in chronicle, nonetheless there is no hope for objectivity in history. History is, in principle, nonobjective because the very thing that makes it history (as opposed to mere chronicle) is the interpretive structure of framework given to it from the subjective vantage point of the historian. Hence, it is concluded, the necessity of structure inevitably makes objectivity impossible.

*The need to select and arrange.* The historian views fragmentary documents indirectly through the interpretation of the original source. In the process a selected amount of material from available archives is hung on an interpretive structure by the use of the historian’s own value-laden language within an overall worldview. Events come to be understood from the relative vantage point of the historian’s generation, and even the topics studied accord with the researcher’s subjective preferences. The dice are loaded against objectivity from the start. In the actual writing an historian covers non-repeatable events from fragmentary, secondhand accounts from a personal point of view while subjectively arranging the material (Collingwood, 285–90).

The selection and arrangement will be determined by personal and social factors. The final written product will be prejudiced by what is included and by what is excluded. It will lack objectivity by how facts are arranged and emphasized. The selection in terms of the framework given will either be narrow or broad, clear or confused. Whatever its nature, the framework

reflects the mind of the historian (Beard, 150–51). This moves one still further away from objectively knowing what really happened.

Subjectivists conclude that hopes of objectivity are dashed at every point in the process.

*An Axiological (Value) Objection.* The historian cannot avoid making value judgments ( *see* TRUTH, NATURE OF ). This, argue historical relativists, renders objectivity unobtainable. For even in the selection and arrangement of materials value judgments are made. Titles of chapters and sections imply values of the writer.

As one historian put it, the very subject matter of history is “value-charged” (Dray, 23). The facts of history consist of murders, oppression, and other evils that cannot be described in morally neutral words. By use of ordinary language, the historian is forced to impose values. Whether, for instance, one is called a “dictator” or a “benevolent ruler” is a value judgment. How can one describe Adolf Hitler without making value judgments? And if one were to attempt a kind of scientifically neutral description of past events without any stated or implied interpretation of human purposes, it would not be history but mere raw-boned chronicle without historical meaning.

There is no way for the historian to keep out of the history. Perspectives and prejudices will be expressed in value language by which and through which the world is viewed. In this sense objectivity is unattainable. Every writer will inevitably evaluate things from a subjective perspective and chosen words.

*Metaphysical Objections.* Three metaphysical objections have been leveled against the belief in objective history. Each is predicated, either theoretically or practically, on the premise that worldview colors the study of history.

*The unavoidability of worldviews.* Every historian interprets the past in the overall framework of a *Weltanschauung*. Every historian operates from inside one of three philosophies of history: (1) History is a *chaotic* jumble of meaningless events; (2) the events of humankind’s story repeat themselves in some sort of *cycle* ; and (3) events are pushing forward the story in a *linear* fashion toward an endpoint (Beard, 151). Which one of these the historian adopts will be a matter of faith or philosophy. Unless one view or another is presupposed, no interpretation is possible. The *Weltanschauungen* determine whether the historian sees the events as a meaningless maze, a series of endless repetitions, or a purposeful advance. These worldviews are both necessary and inevitably value oriented. Without a worldview the historian cannot interpret the past; but a worldview makes objectivity impossible.

A worldview is not generated from the facts. Facts do not speak for themselves. The facts gain meaning only within the overall context of the worldview. Without the structure of the worldview framework, the “stuff” of history has no meaning. Augustine, for example, viewed history as a great theodicy, but W. F. G. Hegel saw it as an unfolding of the divine. It is not an archaeological or factual find but simply the religious or philosophical presuppositions which prompted each person to develop a view. Eastern philosophies of history are even more diverse; they involve a cyclical rather than a linear pattern.

Once one admits the relativity or perspectivity of one worldview instead of another, the historical relativists insist that all rights to claim objectivity have been waived. If there are different ways to interpret the same facts, depending on the overall perspective, then there is no single objective interpretation of history.

*Miracles are suprahistorical.* Even if one grants that *secular* history could be known objectively, there still remains the problem of the subjectivity of *religious* history. Some writers make a strong distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* (Kahler, 63; *see* KAHLER, MARTIN ). The former is empirical and objectively knowable to some degree; the latter is spiritual and unknowable in a historical or objective way. But as spiritual or suprahistorical, there is no objective way to verify it. Spiritual history has no necessary connection with the spatiotemporal continuum of empirical events. It is a “myth” ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ; MIRACLES, MYTH AND ; MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT ). It offers subjective religious significance to the believer but lacks objective grounding. Like the story of George Washington and the cherry tree, *Geschichte* is a story made up of events which probably never happened but which inspire men to some moral or religious good.

If this distinction is applied to the New Testament, then even granted that the life and central teachings of Jesus of Nazareth can be objectively established, there is no historical way to confirm the miraculous dimension of the New Testament ( *see* MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ). Miracles do not happen as part of *Historie* and therefore are not subject to objective analysis; they are *Geschichte* events and as such cannot be analyzed by historical methodology. Many contemporary theologians have accepted this distinction. Paul \*Tillich claimed that it is “a disastrous distortion of the meaning of faith to identify it with the belief in the historical validity of the Biblical stories” (Tillich, 87). Rather, with Søren Kierkegaard , Tillich believed the important thing is that it evoke an appropriate religious response. With this Rudolf Bultmann and Shubert Ogden would concur, as would much of contemporary theological thought.

Even such as Karl Jaspers, who oppose Bultmann’s more radical demythologization view, accept the distinction between spiritual and empirical dimensions of miracles (Jaspers, 16–17). On the more conservative end of those maintaining this distinction is Ian Ramsey. According to Ramsey, “it is not enough to think of the facts of the Bible as ‘brute historical facts’ to which the Evangelists give distinctive ‘interpretation.’” “No attempt to make the language of the Bible conform to a precise straight-forward public language—whether that language be scientific of historical—has ever succeeded.” The Bible is about situations which existentialists call “authentic” or “existential-historical” (Ramsey, 118, 119, 122). There is always something “more” than the empirical in every religious or miraculous situation.

*Miracles are historically unknowable.* On the basis of Ernst Troeltsch ’s principle of analogy, some historians have come to object to the possibility of ever establishing a miracle based on testimony about the past. As discussed more fully in *Miracles, Arguments Against*, Troeltsch stated the problem this way:

On the analogy of the events known to us we seek by conjecture and sympathetic understanding to explain and reconstruct the past. . . . Since we discern the same process

of phenomena in operation in the past as in the present, and see, there as here, the various historical cycles of human life influencing and intersecting one another.

Without uniformity we could know nothing about the past, for without an analogy from the present we could know nothing about the past. In accord with this principle some have argued that “no amount of testimony is ever permitted to establish as past reality a thing that cannot be found in present reality” (Becker, “Detachment,” 12–13). Unless one can identify miracles in the present there is no analogy on which to base understanding of alleged miracles in the past. The historian, like the scientist, must adopt a methodological skepticism toward alleged events for which there are no contemporary parallels. The present is the foundation of our knowledge of the past. As F. H. Bradley put it:

We have seen that history rests in the last resort upon an inference from our experience, a judgment based upon our own present state of things . . . ; when we are asked to affirm the existence in past time of events, the effects of causes which confessedly are without analogy in the world in which we live, and which we know, we are at a loss for any answer but this, that . . . we are asked to build a house without a foundation. . . . And how can we attempt this without contradicting ourselves? [Bradley, 100]

**A Response to Historical Relativism.** Despite these strong objections to the possibility of historical objectivity, the case is by no means closed. There are flaws in the historical relativists’ position. The responses given are in the order of the above objections.

*The Problem of Indirect Access.* If by *objective* one means absolute knowledge, then no human historian can be objective. On the other hand, if *objective* means “a fair but revisable presentation that reasonable men and women should accept,” then the door is open to the possibility of objectivity. In this latter sense, history is as objective as some sciences (Block, 50). Paleontology (historical geology) is considered one of the most objective of all sciences. It deals with physical facts and processes of the past. However, the events represented by fossil finds are no more directly accessible to the scientists or *repeatable* than are historical events to the historian. There are some differences. The fossil is a mechanically true imprint of the original event and the eyewitness of history may be less precise. But natural processes also can mar the fossil imprint. At least if one can determine the integrity and reliability of the eyewitness, one cannot slam the door on the possibility of objectivity in history any more than on objectivity in geology.

The scientist might contend that he can repeat the processes of the past by experimentation, whereas the historian cannot. But even here the situations are similar. In this sense history too can be “repeated.” Similar patterns of events, by which comparisons can be made, recur today as they occurred in the past. Limited social experiments can be performed to see if human history “repeats.” The historian, no less than the scientist, has the tools for determining what really happened in the past. The lack of direct access to the original facts or events does not hinder the one more than the other ( *see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF ).

Likewise, scientific facts do not “speak for themselves” any more than do historical facts. If *fact* means “original event,” then neither geology nor history is in possession of any facts. *Fact* must be taken by both to mean information about the original event, and in this latter sense facts do not exist merely subjectively in the mind of the historian. What one does with data, what meaning or interpretation is given to them, can in no way eliminate the data. There remains for both science and history a hard core of objective facts. The door is thereby left open for objectivity. One may draw a valid distinction between propaganda and history. Propaganda lacks sufficient basis in objective fact but history does not. Without objective facts no protest can be raised either against poor history or propaganda. If history is entirely in the mind of the beholder, there is no reason one cannot decide to behold it any way he desires.

This brings us to the crucial question as to whether “facts speak for themselves” because they are objective. An argument might be advanced that, yes, they do. It is self-defeating to affirm that facts are without meaning, since the affirmation about the allegedly meaningless fact is a meaningful statement about fact. All facts are meaningful; there are no so-called bare facts. But this argument does not really prove that facts speak for themselves. It does show that facts can and do bear meaning. But what it must prove (and fails to prove) is that facts bear only one meaning and that they bear it evidently. The fact that no meaningful statement about facts can be made without attributing some meaning to the facts does not prove that the meaning emanated from the facts. It is possible that the meaning was assigned to the facts by the one making the meaningful statement about them. Indeed, only “mean-ers” (i.e., minds) can emanate meaning.

It is not at all clear in what sense an objective fact can mean anything in and of itself. It is a subject (e.g., a mind) that utters meaning about objects (or about other subjects), but objects as such are not subjects that are emitting meaning. This is so unless we assume that all objective facts are really little minds transmitting meaning or transmitters through which some other minds or a Mind is communicating. But to assume this would be to invoke one particular worldview over another in order to prove that “facts speak for themselves.” And even then it could be argued that the facts are not speaking for themselves but for the Mind (God) who is speaking through them.

It seems best to conclude, then, that objective facts do not speak for themselves. Finite minds may give differing interpretations of them or an infinite Mind may give an absolute interpretation of them, but there is no one objective interpretation a finite mind can give to them. Of course, if there is an absolute Mind from whose vantage point the facts are given absolute or ultimate meaning, then there is an objective interpretation of the facts which all finite minds should concur is the ultimate meaning. If this is the correct worldview ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ; THEISM ), then there is an object meaning to all facts in the world. All facts are theistic facts, and no nontheistic way of interpreting them is objective or true. Hence, objectivity in history is possible, since in a theistic world history would be His-story. Objectivity, then, is possible within a worldview.

*The Fragmentary Nature of Historical Accounts.* The fact that the fossil record is fragmentary does not destroy the objectivity of paleontology. The fossil remains represent only a very tiny percentage of the living beings of the past. This does not hinder scientists from attempting to reconstruct an objective picture of what really happened in geological history.

Likewise, human history is transmitted through partial records. Not every bone is necessary to make some qualified judgments about the whole animal. The reconstruction of both science and history is subject to revision. Subsequent finds may provide new facts that call for new interpretations. But at least there is an objective basis in fact for the meaning attributed to the find. Interpretations can neither create the facts nor can they ignore them, if they would approach objectivity. We may conclude, then, that history need be no less objective than geology simply because it depends on fragmentary accounts. Scientific knowledge is also partial and depends on assumptions and an overall framework which may prove to be inadequate upon the discovery of more facts ( *see* SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE ).

Whatever difficulty there may be, from a strictly scientific point of view, in filling in gaps between the facts, once one has assumed a philosophical stance toward the world, the problem of objectivity in general is resolved. If there is a God, then the overall picture is already drawn; the facts of history will merely fill in the details of its meaning. If the universe is theistic, the artist's sketch is already known in advance ( *see* THEISM ); the detail and coloring will come only as all the facts of history are fit into the overall sketch known to be true from the theistic framework. In this sense, historical objectivity is most certainly possible within a given framework such as a theistic worldview. Objectivity resides in the view that best fits the facts consistently into an overall theistic system which is supported by good evidence ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ).

*Historical Conditioning.* It is true that every historian is time bound. Each person occupies a relative place in the changing events of the spatiotemporal world. However, it does not follow that because the historian is a product of a time that the person's historical research is also a product of the time. Simply because a person cannot avoid a relative place in history does not preclude objectivity. The criticism confuses the content of knowledge and the process of attaining it (Mandelbaum, 94). Where one derives a hypothesis is not essentially related to how its truth is established.

Further, if relativity is unavoidable, the position of the historical relativists is self-refuting. For either their view is historically conditioned, and therefore unobjective, or else it is not relative but objective. If the latter, it thereby admits that it is possible to be objective in viewing history. On the contrary, if the position of historical relativism is itself relative, then it cannot be taken as objectively true. It is simply subjective opinion that has no basis to claim to be objectively true about all of history. If it is subjective it cannot eliminate the possibility that history is objectively knowable, and if it is an objective fact about history then objective facts can be known about history. In the first case, objectivity is not eliminated and in the second, relativity is self-defeated. In either case, objectivity is possible.

The constant rewriting of history is based on the assumption that objectivity is possible. Why strive for accuracy unless it is believed that the revision is more objectively true than the previous view? Why critically analyze unless improvement toward a more accurate view is the assumed goal? Perfect objectivity may be practically unattainable within the limited resources of the historian. But the inability to attain 100 percent objectivity is a long way from total relativity. Reaching a degree of objectivity which is subject to criticism and revision is a more realistic conclusion than the relativist's arguments. In short, there is no reason to eliminate the possibility of a sufficient degree of historical objectivity.

*The Selectivity of Materials.* The fact that the historian must select from among all possible materials does not automatically make history purely subjective. Jurors make judgments "beyond reasonable doubt" without having all the evidence. Availability of the relevant and crucial evidence is sufficient to attain objectivity. One need not know everything in order to know something. No scientist knows all the facts, and yet objectivity is claimed. As long as no important fact is overlooked, there is no reason to eliminate the possibility of objectivity in history, any more than in science.

The selection of facts can be objective to the degree that the facts are selected and reconstructed in the context in which the events represented actually occurred. Since it is impossible for any historian to pack into an account everything available on a subject, it is important to select the points representative of the period (Collingwood, 100). Condensation does not necessarily imply distortion. Further, the evidence for the historicity of the New Testament from which Christian apologetics draw is greater than for the truth of any other document from the ancient world ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ). If the events behind it cannot be known objectively, it is impossible to know anything from that time period.

There remains, however, the question of whether the real context and connections of past events are known, or, are knowable. Unless there is an accepted framework or structure for the facts, there is no way to reconstruct in miniature what really happened. The objective meaning of historical events is dependent on knowing the connection that the events really had when they occurred. But the events are subject to various combinations, depending on the structure given to them by the historian, the relative importance placed on them, and whether prior events are considered causal or merely antecedent. There is really no way to know the original connections without assuming an overall hypothesis or worldview by which the events are interpreted. Of course objectivity of bare facts and mere sequence of antecedent and consequent facts are knowable without assuming a worldview . But objectivity of the meaning of these events is not possible apart from a meaningful structure, such as that provided by an overall hypothesis or worldview. Hence, the problem of finding objective meaning in history, like the problem of objective meaning in science, is dependent on one's *Weltanschauung* . Objective meaning is system-dependent. Only within a given system can the objective meaning of events be understood. Once that system is known, it is possible by fair and representative selection to reconstruct an objective picture of the past. Thus within an established theistic structure objectivity is possible.

*Structuring the Material of History.* All the historian could possibly know about past events without assuming the truth of one interpretive framework over another is the sheer facticity and sequence of the events. When the historian moves beyond bare facts and mere order of events and begins to speak of causal connections and relative importance, an interpretive framework is needed through which to understand the facts. Whether the facts are determined to have originally had the assumed causal connection and the attributed importance will depend on whether the given worldview is correct. To affirm that facts have "internal arrangement" begs the question. The real question is, How does one know the correct arrangement? Since the facts can be arranged in one of at least three ways (chaotic, cyclical, and linear), it begs the question merely to assume that one of these is the way the facts were really arranged. The same set of dots

can have the lines drawn in many ways. The fact is that the lines are not known to be there apart from an interpretive framework through which one views them. Therefore, the problem of the objective meaning of history cannot be resolved apart from appeal to a worldview. Once the skeletal sketch is known, then one can know the objective placing (meaning) of the facts. However, apart from a structure the mere “stuff” means nothing.

Apart from an overall structure, there is no way to know which events in history are the most significant and, hence, there is no way to know the true significance of these and other events in their overall context. The argument that importance is determined by which events influence the most people is inadequate. It is a form of historical utilitarianism subject to the same criticisms as any utilitarian test for truth. The most does not determine the best; great influence does not mean great importance or value. Even after most people have been influenced, one can still question the truth or value of the event that influenced them. Of course, if one assumes as a framework that the most significant events are those that influence the most people in the long run, then utilitarian ideals will be determinative. But what right does one have to assume a utilitarian framework any more than a nonutilitarian one? Here again, it is a matter of justifying one's overall framework or worldview.

The argument advanced by some objectivists is that past events must be structured or else they are unknowable and faulty. All this argument proves is that it is necessary to understand facts through some structure, otherwise it makes no sense to speak of facts. The question of which structure is correct must be determined on some basis other than the mere facts themselves. If there were an objectivity of bare facts, it would provide only the mere “what” of history. But objective meaning deals with the why of these events; this is impossible apart from a meaning-structure in which facts may find their placement of significance. Objective meaning apart from a worldview is impossible.

However, granted that there is justification for adopting a theistic worldview, the objective meaning of history becomes possible ( *see* THEISM ; GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ). Within the theistic context, each fact of history becomes a theistic fact. Granted the factual order of events and known causal connection of events, objective meaning becomes possible. The chaotic and the cyclical frameworks are eliminated in favor of the linear. And within the linear view of events, causal connections emerge as the result of their context in a theistic universe. Theism provides the sketch from which history paints the complete picture. The pigments of mere fact take on real meaning as they are blended on the theistic sketch. Objectivity means systematic consistency. That is, the most meaningful way all the facts of history blend into the whole theistic sketch is what really happened. In this way, theism can provide an objective framework for historical facts.

*Selecting and Arranging Materials.* The historian can rearrange data about the past without distorting it (Nagel, 208). Since the original construction of events is available to neither the historian nor the geologist, the past must be reconstructed from available evidence. But reconstruction does not require revision. The historian must arrange the material. The important thing is whether it is arranged or rearranged in accordance with the events as they really occurred. As long as the historian consistently incorporates all the significant events in accordance with an overall established worldview, objectivity is secure. Objectivity arranges

facts in accordance with the way things really were. Distortion comes when facts are neglected and twisted.

The historian may desire to be selective in the compass of study, to study only the political, economic, or religious dimensions of a specific period. But such specialization does not demand total subjectivity. One can focus without losing the overall context. It is one thing to focus on specifics within an overall field but quite another to ignore or distort the overall context in which the intensified interest is occurring. As long as the specialist stays in touch with reality rather than reflecting pure subjectivity, a measurable degree of objectivity can be maintained.

*Value Judgments.* One may grant the point that ordinary language is value laden and that value judgments are inevitable. This by no means makes historical objectivity impossible (Butterfield, 244). Objectivity means fair dealing with the facts, to present what happened as correctly as possible. Further, objectivity means that when one interprets why these events occurred, the language of the historian should ascribe to these events the value which they had in their original context. Granting within an established worldview that certain things have a given value, then an objective account of history must reconstruct and restructure these events with the same relative value. So objectivity demands making value judgments rather than avoiding them. The question is not whether value language can be objective, but which value statements objectively portray the events. Once the worldview has been determined, value judgments are not undesirable or merely subjective; they are essential. If this is a theistic world, then it would not be objective to place anything but a theistic value on the facts of history.

*The Need for an Overall Worldview.* Those who argue against the objectivity of history apart from an overall worldview must be granted the point. Meaning is system-dependent. Without a worldview it makes no sense to talk about objective meaning (Popper, 150f.). Without a context meaning cannot be determined, and the context is provided by the worldview and not by the bare facts.

But granted that this is a theistic universe, it follows that objectivity is possible. In a theistic universe each fact has objective meaning; each fact is a God-fact. All events fit into the overall context of an ultimate purpose. One can determine the facts and assign them meaning in the overall context of the theistic universe by showing that they fit most consistently with a given interpretation. Then one may lay claim to having arrived at the objective truth about history.

For example, given that this is a theistic universe and that the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth returned from the grave, then the Christian can argue that this unusual event is a miracle that confirms the associated truth claims of Jesus to be the Christ. Apart from this theistic framework, it is not even meaningful to make such a claim. Overarching hypotheses are necessary to determine the meaning of events, and a theistic hypothesis is essential to claim that any historical event is a miracle.

*The Historical Unknowability of Miracles.* Upon examination, Ernst Troeltsch 's principle of analogy turns out to be similar to David Hume 's objection to miracles built on the uniformity of nature. No testimony about alleged miracles should be accepted if it contradicts the uniform testimony of nature. Troeltsch also rejects any particular past event for which there is no analog



in the uniform experience of the present. There are at least two reasons for denying Troeltsch's argument from analogy. First, it begs the question in favor of a naturalistic interpretation of all historical events. It is a methodological exclusion of the possibility of accepting the miraculous in history. The testimony for regularity in general is in no way a testimony against an unusual event in particular. The cases are different and should not be evaluated in the same way. Empirical generalizations ("People do not rise from the dead in normal circumstance") should not be used as counter-testimony to worthy eyewitness accounts that in a particular case someone did rise from the dead. The evidence for any particular historical event must be assessed on its own merits, aside from generalizations about other events.

The second objection to the Troeltsch analogy type argument is that it proves too much. As Richard Whately convincingly argued, on this uniformitarian assumption not only miracles would be excluded, but so would any unusual event of the past. One would have to deny that the career of Napoleon Bonaparte occurred (see Whately). No one can deny that the probability against Napoleon's successes was great. His prodigious army was destroyed in Russia; yet in a few months he led another great army in Germany, which likewise was ruined at Leipzig. However, the French supplied him with yet another army sufficient to make a formidable stand in France. This was repeated five times until at last he was confined to an island. There is no doubt that the particular events of his career were highly improbable. But there is no reason on these grounds that we should doubt the historicity of the Napoleonic adventures. History, contrary to scientific hypothesis, does not depend on the universal and repeatable. Rather, it stands on the sufficiency of good testimony for particular and unrepeatable events. Were this not so, then nothing could be learned from history.

It is clearly a mistake to import uniformitarian methods from scientific experimentation into historical research. Repeatability and generality are needed to establish a scientific law or general patterns (of which miracles would be particular exceptions). But this method does not work at all in history. What is needed to establish historical events is credible testimony that these particular events did indeed occur (see WITNESSES, HUME'S CRITERIA FOR). So it is with miracles. It is an unjustifiable mistake in historical methodology to assume that no unusual and particular event can be believed, no matter how great the evidence for it. Troeltsch's principle of analogy would destroy genuine historical thinking. The honest historian must be open to the possibility of unique and particular events, regardless of whether they may be described as miraculous. One must not exclude *a priori* the possibility of establishing events like the resurrection of Christ without examining the evidence. It is a mistake to assume that the same principles by which *empirical* science works can be used in *forensic* science. Since the latter deals with unrepeatable and unobserved events in the past, it operates on the principles of *origin science*, not on those of *operation science*. And these principles do not eliminate, but establish, the possibility of objective knowledge of the past—whether in science or history (see ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF).

*The Superhistorical Nature of Miracles. A miracle is supernatural.* Surely the Christian apologist does not contend that miracles are mere products of the natural process. Something is miraculous when the natural process does not account for it. There must be an injection from the realm of the supernatural into the natural, or else there is no miracle (see MIRACLE). This is specially true of a New Testament miracle, in which the processes by which God performed acts are unknown. This is also true to some degree of a second-class miracle, where we can describe

how the miracle occurred by scientific means but not why it occurred when it did. In either case, it seems best to admit that the miraculous dimensions of a historical event are in, but not of, the natural process.

*Miracles do occur within history.* In accordance with the objectivity of history, there is no good reason why the Christian should yield to the radical existential theologians on the question of the objective and historical dimensions of miracles. Miracles may not be of the natural historical process but they do occur inside it. Even Karl Barth made this distinction when he wrote, "The resurrection of Christ, or his second coming . . . is not a historical event; the historians may reassure themselves . . . that our concern here is with the event which, though it is the only real happening *in* is not a real happening *of* history" (Barth, 90, emphasis added).

Unlike many existential theologians, we must also preserve the historical context in which a miracle occurs, for without it there is no way to verify the objectivity of the miraculous. Miracles do have a historical dimension without which no objectivity of religious history is possible. And as was argued above, historical methodology can identify this objectivity just as surely as scientific objectivity can be established, within the accepted framework of a theistic world. In short, miracles may be more than historical but they cannot be less than historical. It is only if miracles do have historical dimensions that they are both objectively meaningful and apologetically valuable.

*A miracle is significant in different areas.* A miracle can be identified within an empirical or historical context both directly and indirectly, both objectively and subjectively. Such an event is both scientifically unusual and theologically and morally relevant. The scientific dimensions can be understood in a directly empirical way; the moral dimension is knowable only indirectly through the empirical. It is both "odd" and "evocative" of something more than its empirical data. A virgin birth is scientifically odd, but in the case of Jesus it is represented as a "sign" to draw attention to him as something "more" than human. The theological and moral characteristics of a miracle are not empirically objective. In this sense they are experienced subjectively. This does not mean, however, that there is no objective basis for the moral dimensions of a miracle. If this is a theistic universe (see THEISM), then morality is objectively grounded in God. Hence, the nature and will of God are the objective grounds by which one can test whether the event is subjectively evocative of what is objectively in accord with the nature and will of God. The same thing applies to the truth dimensions of a miracle. They are subjectively evocative of a response to an associated truth claim. However, the truth claim must be in accord with what is already known of God. If its message does not correspond with what we know to be true of God, we should not believe the event is a miracle. It is axiomatic that acts by a theistic God would not be used to confirm what is not the truth of God.

So miracles happen in history but are not completely of history. They are nonetheless historically grounded. They are more than historical but not less than historical. There are both empirical and superempirical dimensions to supernatural events. The empirical dimensions are knowable objectively, and the latter make a subjective appeal to the believer. But even here there is objective ground in the known truth and goodness of God by which the believer can judge whether the empirically odd are really acts of the true and good God.

**The Complete Relativity of History.** In addition to the invalidity of the arguments of historical relativism there are some strong arguments against their conclusions in general. Two of these arguments are sufficient to demonstrate why the possibility of objectivity in history has not—and cannot—be systematically eliminated.

**Objective Knowledge by Facts and Worldview.** A careful look at the arguments of the relativists reveals that they presuppose some objective knowledge about history. This is seen in at least two ways. First, they speak of the need to select and arrange the “facts” of history. But if they are really facts, they present some objective knowledge in themselves. It is one thing to argue about the *interpretation* of the facts but quite another to deny that there are any facts to interpret. It is understandable that one’s worldview framework colors understanding of the fact that Christ died on a cross in the early first century. But it is quite another to deny that this is a historical fact ( *see* CHRIST, DEATH OF ).

Second, if relativists believe one’s worldview can distort how one views history, then there must be a correct interpretation. Otherwise, it would be meaningless to say that some views are distorted.

**Total Historical Relativity Is Self-defeating.** In fact, total relativity (whether historical, philosophical, or moral) is self-defeating ( *see* FIRST PRINCIPLES ). How could one know that history is completely unknowable unless something is known about it? It requires objective knowledge to know that all historical knowledge is subjective. Total relativists must stand on the pinnacle of their own absolute in order to relativize everything else. The claim that all history is subjective turns out to be an objective claim about history. Thus, total historical relativism cuts its own throat.

Of course, some might claim that historical knowledge is not totally relative but only partially so. Then history, at least some history, is objectively knowable, and Christian claims are at least possibly knowable. The historical claims for the central truths of Christianity are more amply supported by the evidence than are claims of facticity for almost any other event in the ancient world. Therefore, this is also an admission that partial relativity does not eliminate the historical verifiability of Christianity. In brief, total historical relativism is self-defeating, and partial historical relativism admits that historical arguments are justified in defending Christian faith.

**The Objectivity of Historiography.** Several general conclusions may be drawn from the subjectivity-objectivity debate: Foremost is that absolute objectivity is possible only for an infinite Mind. Finite minds must be content with systematic consistency. Humans can only devise revisable attempts to reconstruct the past based on an established framework of reference which comprehensively and consistently incorporates the facts into an overall sketch. At this level of objectivity, the historian can be as accurate as the scientist. Neither geologists nor historians have direct access to, nor complete data on, repeatable events. Both must use value judgments to select and structure the partial material available.

In reality, neither the scientist nor the historian can attain objective meaning without a worldview by which to understand the facts. Bare facts cannot even be known apart from some

interpretive framework. Hence, the need for structure or a meaning-framework is crucial to the question of objectivity. Unless one can settle the question as to whether this is a theistic or nontheistic world on grounds independent of the mere facts themselves, there is no way to determine the objective meaning of history. If, on the other hand, there are good reasons to believe that this is a theistic universe, then objectivity in history is a possibility. For once the overall viewpoint is established, it is simply a matter of finding the view of history most consistent with that overall system. Systematic consistency is the test for objectivity in historical, as well as in scientific matters.

**Summary.** Christianity makes claims about historical events, including claims that God supernaturally intervened in it. Some historians complain, however, that there is no objective way to determine the past. And even if there were an objective basis, miracles do not fit it. The historian has fragmentary, secondhand material from which to select. These fragments cannot be objectively understood, because the historian inevitably imposes an interpretive value structure and worldview. Miracle-history is particularly unreliable, since it is neither empirical nor observable. Superhistory or myth, it is useful to evoke a subjective religious response but not to reliably describe the past.

These objections, however, fail. History can be as objective as science. The geologist also views second-hand, fragmentary, and unrepeatable evidence from a personal vantage point. Although interpretive frameworks are necessary, not every worldview must be relative and subjective.

As to the objection that miracle-history is not objectively verifiable, miracles can occur in the historical process, like any other event. The only difference is that the miracle cannot be explained by the flow of events. Christian miracles claim to be more than empirical, but they are not less than historical. Historically, miracles can be verified. Moral and theological dimensions of miracles are not totally subjective. They call for a subjective response but, there are objective standards of truth and goodness (in accordance with the theistic God) by which they can be assessed.

The door for the objectivity of history and thus the objective historicity for miracles is open. No mere question-begging, uniformitarian principle of analogy can lock it *a priori*. Evidence that supports the general nature of scientific law cannot rule out good historical evidence for unusual but particular events of history. Anti-miracle arguments are not only invincibly naturalistic in bias, but if applied consistently they rule out known and accepted secular history ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). The only truly honest approach is to examine carefully the evidence for an alleged miracle to determine its authenticity.

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**Hittites, Problem of.** Genesis asserts that Heth was progenitor of the Hittites, whose kingdom arose in what is now Turkey. However, according to some archaeological evidence, the Hittites did not become a prominent force in the Middle East until the reign of Mursilis I, about 1620 B.C. . It was Mursilis who captured Babylon in 1600 B.C. .

However, several times in Genesis 23 , reference is made to Abraham’s encounter with the sons of Heth, who controlled Hebron in about 2050 B.C. . How could the Hittites have controlled Hebron so long before they became a significant force in the area?

Cuneiform tablets have been found describing conflicts in Anatolia (Turkey) among Hittite principalities from about 1950 to 1850. Even before this conflict there was a race of non-Indo-

Europeans called Hattians. These people were subdued by invaders about 2300 to 2000. The Indo-European invaders adopted the name Hatti. In Semitic languages such as Hebrew, *Hatti* and *Hitti* would be written with the same letters. Only consonants were written, not vowels.

In the days of Ramses II in Egypt, the military strength of the Hittites was sufficient to precipitate a nonaggression pact between Egypt and the Hittite empire, setting a boundary between them. At this time the Hittite empire reached as far south as Kadesh on the Orontes River (modern Asi). However, additional evidence indicates that the Hittites actually penetrated farther south into Syria and Palestine.

Although the Hittite kingdom did not reach its zenith until the second half of the fourteenth century, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate a Hittite presence, significant enough for control, in Hebron at the time of Abraham.

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**Holy Spirit, Role in Apologetics.** Most Christian apologists agree that the Holy Spirit witnesses to the individual with regard to their personal salvation. Romans 8:16 asserts: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” ( 1 John 3:24 ; 4:13 ). Many also believe that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth of Christianity. One of several texts teaching that is 1 John 5:6–10 :

This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. . . . And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. . . . We accept man’s testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. . . . Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.

Some have charged that the use of reason relating to God, as apologetic arguments do ( *see* APOLOGETICS, NEED FOR ), is inconsistent with the biblical emphasis on the necessity of the Holy Spirit to convince someone of the truth of Christianity. But the Christian position is that there is no contradiction between reason and evidence on one hand and the work of the Holy Spirit on the other.

**The Early Church Fathers.** Early Christian apologists from Justin Martyr (100–165) to Clement of Alexandria (ca. 155–220) used reason in their defense. They also believed in the

necessity of divine revelation and the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the truth about God to humankind. However, they provided no systematic treatment of the precise relationship between human reason and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This was left to later theologians, especially Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the Reformers.

**Augustine.** Augustine (354–430) stressed the work of the Spirit to call depraved, dead-in-sin humans to new life in Christ. But he kept this work of the Spirit in tension with his belief that human reason is needed to judge and understand divine revelation. Without it we cannot know the truth of God. Each of five purposes served by reason in Augustine’s thought is independent of the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit.

**Reason Comes before Faith.** First, there is a sense in which reason comes before faith. Augustine declared that “no one indeed believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed.” Hence, “it is necessary that everything which is believed should be believed after thought has led the way” ( *On Free Will* , 5).

**Reason Distinguishes Human Beings.** Second, reason is a distinguishing and superior faculty in human beings. “God forbid that He should hate in us that faculty by which He made us superior to all other beings. Therefore, we must refuse so to believe as not to receive or seek reason for our belief, since we could not believe at all if we did not have rational souls” ( *Letters* , 120.1).

**Reason Elaborates on Creation and Providence.** Third, reason elaborates on the proofs God provides for his existence ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ). “It will become clear that God exists, when, with His assistance, I shall prove, as I promised, that there exists something above human reason” ( *On Free Will* , 2.6).

**Reason Provides Commentary on the Gospel.** Fourth, reason helps people understand the content of the Christian message. How can anyone believe the preacher without understanding the words the preacher speaks? Understanding contributes to belief.

**Reason Removes Objections.** Fifth, reason can be used to remove objections to faith. Speaking of someone who had questions prior to becoming a believer, he wrote: “It is reasonable that he inquire as to the resurrection of the dead before he is admitted to the Christian sacraments.” What is more, “Perhaps he ought also to be allowed to insist on preliminary discussion on the question proposed concerning Christ—why He came so late in the world’s history, and of a few great questions besides, to which all others are subordinate” ( *Letters* , 102.38).

Augustine thus taught that reason is useful before, during, and after one exercises faith in the Gospel. Nevertheless, reason has shortcomings, and without the work of the Holy Spirit, humanity would be in darkness.

**The Role of the Holy Spirit.** The need for and superiority of divine revelation is made abundantly clear by Augustine. His famous statement is, “First believe, then understand” ( *On the Creed* , 4). “If we wished to know and then believe, we should not be able to either know or

believe” ( *On the Gospel of John* , 27.9). Since faith was a gift of the Spirit ( *Enchiridion* , 31), there is no true understanding of the Christian faith apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Revelation Overcomes the Result of Sin.** “Falsehood arises not because things deceive us. . . . It is sin which deceives the soul, when they seek something that is true but abandon or neglect truth” ( *Of True Religion* , 36). This sin is inherited, for “the sin which they [Adam and Eve] committed was so great that it impaired all human nature—in this sense, that the nature has been transmitted to posterity with a propensity to sin and a necessity to die” ( *City of God* , 14.1). Only divine revelation received by faith can overcome this. “Nor does anyone become fit to discover God unless he shall have first believed what he is later to come to know” ( *On Free Will* , 2.6).

**Revelation Is Superior to Reason.** “What then we understand we owe to reason; what we believe to authority” ( *On the Profit of Believing* , 25). Augustine made this most explicit when he confessed to God: “We were too weak by unaided reason to find out the truth, and for this reason needed the authority of the holy writings” ( *Confessions* 6.5).

Not only is the Holy Spirit the means by which we receive God-written revelation ( *ibid.*, 7.21), but he is necessary for illuminating and confirming its truth. And the Spirit is truth of the presence of God in the Christian. “If in truth thou hast charity, thou hast the spirit of God in order to understand: for a very necessary thing it is” ( *Homily VI* ).

**Thomas Aquinas.** The question of the relation between the Holy Spirit and the use of human reason is really a subdivision of the broader topic of faith and reason. Aquinas (1224–1274) spoke extensively about both. He spoke of rational proofs for the existence of God and offered historical and experiential evidences in support of the truth of Christianity. Aquinas also believed that no one ever comes to faith in Christ apart from a special, gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

**Philosophy Applies Reason.** Aquinas saw three uses for reason in philosophy. Human reason can be used to prove natural theology (the existence and nature of one God). Also, it can be used to illustrate supernatural theology (the Trinity and incarnation), and it can be used to refute false theologies.

It demonstrates God’s existence, oneness, and other propositions concerning God and creatures. “Such truths about God have been proved demonstratively by the philosophers, guided by the light of the natural reason” ( *Summa Theologica* , 1a.3, 2). Philosophy uses teachings of the philosophers to explain Christian doctrines such as the Trinity. Even though demonstrative arguments are unavailable for supernatural theology, there are certain probable arguments that can make divine truth known. And philosophy can be used to oppose attacks against faith, by showing they are false or unnecessary.

**Human Reason Can Support Faith.** On the use of “reason” ( *apologia* ) in 1 Peter 3:15, Aquinas argued that human reasoning in support of what we believe stands in a two-fold relation to the will of the believer. Sometimes someone does not have the will to believe unless moved by human reason. In this sense reasoning diminishes the merit that would come with faith, since the person “ought to believe matters of faith, not because of human reasoning, but because of the divine authority.” Also, “human reason may be consequent to the will of the believer.” For

“when a man has a will ready to believe, he loves the truth he believes, he thinks out and takes to heart whatever reasons he can find in support thereof; and in this way, human reasoning does not exclude the merit of faith, but is a sign of greater merit” (ibid., 2a2ae.2, 10).

Faith is supported by, not based on, probable evidence. “Those who place their faith in this truth, however, ‘for which the human reason of fers no experimental evidence,’ do not believe foolishly, as though ‘following artificial fables.’ ” Rather, “arguments confirm truths that exceed natural knowledge and manifest God’s works that surpass all nature” ( *Summa Contra Gentiles* , 1.6). The kind of positive evidence Aquinas used included the raising of the dead, the conversion of the world, and miracles ( see MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ).

The negative evidence encompasses arguments against false religions, including their fleshly appeal to carnal pleasures, teachings that contradict their promises, fables and falsities, the lack of attesting prophets and miracles to witness to divine inspiration of their holy book (for example, the *Qur’an* ), use of arms to spread the message, the testimony of wise men who refused to believe, and perversions of Scripture.

It may surprise some who know their differences to note how closely Aquinas’s reasons why the Holy Spirit is needed parallel those of John Calvin.” Calvin closely studied Aquinas and the medieval scholastics, though he owed the most to Augustine.

*The Spirit Overcomes Effects of Sin* ( see NOETIC EFFECTS OF SIN ). With the later Calvin, Aquinas believed that sin profoundly distorts the mind. This distortion makes reason unable to contemplate God, and so find the faith that brings certitude. God wants his people to have confidence, so his Spirit delivers certain knowledge of him by way of faith ( *Summa Theologica* , 2a2ae.1, 5, ad 4).

*The Spirit Reveals Supernatural Truth*. For Aquinas the sole way to overcome an adversary of divine truth is from the authority of Scripture—an authority divinely confirmed by miracles. For that which is above the human reason we believe only because God has revealed it. It is necessary “to receive by faith not only things which are above reason, but also those which can be known by reason.” Without the revelation of the Holy Spirit, we would be in darkness about such mysteries of the faith as the Trinity, salvation, and other matters revealed only in the Bible.

*The Spirit Is Necessary to Give Faith*. Not only are many things known only by faith, but the faith by which they are known is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Reason may accompany faith, but it does not cause faith. “Faith is called a consent without inquiry in so far as the consent of faith, or assent, is not caused by an investigation of the understanding.” Faith is produced by God. Commenting on Ephesians 2:8–9 , Aquinas contended that free will is inadequate for faith since the objects of faith are above reason. “That a man should believe, therefore, cannot occur from himself unless God gives it” ( *Commentary on Ephesians* , 96). Faith is a gift of God, and no one can believe without it.

Reasoning accompanies the assent of faith; it does not cause it ( *On Truth* , 14.A1, ad 6). One does not cause the other, but faith and reason are parallel. “Faith involves will (freedom) and

reason doesn’t coerce the will” (ibid.). A person is free to dissent, even in the face of convincing reasons to believe.

*The Spirit Gives a Motive to Believe*. In order to believe in God, one must have the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. For “one who believes does have a sufficient motive for believing, the authority of God’s teaching, confirmed by miracles, and the greater motive of the inner inspiration ( *instinctus* ) of God inviting him to believe” ( *Summa Theologica* , 2a2ae.6, 1). As to voluntary assent in matters of faith, we can look to two types of causes. A cause that persuades *from without* is attested to by something like a miracle witnessed or a human appeal. This is sufficient if there is not a cause that persuades *from within* . “The assent of faith, which is its principal act, therefore, has as its cause God, moving us inwardly through grace.” The belief is a matter of the will that has been prepared by God through his grace to receive the knowledge that surpasses nature (ibid., 2a2ae.2, 9, ad 3).

*The Spirit Makes Probable Evidence Certain*. How can we be sure when the support of our faith rests on intermediary (fallible) testimonies? Aquinas responds that we believe prophets and apostles because their witness has been attested by miracles ( Mark 16:20 ; see MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ). We believe other teachers only as they agree with the writings of the prophets and apostles ( *On Truth* , 14.10, ad 11). The Bible alone, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives certainty and infallible authority to faith ( see CERTAINTY/CERTITUDE ).

*God Is the Basis for Faith*. God alone, not reason, is the basis of faith. Reason can prove that God exists, but it cannot convince an unbeliever to believe in God ( *Summa Theologica* , 2a2ae.2.2, ad 3). We may believe (assent without reservation) in something which is neither self-evident nor deduced from it (where the intellect is moved) by a movement of the will.

This does not mean that reason plays no prior role. “Faith does not involve a search by natural reason to prove what is believed. But it does involve a form of inquiry unto things by which a person is led to belief, e.g., whether they are spoken by God and confirmed by miracles” (ibid., 2a2ae.2.1, reply).

Demons, for example, are convinced by the evidence that God exists, but it “is not their wills which bring assent to what they are said to believe. Rather, they are forced by the evidence of signs which convince them that what the faithful believe is true.” However, “these signs do not cause the appearance of what is believed so that the demons could, on this account, be said to see those things which are believed” ( *On Truth* , 14.9, ad 4).

*John Calvin*. John Calvin (1509–1564) held that human reason was adequate to understand the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and even the truth of Christianity. At the same time, he believed no one could come to certainty about these truths apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Calvin did believe that many truths about God could be known, even apart from any special work of the Holy Spirit. These included a sense of deity, natural law, and evidence for the truth of the Bible.

*The Innate Sense of Deity*. Every human has a natural sense of God apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Some sense of the person of God is built into the human mind and instincts.

“There is no nation so barbarous, no race so brutish, as not to be imbued with the conviction that there is a God” ( *Institutes* , 1.3.1). This *sense of deity* is so naturally engraven on the human heart that even many unbelieving philosophers are forced to acknowledge it (ibid., 1.4.4).

*God's Existence and the Soul's Immortality.* Calvin spoke of “the invisible and incomprehensible essence of God” that has been made visible in creation. This proof extends to the soul's immortality. “On each of his works his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse” (ibid., 1.5.1–2). Regarding Romans 1:20–21 , Calvin concludes that “God has presented to the minds of all the means of knowing him, having so manifested himself by his works, that they must necessarily see what of themselves they seek not to know—that there is some God” ( *Commentary on Romans and Thessalonians* , 2).

*Natural Knowledge of Natural Law.* The innate knowledge of God includes knowledge of his righteous law. Calvin held that since “the Gentiles have the righteousness of the law naturally engraven on their minds, we certainly cannot say that they are altogether blind as to the rule of life” ( *Institutes* , 1.2.22). This moral awareness is *natural law* and is enough so that no mortal has an excuse for not knowing God. By this natural law the judgment of conscience is able to distinguish between the just and the unjust. This knowledge includes a sense of justice implanted by nature in the heart. It includes a natural discrimination and judgment which distinguishes justice and injustice, honesty and dishonesty. Calvin believed that such crimes as adultery, theft, and murder are known to be evil in every society, and honesty is esteemed ( *Romans and Thessalonians* , 48). It is evident that God has left proofs of himself for all in both creation and conscience.

*Evidence for Inspiration of Scripture.* Calvin repeatedly spoke of “proofs” of the Bible's inspiration ( *see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ). These include the unity of Scripture, its majesty, its prophecies, and its miraculous confirmation. Calvin wrote: “If we look at [Scripture] with clear eyes and unbiased judgment, it will forthwith present itself with a divine majesty which will subdue our presumptuous opposition, and force us to do it homage” ( *Institutes* , 1.7.4). The evidence compels even unbelievers to confess (at some level of consciousness) that the Scripture exhibits clear evidence that it was spoken by God (ibid.).

The use of human reason, though not absolute, did bring a sufficient conviction about both the existence of God and the truth of Scripture. Calvin said proofs of the inspiration of Scripture may not be so strong as to produce and rivet a full conviction in the mind, but they are “most appropriate helps” (ibid., 1.8.1).

Calvin speaks of “the credibility of Scripture sufficiently proved, in so far as natural reason admits.” He offers rational proofs from various areas, including the dignity, truth, simplicity, and efficacy of Scripture. To this he adds evidence from miracles, prophecy, church history, and even the martyrs (ibid.).

*The Need for the Holy Spirit.* At the same time, Calvin believed that no one ever came to be convinced of the certainty of truths about God, Christ, and the Bible apart from the supernatural

work of the Holy Spirit. He saw no contradiction in what he said about the natural knowledge of God and Scripture.

*The vitiating effects of depravity.* Calvin believed human depravity obscures human ability to understand and respond to this natural revelation of God ( *see* NOETIC EFFECTS OF SIN ). He wrote: “Your idea of His [God's] nature is not clear unless you acknowledge Him to be the origin and foundation of all goodness. Hence, would arise both confidence in him and a desire of cleaving to him, did not the depravity of the human mind lead it away from the proper course of investigation” (ibid., 1.11.2).

*The testimony of the Spirit.* Complete certainty comes only by the Spirit working through the objective evidence to confirm in one's heart that the Bible is the Word of God. Calvin affirmed that “Our faith in doctrine is not established until we have a *perfect conviction* that God is its author. Hence, the *highest proof* of Scripture is uniformly taken from the character of him whose word it is.” Hence, “our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from a *higher source than human conjecture, judgments, or reasons* ; namely, the secret testimony of the Spirit” (ibid., 1.7.1, cf. 1.8.1, 1.7.4; emphasis added). Using reason to defend Scripture is insufficient. “Although we may maintain the sacred Word of God against gainsayers, it does not follow that we shall forthwith implant the certainty which faith requires in their hearts” (ibid., 1.7.4).

Calvin insisted that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. “For as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit.” He adds, “The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely entrusted” (ibid., 1.7.4).

Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit. . . . Enlightened by Him, we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but, in a way superior to human judgment, feel perfectly assured . . . that it came to us, by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God. [ibid., 1.7.5]

Calvin went on to say that the proof the Spirit gives transcends proofs and probabilities ( *see* CERTAINTY/CERTITUDE ). Its assurance does not ask for reasons; in such knowledge the mind rests more firmly and securely than in any reasoning. It is a “conviction which revelation from heaven alone can produce” (ibid.). Apart from this divine confirmation, all argument and support from the church is vain. “Till this better foundation has been laid, the authority of Scripture remains in suspense” (ibid., 1.8.1).

*The Testimony of the Spirit and Evidence.* It is important to remember, as R. C. Sproul points out, that “the *testimonium* is not placed over against reason as a form of mysticism or subjectivism. Rather, it goes beyond and transcends reason” (Sproul, “Internal Testimony of the

Holy Spirit.” 341). It is God working through the objective evidence, not apart from evidence, that provides the subjective certainty that the Bible is the Word of God. It is a combination of the objective and subjective, not an exclusion of the objective evidence by a subjective experience. See the comments below on B. B. Warfield .

**Jonathan Edwards.** Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) provides further insight into the relation between apologetic evidence and the Holy Spirit. He too saw complementary relation between the two. Edwards saw eight functions in reason:

1. Reason must prove the existence of God, the Revealer.
2. Reason anticipates that there will be a revelation.
3. Reason can show that a “pretended” revelation is not from God.
4. Reason demonstrates the rationality of revelation.
5. Reason verifies a true revelation as genuine.
6. Reason argues for the dependability of revelation.
7. Reason anticipates that there will be mysteries in a genuine divine revelation, defends them, and refutes objections to their presence.
8. Reason comprehends what is illumined by revelation.

*Reason Proves the Existence of God.* Edwards outlines his own approach to God’s existence in *Freedom of the Will* (2.3). The first proof is *a posteriori* from effects that there is an eternal cause. From arguments, such a being is shown to be necessarily existent. The necessity of this existence shows his perfections *a priori* . Cosmological and teleological proofs unite in this approach.

*Reason Can Give Certainty.* It is impossible that nothing could cause something. And since something now exists, there must be an eternal and Necessary Being. Edwards’ firm conviction about this springs from the principle of causality, which he describes as a self-evident principle, a “dictate of common sense,” “the mind of mankind,” and “this grand principle of common sense” (ibid.). In “Miscellanies” he declares that “ ‘Tis acknowledged by all to be self-evident that nothing can begin without a cause.” Thus, “When understood ‘tis a truth that irresistibly will have place in the assent.” This being the case, “if we suppose a time wherein there was nothing, a body will not of its own accord begin to be.” For to hold that something can arise without a cause is “what the understanding abhors” (“Miscellanies” number 91).

So convinced was Edwards that something could not arise without a cause that, like Aquinas, he argued even an eternal world would need a cause. For “if we should suppose that the world is eternal, yet the beautiful, contrivance, and useful disposition of the world would not less strongly conclude for the being of an intelligent author.” He uses the example of a great work of

literature. Such a work, even if it had existed from eternity, would require more explanation than that ink had fallen on paper (ibid., number 312).

We depend on metaphysics to show what that Necessary Being is like, to “demonstrate that God is not limited to a place, or is not mutable; that He is not ignorant, or forgetful; that it is impossible for Him to lie, or be unjust; and there is one God only and not hundreds or thousands” ( *Freedom of the Will* , 4.13). Edwards was certain that reason demonstrates the divine attributes in their infinity ( *see* GOD, NATURE OF ).

*Limited Reason Requires the Holy Spirit.* In spite of the value placed on human reason, Edwards believed that significant limitations on human reason require the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Reason cannot make knowledge of God “real” to the unregenerate. It cannot yield a supernatural revelation that leads to salvation, or even sense one, because of human depravity. If it does receive a revelation, it cannot determine the full divine content of that revelation.

Nothing is more clear to Edwards than that, as valid as natural revelation is, there is an indispensable need for supernatural revelation:

Were it not for divine revelation, I am persuaded, that there is not one doctrine of that which we call natural religion, which, notwithstanding all philosophy and learning, would not be for ever involved in darkness, doubts, endless disputes, and dreadful confusion. . . . In fact, the philosophers had the foundation of most of their truths, from the ancients, or from the Phoenicians, or what they picked up here and there of the relics of revelation. [“Miscellanies,” 1.1.19]

In spite of Edwards’ belief that natural reason could construct valid arguments for the existence of God, he denied that any non-Christian thinkers ever did this. “There never was a man known or heard of, who had an [right] idea of God, without being taught it” (ibid., 1.6.15).

*The Spirit Breathes Life into Revelation.* Christians can construct a valid natural religion where pagans fail because of the Holy Spirit’s light. This is why

the increase of learning and philosophy in the Christian world, is owing to revelation. The doctrines of revealed religion are the foundations of all useful and excellent knowledge. . . . The word of God leads barbarous nations into the way of using their understandings. It brings their minds into a way of reflecting and abstracting reasoning; and delivers from uncertainty in the first principles, such as, the being of God, the dependence of all things upon him. . . . Such principles as these are the basis of all true philosophy, as appears more and more as philosophy improves. [ibid.]

In view of this, it is unreasonable to suppose that philosophy itself could fill in the gap. Knowledge is easy, however, to those who understand by revelation.

It may seem inconsistent for Edwards to hold both that God may be proven by natural reason and that no unbelievers have really ever come to the true God in this manner. The reason, as

Edwards explained it, is that reason can demonstrate a point that has been proposed by someone else far easier than it can come upon the point in the first place. Would we have known the works of creation are effects had we not been told they had a cause? The greatest minds might be led into error and contradiction were they to try to come up with a description of the cause simply by studying the effects (ibid., 1.6.16).

Edwards believed it possible for an unbeliever to construct valid proof for the existence of the true God, but the fact that none ever had done so showed him that the mind must have the illumination of the Spirit. Once the mind has knowledge of the true God from revelation, it is possible to construct a valid argument for his existence on the basis of premises drawn from nature and reason alone ( *see* REVELATION, GENERAL ). So special revelation is not *logically necessary* to prove the existence of the true God, but it is in practice *historically necessary* .

Edwards asserts that, when we fully understand the difficulties involved in knowing the true God, we inevitably ascribe all true religion to divine instruction and all theological error to human invention (ibid., 1.6.22).

*Subjective Illumination Is Necessary.* All of his stress on rational and objective evidence notwithstanding, Edwards did not believe that either general or special revelation was sufficient to make depraved people open to truth. In addition to objective special revelation there had to be a subjective divine illumination. Only the supernatural light could open the heart to receive God's revelation. Without this divine illumination no one ever comes to accept God's revelation, regardless of how strong the evidence for it is. A new heart is needed, not a new brain. This is done by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. This divine light does not give any new truth or new revelations. Rather, it provides a new heart, a new attitude of receptivity by which one is able to accept God's truth.

**B. B. Warfield.** Classical apologetics ( *see* CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS ) was carried on by Benjamin Breckinridge (B. B.) Warfield (1851–1921). He, too, saw a need for both human reason and the work of the Holy Spirit to convince people of the truth of Christianity.

*The Need for Rational Apologetics.* Warfield defined apologetics as “the systematically organized vindication of Christianity in all its elements and details, against all opposition” ( *Works* , 9:5). Or, more technically, “Apologetics undertakes not the defense, not even the vindication, but the establishment, not, strictly speaking, of Christianity, but rather of that knowledge of God which Christianity professes to embody and seeks to make efficient in the world, and which it is the business of theology scientifically to explicate” (ibid., 3).

He divided apologetics functionally:

1. Apologetics demonstrates the being and nature of God.
2. Apologetics reveals the divine origin and authority of Christianity.
3. Apologetics shows the superiority of Christianity (ibid., 10).

The first function properly belongs to philosophical apologetics, which undertakes to establish the being of God as personal Spirit, Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things. To it belong problems of theism with the involved discussion of antitheistic theories.

Warfield believed apologetics a necessary prolegomena to theology. He wrote:

Apologetical Theology prepares the way for all theology by establishing its necessary presuppositions without which no theology is possible—the existence and essential nature of God, the religious nature of man which enables him to receive a revelation from God, the possibility of a revelation from God, the possibility of revelation and its actual realization in the Scriptures. [ *Works* , 9.64]

Warfield held that apologetics has “a primary part” and “a conquering part” in the spreading of the Christian faith. Christianity is distinctive in its mission of reasoning its way to dominion. Other religions appeal to the sword or seek another way of propagating themselves. Christianity appeals to reason and so is “the apologetic religion” ( *Selected Shorter Writings* , 2.99–100).

*The Role of the Spirit.* The *indicia* or demonstrations of the Bible's divine character stand side by side with the Holy Spirit to convince people of the truth of the Bible. Warfield agreed with Calvin that they are not in themselves capable of bringing people to Christ or even convincing them of the complete divine authority of Scripture. Nonetheless, Warfield believed that the Holy Spirit always exercises his convincing power through the evidence.

On the relation of apologetics and the Bible, Warfield said, “It is easy, of course, to say that a Christian man must take his standpoint not *above* the Scriptures, but *in* the Scriptures. He very certainly must. But surely he must first *have* Scriptures, authenticated to him as such, before he can take his standpoint in them” (ibid., 2.98).

In this appeal to evidence, Warfield saw common ground with unbelievers. Facts are universally available, and all can be convinced of God's existence and the truth of Scripture through them by the power of reasoning of a redeemed thinker. In his 1908 article on “Apologetics,” he said that, though faith is a gift, it is still a formal conviction of the mind. All forms of conviction must have evidence on which to rest. Reason investigates the nature and validity of this ground ( *Works* , 9.15).

Reasoning saves no one, not because there is no proof for Christian faith, but because the dead soul cannot respond to evidence. “The action of the Holy Spirit in giving faith is not apart from evidence, but along with evidence; and in the first instance consists in preparing the soul for the reception of the evidence.” Apologetics does not make men and women Christian, but apologetics supplies the systematically organized basis on which faith must rest (ibid.).

The relationship, then, between reason and evidence on the one side and the Holy Spirit on the other is complementary. It is not *either* the Holy Spirit *or* evidence. It is the Holy Spirit working *in* and *through* evidence to convince people of the truth of Christianity. There is both an outer (objective) dimension and an inner (subjective) dimension to the process by which people come to know Christianity is true. These may be called the *rational* and the *mystical* ,



respectively. But the two are never separated as many Christian mystics and inner-light subjectivists tend to do (see *Biblical and Theological Studies* , chap. 16).

**Bernard Ramm.** According to Bernard Ramm , there are three concentric circles of verification. These represent three stories in the confirmation of Christian truth claims.

*Internal Witness.* In the first circle of verification, internal witness, the sinner hears the Gospel and is convinced of its truth by the Holy Spirit. This is “a spiritual verification in that the primary verification of religion must be of this order else the case is decided away to a method of verification alien to religion.” This persuasive influence of the Holy Spirit is inward, but not subjective ( *Witness of the Holy Spirit* , 44).

*God’s Action.* The primary function of Christian evidence is to cultivate a favorable reception for the Gospel. The Gospel still must do its work, not the apologetic arguments. Proofs show that “this [biblical] God does come into our time, our history, our space, our cosmos, and make a difference. . . . Because God makes this difference, we know that we are believing truth and not fiction or mere religious philosophy” (ibid., 57). Thus, Christianity is confirmed by objective facts. The most exceptional acts of God, miracles and fulfilled prophecies, provide the best factual evidence for Christianity’s truth claims ( see MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ). Supernatural events validate the theological. Reason tests revelation ( see FAITH AND REASON ).

*Worldview.* Christianity is also tested by its ability to provide a vision of the whole of world, humankind, and God. Christian principles make the most sense out of life and the world. A worldview, or “synoptic vision,” puts things together in the most meaningful way (ibid., 60). The choice of an appealing worldview does not make it true. Further, it must be internally coherent (ibid., 63, 67). Ramm’s criteria of truth and coherence are similar to the criteria of factual fit and logical consistency proposed by John Carnell.

Ramm is convinced of the validity of the law of noncontradiction as a necessary test for truth ( see FIRST PRINCIPLES ). We cannot think without it (ibid., 68–69; *Protestant Christian Evidences* , 41, 54). However, Ramm does not put the kind of emphasis on logic as do other presuppositionalists such as Gordon Clark .

*Certainty or Probability.* Ramm distinguished between *certainty* and *certitude* . Divine revelation in Scripture and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit allows a Christian full spiritual certitude. This spiritual confidence extends to the existence and attributes of God, the truth of the claims of Jesus Christ, and personal salvation. Such facts are based upon what God has done in history. No historical fact is known with “certainty,” since no one can return to the physical place and time to test the event empirically. It cannot be recreated in the lab. But that doesn’t mean we must use the word *probably* . Historical facts can be known with a high degree of probability. With the evidence of Scripture, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and the changes made by the actions of the living God in the cosmos, the Christian rests faith in the high degree of probability of full certitude.

**Summary.** Obviously not all of the apologists surveyed above agreed on every point, but there is a general agreement in contrast with Fideism , Mysticism , and other forms of Subjectivism.

*The Role of Reason.* Human reason, apart from special revelation ( see REVELATION, GENERAL ; REVELATION, SPECIAL ), can provide arguments in support of the existence of God, know many of God’s essential attributes ( see GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ), offer evidence in support of Christian faith, defend Christianity against attacks, judge the truth of alleged revelations, and teach the content of a revelation from God.

There is general agreement on the limits of reason. It is marked by the effects of sin. It does not come to a proper knowledge of the true God apart from divine help. It cannot bring the highest certainty concerning truth about God. It cannot explain the mysteries of the incarnation and Trinity . It supports faith in God, but it is not the basis for that faith. Alone it cannot move anyone to believe in God or provide saving knowledge.

*The Role of the Spirit.* Most classical apologists would agree that the Holy Spirit plays several needed apologetic roles: The Spirit empowered the origin of Scripture. He gives understanding of Scripture’s revealed truth and its implications to individuals. The Holy Spirit is necessary for full assurance of the truths of Christianity, and he alone prompts people to believe in God’s saving truth. The Holy Spirit works in and through evidence, but not separate from it. As the Spirit of a rational God, he does not bypass the head on the way to the heart. The Spirit provides supernatural evidence (miracles) to confirm Christianity.

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**Hume, Criteria for Credible Witnesses.** See WITNESSES, HUME’S CRITERIA FOR .

**Humanism, Secular.** Humanism focuses on the values and interests of human beings. There are Christian forms ( see LEWIS, C. S. ) and non-Christian forms. Secular humanism is the dominant form of the latter. Its confession is that “Man is the measure of all things.” Rather than being *focused on* human beings, its philosophy is *based on* human values.

Secular humanists comprise a diverse group. They include existentialists ( see SARTRE, JEAN-PAUL ), Marxists ( see MARX, KARL ), pragmatists ( see DEWEY, JOHN ), and egocentrists ( see RAND, AYN ), and behaviorists ( see B. F. Skinner under DETERMINISM ). While all humanists believe in some form of evolution ( see EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL ; EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL ), Julian Huxley called his view “the religion of evolutionary humanism.” Corliss Lamont could be called a “cultural humanist.” Differences notwithstanding, non-Christian humanists share a core of beliefs. These have been summarized in two “humanist manifestos” and represent a coalition of various secular humanist viewpoints.

**Humanist Manifesto I.** In 1933, a group of thirty-four American humanists enunciated the fundamental principles of their philosophy in *Humanist Manifesto I*. Signatories included Dewey, the father of American pragmatic education; Edwin A. Burtt, a philosopher of religion, and R. Lester Mondale, a Unitarian minister and brother of the later U.S. vice-president, Walter Mondale.

*The Affirmations.* In the preamble the authors identify themselves as “religious humanists” and affirm that “to establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present” (Kurtz, *Humanist Manifestos*). The manifesto consists of fifteen basic affirmations which read in part:

“*First: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.*” These are nontheists ( see THEISM ) who deny existence of a Creator to bring into existence or sustain the universe.

“*Second: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process.*” Naturalism and naturalistic evolution are affirmed. The supernatural is denied.

“*Third: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.*” Humans have no soul or immaterial aspect to their nature. Neither are they immortal ( see IMMORTALITY ). No existence extends beyond death.

“*Fourth: Humanism recognizes that man’s religious culture and civilization . . . are the product of a gradual development.*” Further, “the individual born into a particular culture is largely molded to that culture.” This implies cultural evolution and cultural relativity.

Cultural evolution means society has gradually become more sophisticated and complex; cultural relativity means that individuals are shaped largely by their respective cultures.

“Fifth: Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantee of human values.” There are no God-given values to discover; therefore values are relative and subject to change ( see MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ).

“Sixth: We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and several varieties of ‘new thought.’” Framers of the first manifesto were atheists ( see ATHEISM ) or agnostics ( see AGNOSTICISM ) in the traditional senses of the terms. Even desupernaturalized beliefs are rejected ( see MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ).

“Seventh: Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant . . . all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living.” The essence of this affirmation is to define religion in purely humanistic terms. Religion is anything significant, interesting, or satisfying to humans.

“Eighth: Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man’s life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now.” The hope of the humanist is this-worldly. The “chief end of man” is terrestrial, not celestial ( see MATERIALISM ).

“Ninth: In place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.” The religious emotion is focused in the natural, personal, and social spheres, not in the spiritual or supernatural realms.

“Tenth: It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.” This point carries out the naturalistic implications of earlier statements. Religious experience must be explained in purely materialistic terms.

“Eleventh: Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge of their naturalness and probability.” Humanists believe that humanistic education will promote social well-being by discouraging the wishful thinking and worry that stem from ignorance.

“Twelfth: Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy and living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in man and to encourage achievements that add to satisfactions in life.” This stress on humanistic values of creativity and achievement shows the influence of Dewey.

“Thirteenth: Religious humanists maintain that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life.” Humanists would rapidly reconstitute religious institutions, rituals, ecclesiastical organization, and communal activities around their worldview.

“Fourteenth: The humanists are firmly convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted.” In lieu of capitalism, humanists suggest “a socialized and cooperative economic order.”

“Fifteenth and last: We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from it; and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few.” The prosocialist tendency continues in this summary statement, which presents religious humanism in a life-affirming framework.

The humanists who framed the manifesto affirmed that “the quest for the good life is still the central task of mankind” and that each person “has within himself the power for its achievement.” They were optimistic with respect to their goals and perfectionistic in their belief that humanity had the ability to achieve them.

An Evaluation of Humanist Manifesto I. Humanist Manifesto I can be summarized as:

1. atheistic ( see ATHEISM ) regarding the existence of God;
2. naturalistic regarding the possibility of miracles ( see MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST );
3. evolutionistic ( see EVOLUTION ) concerning human origins;
4. relativistic concerning values ( see MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF );
5. optimistic about the future;
6. socialistic in politico-economic policy;
7. religious in attitude toward life, and
8. humanistic with regard to the methods which it suggests to those who would achieve its goals.

The statement is not simply optimistic; it is overoptimistic about human perfectability. Even the framers of *Humanist Manifesto II* (1973) acknowledged that “events since [1933] make that earlier statement seem far too optimistic.”

*Manifesto I* studiously avoids use of the words *ought* and *should*. It does not, however, avoid *will* (art. 15) and *must* (arts. 3, 5, 12, 13, 14). The humanists’ affirmations of values they consider worthwhile implies that one “ought” to pursue those values. Hence the secular humanists are in effect offering a moral prescription they believe humans *ought to follow*.

Some moral prescriptions implied have a universal force because of the strong words used: *necessity* (preamble), *must* (arts. 3, 5, 12, 14), *insists* (art. 5), *no or nothing* (arts. 7, 10, conclusion), and even *demand* (art. 14) in connection with values advocated. In the preamble a universal obligation is euphemistically called an “abiding value.” Likewise the values of freedom, creativity, and achievement are clearly regarded as universal and irrevocable.

It is worth noting that the religious tone of the first manifesto is very evident. The words *religion* or *religious* occur twenty-eight times. The authors consider themselves religious, wish to preserve religious experience, and even call themselves “religious humanists.” Their religion, however, is without an ultimate personal object of religious experience.

**Humanist Manifesto II.** In 1973, forty years after the framing of *Humanist Manifesto I*, proponents of secular humanism from several countries felt an updating was necessary. “Humanist Manifesto II” was signed by Isaac Asimov, A. J. Ayer, Brand Blanshard, Joseph Fletcher, Antony Flew, Jacques Monod, and B. F. Skinner.

In the preface the authors deny that they “are setting forth a binding credo” but say that “for today it is our conviction.” They acknowledge their continuity with earlier humanists in affirming that God, prayer, salvation, and providence are part of “an unproved and outmoded faith.”

*The Affirmations.* The seventeen basic affirmations in *Humanist Manifesto II* appear under the headings “religion” (arts. 1–2), “ethics” (3–4), “the individual” (5–6), “democratic society” (7–11), and “world community” (12–17).

“*First: In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine ‘spiritual’ experience and aspiration.*” The authors quickly add “that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions . . . do a disservice to the human species.” Moreover, they find insufficient evidence for existence of the supernatural. As “non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.” They could discover no divine providence. Hence, “no deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”

“*Second: Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.*” They distract from self-actualization and from concern over injustice. Science discredits belief in the soul ( *see* IMMORTALITY ). “Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces.” Neither has science found evidence that life survives death. Humans should look after the welfare of this life, not the next.

“*Third: We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction.*” Humanists base their values system on human experience, “here and now.” Values have no suprahuman basis or goal ( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ).

“*Fourth: Reason and intelligence are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses.*” Neither faith nor passion will substitute. Humanists suggest that “the

controlled use of scientific methods . . . must be extended further in the solution of human problems.” A combination of critical intelligence and human caring is the best hope for resolving human problems.

“*Fifth: The preciousness and dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value.*” Humanists allow for as much individual autonomy as is consistent with social responsibility. Accordingly, individual freedom of choice should be increased ( *see* DETERMINISM ; FREE WILL ).

“*Sixth: In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct.*” The authors affirm rights to birth control, abortion, divorce, and any form of sexual behavior between consenting adults. “Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life styles as they desire.”

“*Seventh: To enhance freedom and dignity the individual must experience a full range of civil liberties in all societies.*” These include freedoms of speech and press, political democracy, oppose government policies, judicial process, religion, association, artistic expression, and scientific investigation. Rights must be protected and extended to die with dignity and use euthanasia and suicide. Humanists oppose the increasing invasion of individual privacy. This detailed list is a catalog of humanist values.

“*Eighth: We are committed to an open and democratic society.*” All persons should have a voice in developing values and setting goals. “People are more important than decalogues, rules, proscriptions, or regulations.” Here is manifest an opposition to divine moral law such as is found in the Ten Commandments (Decalogue).

“*Ninth: The separation of church and state and the separation of ideology and state are imperatives.*” Humanists believe that the state “should not favor any particular religious bodies through the use of public moneys, nor espouse a single ideology.”

“*Tenth: . . . We need to democratize the economy and judge it by its responsiveness to human needs, testing results in terms of the common good.*” This means that the value of any economic system is to be judged on a utilitarian basis.

“*Eleventh: The principle of moral equality must be furthered through elimination of all discrimination based on race, religion, sex, age, or national origin.*” Total elimination of discrimination would result in a more equitable distribution of wealth. There would be a minimum annual income, welfare to all who need it, and the right to a university education.

“*Twelfth: We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and to move toward the building of a world community.*” This would involve a supranational political entity which allows for cultural diversity.

“*Thirteenth: This world community must renounce the resort to violence and force as a method of solving international disputes.*” This article pronounces war to be absolute, and claims a “planetary imperative” to reduce military spending.

“*Fourteenth: The world community must engage in cooperative planning concerning the use of rapidly depleting resources . . . and excessive population growth must be checked by international concord.*” For humanists, then, conservation is a moral value.

“*Fifteenth: It is the moral obligation of the developed nations to provide . . . massive technical, agricultural, medical, and economic assistance*” to underdeveloped nations. This is to be done through “an international authority that safeguards human rights.”

“*Sixteenth: Technology is a vital key to human progress and development.*” This article speaks against indiscriminate condemnation of technology and its use to control, manipulate, or modify human beings without their consent.

“*Seventeenth: We must expand communication and transportation across frontiers. Travel restrictions must cease.*” This article ends with the warning: “We must learn to live openly together or we shall perish together.

The conclusion speaks out against “terror” and “hatred.” It holds out the values of reason and compassion, as well as tolerance, understanding, and peaceful negotiation. It calls for “the highest commitment [i.e., to these values] of which we are capable,” which “transcends . . . church, state, party, class, or race.” It is clear from this that humanists are calling for an ultimate commitment to transcendent moral values—a religious commitment.

*An Evaluation of Humanist Manifesto II.* *Humanist Manifesto II* is stronger, more detailed, and less optimistic than “*Humanist Manifesto I*.” It is less guarded in its use of moral terms such as *should* and in its call for an ultimate commitment. It is indeed a strong, urgent, moral, and religious call. Like its predecessor it is also atheistic, naturalistic, evolutionistic, socialistic, relativistic, and still optimistic that humankind can save itself. The internationalist emphasis is much stronger.

“*The Secular Humanist Declaration.*” A third coalition voice for secular humanism has been raised. Signers of the “*Secular Humanist Declaration*,” which appeared in the secular humanist journal *Free Inquiry*, included Asimov, Fletcher, Skinner, and some who did not sign *Manifesto II*, among them philosophers Sidney Hook and Kai Nielsen.

*The Affirmations.* The declaration espouses “democratic secular humanism.” It is clear from the opening paragraphs that humanists see established religion as their chief enemy: “Regrettably, we are today faced with a variety of anti-secularist trends: the reappearance of dogmatic, authoritarian religions; Fundamentalist, literalist, and doctrinaire Christianity.” In addition, the document complains of “a rapidly growing and uncompromising Moslem clericalism in the Middle East and Asia, the reassertion of orthodox authority by the Roman Catholic papal hierarchy, nationalistic religious Judaism; and the reversion to obscurantist religions in Asia.” The platform of these humanists is:

*Free inquiry.* “The first principle of democratic secular humanism is its commitment to free inquiry. We oppose any tyranny over the mind of man, any efforts by ecclesiastical, political, ideological, or social institutions to shackle free thought.”

*Separation of church and state.* “Because of their commitment to freedom, secular humanists believe in the principle of the separation of church and state.” In their view “any effort to impose an exclusive conception of Truth [ see TRUTH, NATURE OF ], piety, virtue, or justice upon the whole of society is a violation of free inquiry.”

*The ideal of freedom.* “As democratic secularists, we consistently defend the ideal of freedom.” The secular humanism concept of freedom includes not only freedom of conscience and belief from repressive ecclesiastical, political, and economic powers, but also “genuine political liberty, democratic decision-making based upon majority rule, and respect for minority rights and the rule of law.”

*Ethics based on critical intelligence.* “The secular humanist recognizes the central role of morality in human life.” Ethical conduct should be judged by critical reason, and their goal is to develop “autonomous and responsible individuals, capable of making their own choices in life based upon an understanding of human behavior.” Although secular humanists are ostensibly opposed to absolutist morality, they maintain that “objective standards emerge, and ethical values and principles may be discovered, in the course of ethical deliberation.”

*Moral education.* “We believe that moral development should be cultivated in children and young adults. . . ; hence it is the duty of public education to deal with these values.” Such values include “moral virtues, intelligence, and the building of character.”

*Religious skepticism.* “As secular humanists, we are generally skeptical about supernatural claims.” While it is true that “we recognize the importance of religious experience: that experience that redirects and gives meaning to the lives of human [beings, we deny] that such experiences have anything to do with the supernatural.” It is maintained that there is insufficient evidence for the claim that some divine purpose exists for the universe. Men and women are free and responsible for their own destinies, and they cannot look to any transcendent being for salvation.

*Reason.* “We view with concern the current attack by nonsecularists on reason and science.” Although secular humanists deny reason and science can solve all human problems, they affirm that they know of no better substitute than human intelligence.

*Science and technology.* “We believe the scientific method, though imperfect, is still the most reliable way to understand the world. Hence, we look to the natural, biological, social, and behavioral sciences for knowledge of the universe and man’s place within it.”

*Evolution.* This article laments the attack by religious fundamentalists on evolution. While denying that evolution is an “infallible principle,” secular humanists believe it “is supported so strongly by the weight of evidence that it is difficult to reject it.” Consequently, “we deplore the efforts by fundamentalists (especially in the United States) to invade the science classrooms,

requiring that creationist theory be taught to students and requiring that it be included in biology text-books" ( *see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF ). Secular humanists consider this a serious threat both to academic freedom and educational integrity.

*Education.* "In our view, education should be the essential method of building humane, free, and democratic societies." The aims of education include the transmission of knowledge, occupational training, citizenship instruction and encouraging moral growth. Secular humanists also envision the broader task of embarking on "a long-term program of public education and enlightenment concerning the relevance of the secular outlook to the human condition."

The declaration concludes with the plea that "democratic secular humanism is too important for human civilization to abandon." It decries contemporary orthodox religion as "anti-science, anti-freedom, anti-human," pointing out that "secular humanism places trust in human intelligence rather than in divine guidance." It ends by deploring "the growth of intolerant sectarian creeds that foster hatred."

*Evaluation of the "Secular Humanist Declaration."* It may seem surprising that this declaration appeared so soon after *Humanist Manifesto II* (only eight years), especially since many of the same people signed both. Much of the content is similar to one or both manifestos. With previous humanist statements it stresses naturalism, evolution, humankind's ability for self-salvation, as well as common humanistic ethical commitments to freedom, toleration, and critical intelligence.

However, the Declaration does have distinctives. The most significant aspects of this declaration are those areas in which it differs from previous efforts. First, these secular humanists wish to be called " *democratic* secular humanists." The stress on democracy is evident throughout. Second, nowhere do they claim to be religious humanists, as do the authors of the prior documents. This is strange, since humanists have pleaded for recognition as a religious group, and the U.S. Supreme Court so defined it in *Torcaso vs. Watkins*, 1961. Indeed, the declaration could be justly characterized as antireligious, for it particularly attacks the recent trend toward conservative religious beliefs. The bulk of the declaration, in fact, seems to be a reaction against the recent trends contrary to secular humanism. Finally, one cannot help but notice a strange inconsistency in that the declaration affirms academic freedom, yet insists that scientific creationism be excluded from school science classes.

**Common Elements in Secular Humanism.** A study of the humanist manifestos and declaration, and other writings of prominent secular humanists, reveals a common core of at least five beliefs:

1. Nontheism is common to all forms of secular humanism. Many humanists deny the existence of God altogether, but all deny the need for a Creator of the world. Thus secular humanists join in opposing all theistic religion.
2. Naturalism is essential to humanism, following from the denial of theism. Everything in the universe must be explainable in terms of natural laws alone.

3. Evolution is the secular humanist's way to explain origins. Either the universe and living things originated by means of the intervention of a supernatural Creator, or they evolved by purely naturalistic means. Nontheists thus have no choice but to defend evolution.
4. Ethical relativism unites secular humanists, for they have a distaste for absolutes ( *see* ABSOLUTES, MORAL ). There are no God-given moral values; humanity decides its own values. These standards are subject to change and relative to different situations. Since there is no absolute basis for values in God, there are no absolute values to be received from God.
5. Human self-sufficiency is a central tenet. Not all secular humanists are utopian, but all believe human beings can solve their own problems without divine help. Not all believe the race is immortal, but all hold that humanity's survival depends on personal behavior and responsibility. Not all believe that science and technology are the means of saving humankind, but all do believe human reason and secular education are the only hope if the race is to endure.

**Conclusion.** Secular humanism is a movement consisting mostly of atheists, agnostics, and deists. All are antitheists and antisupernatural. All are strongly naturalistic. These specific doctrines are challenged in other articles, among them: GOD, ALLEGED DISPROOFS OF ; GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ; GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR ; EVOLUTION ; EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL ; EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL ; EVOLUTION, COSMIC ; MIRACLE , and MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST . Morally humanists are relativists ( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ). Various kinds of nontheistic humanism are evaluated under the names of their leading proponents.

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**Humanist Manifestos.** *See* HUMANISM, SECULAR .

**Hume, David.** David Hume (1711–1776), philosopher and historian, was born and reared in Edinburgh, Scotland and attended Edinburgh University. He earned a degree in law but soon after decided not to practice. Instead, during the height of the European Enlightenment, Hume took up a rigorous study of philosophy. This study led to skepticism ( *see* AGNOSTICISM ) and a disdain for the miraculous ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). However, unlike Benedict Spinoza a century earlier, Hume attacked miracles from an empirical perspective, not a rationalistic one. In many ways the two men were opposites. Spinoza was dogmatic, and Hume was a skeptic. Spinoza was rationalistic, and Hume was empirical. Differences notwithstanding, they shared the conclusion that it is unreasonable to believe in miracles. For Spinoza, miracles are actually impossible; for Hume, they are merely incredible.

**Hume's Empirical Skepticism.** The skeptic believes in suspending judgment about metaphysical questions. Hume's skepticism was based in his epistemology. He believed that all ideas are based in sense experience. Since there were no sense experiences of concepts like *God*, Hume rejected these as meaningless.

**Two Kinds of Propositions.** All objects of human inquiry, Hume wrote, are either *Relations of Ideas*, or *Matters of Fact*. The first kind includes mathematical statements and definitions; the second includes everything known empirically—through one or more of the senses. So emphatic was Hume about this distinction that he concluded *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*:

When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume—of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance—let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion. [12.3.173]

**Causes Known by Custom.** For Hume “all reasoning concerning matters of fact seems to be founded on the relation of *cause* and *effect*. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses” (ibid., 4.1.41). In view of this, the mind can never find the cause for a given event. Only “after the constant conjunction of two objects, heat and flame, for instance . . . we are determined by custom alone to expect the one from the appearance of the other” (ibid., 5.1.57). That is, we use causality, but we have no empirical grounds for doing so. In short, one cannot know causal *connections* between things; one can only believe in them based on customary *conjunctions*. “All inferences from experience, therefore, are effects of custom, not of reasoning” (ibid.).

According to Hume, we cannot even be sure the sun will rise tomorrow. We believe it will because it has customarily risen in the past. Some things happen so often in conjunction with others that it is foolish not to believe they will be so conjoined in the future. Hume would even call this uniform experience a “proof,” by which he means “such arguments from experience as leave no room for doubt or opposition” (ibid., 6.1.69). Nonetheless, “all events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*” (ibid., 7.2.85). But conjoined events do not prove

they are causally connected any more than there is a causal connection between the rooster crowing and the sun rising. All one can do is extrapolate based on oft-repeated occurrences.

**An Evaluation of Hume's Skeptical Empiricism.** It is self-defeating. Hume's skepticism is vulnerable to serious criticisms. Perhaps the most serious is that it is self-defeating. According to Hume, meaningful propositions are *empirical* or *analytical*. The empirical have content but tell us nothing about metaphysical reality, such as God. The *analytical* are empty and contentless. Like the principle of empirical verifiability based on Hume's two kinds of propositions, this is a self-destructive proposition ( *see* LOGICAL POSITIVISM ). For the statement that “only analytic or empirical propositions are meaningful” is not itself an analytic (true by definition) or empirical statement. Hence, by its own criteria, it is meaningless. If one allows that such statements are meaningful, then why cannot metaphysical statements be meaningful?

**Atomism is contrary to experience.** Another serious objection to Hume's skeptical empiricism is that it is based on an unjustified empirical atomism. Hume believed all sensations to be atomically separated. One event follows another; but we never can observe a tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*” (ibid., 7.2.85). But this is not how we experience them. We encounter them as a continuous flow. We do not get a staccato series of snapshots. Rather, we see a continuous flow motion picture of the external world. Only if one wrongly *assumes* that everything is atomically loose and separate is there a problem of connecting them.

**Causality can be experienced internally.** Hume is widely misunderstood. He did not deny the principle of causality. He denied the basis on which some people try to prove causality ( *see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF ). Hume rejected intuition, dismissing causal connections we experience in our own consciousness that are not based on external events. I am the cause of this sentence as I am typing, and I experience that fact. Everyone experiences their own thoughts and actions. These are not atomically loose and separate. We experience them as a continuous flow of cause and effect.

**Hume could not live his theory.** Hume was not consistent with his skepticism in either the practical or the theoretical realm. In the practical area Hume admitted that he had to take a break from his depressing skeptical pursuits and play a game of backgammon. Indeed, no one can live a life of suspended judgment on all metaphysical and moral matters. Life demands certain commitments in these areas. No skeptic suspends judgment on whether the moral right exists to believe and express these views. Nor is there doubt about everything. (Hume was not skeptical of skepticism.) A complete skeptic could not eat, walk, or talk ( *see* AGNOSTICISM ).

More pointedly, Hume was not consistent with his own theory. When arguing that we do not know the connection between events, Hume insisted that we could not even be certain that the sun will rise tomorrow. Yet when arguing against miracles he insisted that the uniform experience to date that all men die and do not rise from the dead proves that no resurrection will occur tomorrow ( *see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ).

**Hume never denied causality.** What is more, Hume himself never denied that things have a cause for their existence. He wrote: “I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything

might arise without a cause” (Hume, *Letters*, 1:187). Indeed, in the same source Hume claimed that it would be “absurd” to deny the principle of causality. What Hume denied was the way some philosophers attempt to prove the principle of causality. For Hume, customary conjunction is the basis for positing a causal connection.

**Hume’s Rejection of Proofs for God.** Hume’s skepticism concerning the existence of God was based on his empiricism and is manifest in several objections that have been often repeated since his time. They are based on his famous *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

*Arguments against a Theistic God.* Hume argued that all attempts to prove God, at least a theistic God ( *see* THEISM ), fail for any of the following reasons ( *see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR ):

*Finite beings need only finite causes.* According to Hume, positing an infinite Cause is metaphysical overkill. A finite universe needs only a finite cause.

*The principle of causality is unprovable.* There is no way to prove the principle of causality. Everything based on experience could be otherwise. And everything not based on experience is simply a tautology, that is, true only by definition.

*Principle of analogy proves nontheistic God.* Even if one grants there must be some kind of cause of the world, it would not be an infinitely perfect God. At best the argument from analogy leads us to a finite and imperfect God for a finite and imperfect world. If one insists that God must be like what he created, then is God like a cabbage or a rabbit, because he made them?

*An infinite series of causes is possible.* An infinite series of causes is possible. Hence, there is no need to come to a *First Cause*. Infinite series are possible in mathematics.

*Necessity does not apply to existence, but only to concepts.* A Necessary Being, such as the cosmological argument concludes, is a misapplication of the term “necessary.” The reason is that necessity applies only to concepts or ideas, never to actual reality. Necessary statements are analytic and contentless. And statements about the real world are not necessary.

*There is no need for a designer; chance can explain all (see TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT).* There is no need to posit an intelligent cause (designer) of the world; chance can explain the apparent design in the world. Given enough time any “lucky” combination will result. The universe may be a “happy accident.”

*It is possible that nothing ever existed, including God.* 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, even he must not exist necessarily, hence God must not exist at all.

*What is logically necessary does not necessarily exist.* 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. Hence, even if it were logically necessary for God to exist it would not mean that he actually does exist.

*If all things were created, then so was God.* 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.

These arguments are answered and Hume’s logic critiqued in the article *God, Objections to Proofs for*.

**Conclusion.** Hume was one of the most influential figures in modern philosophy. His clear and powerful presentation of skepticism and antisupernaturalism was a significant factor in molding the modern secularistic mind. However, a careful analysis of Hume’s crucial positions reveals that they are both inconsistent and contrary to experience. Indeed, the heart of his skepticism is self-defeating, since he does not really suspend judgment on the many dogmatic positions he takes about God and miracles.

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**Huxley, Julian.** Julian Sorell Huxley (1887–1975) was the grandson of Thomas Huxley, who was known for his support of Charles Darwin. Julian received his degree from Oxford in zoology and later taught there. In 1912 he was appointed Biology Department chair at Rice University. He became professor of zoology at Kings College, London, in 1925. In 1952 he became president of the British Humanist Association. He was a signer of the 1973 Humanist Manifesto II ( *see* HUMANISM, SECULAR ). His books included *Principles of Experimental Embryology* (1934), *Evolution, the Modern Synthesis*, and *Religion Without Revelation* (1928, rev. 1957).

Julian is noted for his *evolutionary humanism*. This view had its most complete expression in *Religion without Revelation*. Building on the evolutionary biology of Darwin, the evolutionary philosophy of Herbert Spencer, and the evolutionary ethics of his grandfather T. H. Huxley, Julian developed a complete system of belief he called “evolutionary humanism.” He expressed views on the whole gamut of topics, including God, human origins, religion, values, science, the arts, and his hopes for the future possibilities of the human race.

**God and Religion.** Like other humanists, Huxley did not believe in a theistic God ( *see* THEISM ). He believed that evolution explained all ( *see* ATHEISM ; EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL ).



*Huxley's Disbelief in God.* Huxley was opposed to God but in favor of religion. He said, "I believe . . . that we quite assuredly at present *know* nothing beyond this world and natural experience." That is, "a personal God, be he Jehovah, or Allah, or Apollo, or Amen-Ra, or without name but simply God, I *know* nothing of." Nor did he want to know. "I am not merely agnostic on the subject. . . . I disbelieve in a personal God in any sense in which that phrase is ordinarily used" (Huxley, 17, 18).

Belief in God, Huxley held, was purely psychological. God the Father was a personification of nature; the Holy Spirit represented ideals; the Son personified ideal human nature. So "the gods are creations of man, personalized representations of the forces of destiny, with their unity projected into them by human thought and imagination" (ibid., 51).

Huxley believed that modern scientific understanding made the concept of God obsolete. "God can no longer be considered as the controller of the universe in any but a pickwickian sense. The god hypothesis is no longer of any pragmatic value," he said. Operationally, "God is beginning to resemble not a ruler, but the last fading smile of a cosmic Cheshire Cat" (ibid., 58, 59). In fact, Huxley believed "it will soon be as impossible for an intelligent, educated man or woman to believe in a god as it is now to believe that the earth is flat" (ibid., 62).

Disbelief brought Huxley great relief. "For my own part," he concluded, "the sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a supernatural being is enormous." He passionately hoped others would join him in his belief (and relief). Then "the insufferable arrogance of those who claim to be in sole possession of religious truth would happily disappear." Along with this would go bigotry, religious war, religious persecution, the horrors of the Inquisition, attempts to suppress knowledge and learning, hastily to social and moral change (ibid., 33).

*Huxley's Belief in Religion.* Despite his strong disbelief in God, Huxley considered himself deeply religious. "I believe," said Huxley, "that it is necessary to believe something. Complete skepticism does not work" (ibid., 13). In the end he found that believing in the scientific method met some of his religious longing. So Huxley believed that the scientific method "is the only method which in the long run will give satisfactory foundation for beliefs" (ibid., 13).

When Huxley applied the scientific method to religious experiences, including his own, he concluded that "religion arose as a feeling of the sacred." The capacity for this feeling, he reckoned fundamental to humankind, something given in and by the construction of the normal human mind. Huxley spoke honestly and vividly of his own religious experiences;

Another incident of the same year remains vividly with me. We were doing night exercises between Aldershot and Fleet: the warm June night was scented with broom: the monotony of exercise, enforced silence, and darkness, combined with the beauty of the hour, impelled to aimless meditation.

Suddenly, for no particular reason, without apparent connection with other thoughts, a problem and its solution flashed across my mind. I had understood how it was that two views or courses of action could not only both be sincerely held as good, but both

actually could *be* good—and when the two came into contact, the one could both appear and be evil. It can be so when both are aiming in the same general direction, but the one is moving so much more slowly that it becomes a drag on the other's wheel. Ideas and facts, particular examples and their general meaning, the tragedy of bitter conflict between two fine realities, two solid honesties, all jostled each other in my mind in that moment of insight, and I had made a new step towards that peaceful basis for action which is expressed by the French proverb, "Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner."

It also had that definite quality of being thrown into consciousness, implied in the term revelation, which has been described for purely intellectual discovery by many mathematicians and men of science, notably Poincaré in his essays on scientific method. It was an exaggeration of the sense that comes when one suddenly sees a point which had eluded comprehension, but without any accompanying sense of effort. The same general sense in the sphere of feeling one may have when one is suddenly transported to a complete and satisfaction by some sudden view of distant hills over plain; or by a sudden quality of light—"the light that never was on sea or land," and yet is suddenly here, transforming a familiar landscape; or by a poem or a picture, or a face. But only once before had I had such a complete sense of outside givenness in an experience—the only occasion on which I had a vision (of a non-hallucinatory but amazingly real sort: such, of a religious cast, abound in the records of mystics [ *see* MYSTICISM ] such as St. Theresa). [ibid., 86, 87]

Such vivid religious experiences left Huxley with passionate "beliefs in the supreme value of certain ideas and activities." He said, "these in the theological parlance are called Faith" (ibid., 76). In fact, Huxley confessed, "Life would have been intolerable but for [such] glimpses of the alternative state, occasional moments of great happiness and spiritual refreshment, coming usually through poetry or through beautiful landscape, or through people" (ibid., 77).

One day while browsing through a library in Colorado Springs, Huxley came across some essays by Lord Morley in which he found these words: "The next great task of science will be to create a religion for humanity." Huxley was challenged by this vision. He wrote, "I was fired by sharing his conviction that science would of necessity play an essential part in framing any religion of the future worthy of the name" (ibid., 82).

*A Religion for Humanists.* Huxley took up Morley's challenge to develop a scientific religion. He called it "evolutionary humanism." One of the foundational tenets, as the name would signify, is the theory of evolution.

*Human Evolution and Destiny.* The experience of the mystical led Huxley to reject a purely materialistic interpretation of the universe, such as he saw in Marxism ( *see* MATERIALISM ). He concluded, "the materialist hypothesis, in denying the importance of mental and spiritual factors in the cosmos, is to me as erroneous as, though more sophisticated than, the naïve notion of the magic hypothesis, which projects spiritual forces into material events." But his rejection of pure materialism notwithstanding, Huxley was a complete naturalist. He insisted that discoveries of physiology, biology, and psychology necessitated naturalism. There was no longer room for the supernatural. Both material and "spiritual" forces in the cosmos were part of nature (ibid., 187).

Evolution is, of course, the only naturalistic explanation of the origin of life. Huxley wrote, "I personally believe in the uniformity of nature, in other words, that Nature is seen to be orderly . . . and that there are not two realms of reality, one natural, the other supernatural and from time to time invading and altering the course of events in the natural" (ibid., 45). Huxley added, "I believe also in the unity of nature." Further, "I believe in unity by continuity. Matter does not appear or disappear, nor do living things arise except from previously existing things essentially like themselves" ( *see* NATURALISM ). Hence, "the more complex matter that is alive must at some time have originated from matter that was not alive" (ibid., 45).

As evolution moved onward it moved upward. For each new dominant type possesses improved general organization. This progressive replacement of dominant types and groups is most clearly shown in later vertebrates. "It is thus perfectly proper," said Huxley, "to use terms like *higher* and *lower* to describe different types of organism, and *progress* for certain types of trend" (ibid., 192).

The culmination of the evolutionary biological process is humankind. Huxley believed that the only avenue of advance left was the improvement of brain and mind. "It is clear that man is only at the beginning of his period of evolutionary dominance, and that vast and still undreamt-of possibilities of further advance still lie before him" (ibid., 193). Biology has revealed human destiny as the highest form produced by evolution, the latest dominant type, and the only organism capable of further major advance. Human destiny is to realize new possibilities for the world and be the instrument of further evolutionary process (ibid., 193).

*The Nature of Human Beings.* Huxley was not a wide-eyed optimist about the nature of man. He recognized evil urges and activities, such as greed, arrogance, fanaticism, sadism, and self-indulgence (ibid., 196–97). He believed, however, that humanity was capable of saving itself from these evils.

Further, Huxley was not a strict materialist ( *see* MATERIALISM ). He believed in "spiritual" and "mental" aspects to the "stuff" of the universe as well as the "material" aspect (ibid., 186–87). He rejected Marxist ( *see* MARX, KARL ) materialism and spoke favorably about "mystical" experience. He was nonetheless, a committed naturalist in explaining the human phenomena.

Clearly Huxley was optimistic about humankind's ability to achieve a great future. The human was the only hope for future evolution. Along with his grandfather, Huxley confessed: "My faith is in the possibilities of man" (ibid., 212). This hope was that *Homo sapiens* would continue to realize new potential through continuing evolution.

*Evolution and Ethics.* The evolutionary progress of the past provides guiding principles for the future. On this basis humanity should aim at those qualities that have succeeded. These principles include efficiency and control of environment, self-regulation and independence, individuation and levels of organization, harmony in work, increased awareness and knowledge, storage of experience, and mental organization (ibid., 193). Human beings would fulfill their destiny more successfully by exploiting reason, imagination and conceptual thought, and unique capacities of accumulating, organizing, and applying experience through culture and the exchange of ideas (ibid., 193). The most sacred duty, and the most glorious opportunity is to

promote the maximum fulfillment of the evolutionary process and fully realize the latent human possibilities (ibid., 194).

But even though "the flowering of the individual is seen as having intrinsic value, as being an end in itself," the individual's value is limited by the need to maintain and improve society (ibid., 194, 195). The individual has duties to develop personal potential and to help others singly and collectively realize their potential. Each person must contribute at least a little to promoting the evolution of the whole (ibid., 195).

According to Huxley, "the basic postulate of evolutionary humanism is that mental and spiritual forces . . . do have operative effect, and are indeed of decisive importance in the highly practical business of working out human destiny; and that they are not supernatural, not outside man but within him" (ibid.). These forces operate not only within individuals, but also through the social process. Since the human being is the only one in conscious control of these forces, alone people are responsible for realizing life's further progress. "This applies," said Huxley, "as much to the blind urge to reproduction as to personal greed or desire for power, as much to arrogance and fanaticism, whether nationalist or religious, as to straightforward sadism or self-indulgence" (ibid., 197).

In evolutionary humanism the general duty of the individual is to realize personal potential. The right kind of individual development leaves the way permanently open for growth. Three areas of personal development are possible: specialization, cultivation of personal abilities in every area of life, and cultivating inner harmony and peace (ibid., 199, 200).

Actually, evolutionary humanism has twin goals: present personal fulfillment and long-term cosmic progress. The latter value Huxley calls "the gospel of evolutionary humanism" which is a "transcendent value" (ibid., 201).

**Science and the Future.** Although Huxley did not believe in individual immortality (ibid., 18), he did expect the human race to continue on. He believed that science was the best organ for accomplishing this goal—not science without religion, but a scientific religion. He wrote:

Twentieth-century man, it is clear, needs a new organ for dealing with destiny, a new system of religious beliefs and attitudes adapted to the new situation in which his societies now have to exist. The radically new feature of the present situation may perhaps be stated thus: Earlier religions and belief-systems were largely adaptations to cope with man's ignorance and fears, with the result that they came to concern themselves primarily with stability of attitude. But the need today is for a belief-system adapted to cope with his knowledge and his creative possibilities; and this implies the capacity to meet, inspire and guide change. [ibid., 188]

Huxley's humanistic religion, then, is the organ of destiny. Even so, Huxley had no delusions of grandeur about the immediate prospects of this kind of religion. "Like all other new religions . . . it will at the outset be expressed and spread by a small minority." However, he predicted that "it will in the due course of time become universal, not only potentially and in theory, but actually and in practice." Human psychological nature makes this inevitable. "Man cannot avoid

the process of convergence which makes for the integration of divergent or hostile human groups in a single organic world society and culture” (ibid., 208).

So an unavoidable evolutionary process will eventuate in a universal humanistic religion. This atheistic society will continue the evolutionary development in ever new intellectual, psychological, and social ways.

Huxley did not know what form his new religion would take, what rituals or celebrations it might practice, whether it would have a priesthood, erect buildings, or adopt symbols (ibid., 209). Whatever the form, it should be both “unified and tolerant” (ibid., 160). He was confident, however, that it would come. Since “the scientific spirit and the scientific method have proved the most effective agents for the comprehension and control of physical nature” it remains for coming generations to apply them toward controlling human destiny (ibid., 205).

*Comparison and Contrast.* Evolutionary humanism is much broader than Huxley’s variety of it. Virtually all humanists believe in some form of evolution. What they disagree about is what mechanism made it happen. Not all agree with Huxley that natural selection (the survival of the fittest) is the means by which evolution is accomplished. What further distinguishes Huxley’s variety is that he believed it should be made a universal religion and the basis for ethics. That is, whatever aids the evolutionary process is good and whatever hinders it is evil.

*Evaluation.* As a religion, Huxley’s dream has not caught on quickly. It would seem that many secular humanists do not really desire it to catch on. More recent humanists have admitted that Huxley was too optimistic (cf. “Humanist Manifesto II,” 1973). There is no good observational evidence to indicate the inevitability of the evolution of a universal humanistic religion.

The evolutionary ethic involves some serious problems. How does society preserve individual rights of those who are blocking social evolution ( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF )? How can an ethical “ought” be derived from a biological “is”? How can the assumed fact of evolution be the basis for moral value? Many bad things evolve too. If so, there must be some standard outside of the evolutionary process by which to know what is good or bad.

Huxley’s confession of transcendent, supreme values, mystical experience, and a destiny of the world will be welcomed by those who claim that these are verbal indicators of a surrogate “God.” They will insist that only minds can “destine” and only persons can be the object of religious commitments. They will contend that Huxley has avoided the name *God* but not his reality.

With the foundations of modern evolution crumbling ( *see* EVOLUTION ), the basis of Huxley’s evolutionary humanism is being destroyed too. Moreover, he is inconsistent. In one breath he states that the first life arose from nonlife (ibid., 45), yet in the next he ridicules belief in spontaneous generation (ibid., 62). Huxley erroneously uses operation science to explain origins ( *see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF ). He tries to explain the unrepeatable events of the past by the repeatable events of the present. Huxley misuses the scientific method he advances as the basis of evolutionary humanism. Such naturalism also lacks philosophical justification. He offered no

adequate arguments for denying the possibility of supernatural intervention ( *see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ).

Finally, like other nontheists, Huxley’s critique of God ( *see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO ARGUMENTS FOR ) is shallow and inadequate. He does not interact with the substantial evidence for the existence of a theistic God ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ).

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