

Illusion, Religious. See FREUD, SIGMUND .

Illusionism. Illusionism is the belief that the “world” only appears to be real. Our senses deceive us. The mind or spirit is the guide to true reality. Illusionism is closely associated with monism and pantheism. The Greek philosopher Parmenides is an example of a monist who believed everything other than an absolute One is an illusion (see ONE AND MANY, PROBLEM OF). Shankaristic Hinduism is an example of illusionist pantheism . Christian Science is pantheistic and illusionist.

Illusionism, solves the problem of evil (see EVIL, PROBLEM OF) by denying its existence. Illusionism affirms God and denies evil, whereas atheism affirms evil and denies God. Theism affirms the reality of both but denies that there is a contradiction.

In Hindu illusionism the illusion of the external world is call *maya* , and the illusion of diversity is called *mithya* . Ninth-century Hindu thinker, Sankara, argued that Brahman (the Hindu name for the Ultimate) is the sole reality. The external world only appears to be, the same way a rope seen at a distance appears to be a serpent. When we examine the world closely, we see that the only reality behind the illusion is Brahman. Brahman “causes” the world to appear diverse and evil only in the sense that the rope “causes” the serpent to appear.

Western illusionism has taken a number of forms. The first proponents of illusionism in the West were the Greeks Parmenides and Zeno. Parmenides (b. 515 B.C .) was one of the first philosophers to focus his attention on the metaphysical problem of whether reality was one or many. He argued that our senses could not be trusted (Parmenides, 266–67). Parmenides believed that things may appear to be many and evil, but they are ultimately one and good. The senses are easily deceived, and consequently humans falsely perceive of the world as diverse and evil.

One of Parmenides’ pupils, Zeno (b. 490 B.C .), attempted to prove this through logic. His “race course argument” denied the existence of motion. A runner covering a set distance transverses a successive number of halves of the distance. To travel from A to B, one must travel past the midpoint (m1). But in order to travel from A to m1, one must travel past the midpoint (m2) of that distance. And in order to travel past midpoint m2, one must travel past midpoint (m3). Thus in order to travel in any direction, it appears that we must cross an infinite number of

midpoints, which seems impossible. That means, according to Zeno, that motion is impossible and therefore an illusion.

A modern form of illusionism in the West is Christian Science. According to Mary Baker Eddy, evil is not a real entity, but is instead a false perception; it is the “error of the mortal mind.” Christian Science maintains that God is truth and that “there is no pain in truth, and no truth in pain.” Sin, sickness, and death, therefore, are mortal illusions that do not exist in reality (Eddy, 113, 289, 480).

Evaluation. Many of the criticisms of illusionism are the same as those covered in the article PANTHEISM .

Illusionism is self-destructive. One can only know that all is an illusion against the backdrop of reality. Illusion means not-real. There must be a real standard by which the illusion is defined.

Of course an illusionist could claim that he is not denying all reality, just the reality of this world. Brahman is real. And the world is known to be unreal by contrast with this Reality. While this solves the logical problem of illusionism, it leaves an epistemological problem. Since we are in this world and are allegedly part of the illusion, how could we know that the whole world is an illusion?

The illusionist who claims we are Ultimate Reality (God) and, hence, are not part of the world, begs the question. How do we know we are God? Illusionists admit that they were not always conscious that they were God. But the assertion “I came to realize that I was always God” is a self-defeating statement. For God (Ultimate Reality) does not change. Change is only part of the illusion. Hence, God was always aware he was God. And since we were not, then it follows that we are not God.

Further, if evil is an illusion, where did the illusion originate? And why does everyone experience it from their first moments of consciousness? How did the illusion originate, and how is it passed down to successive generation? The origin, persistence, and universality of the so-called “illusion” argues for its objectivity and reality. What is the difference between saying everyone has it all the time and cannot get rid of it and saying it is objectively real?

It seems more reasonable to assert that illusionism is an illusion. There seems to be no practical difference between viewing pain or evil as illusion and viewing it as reality. Pain or evil is part of the human experience and is encountered by all. Viewed as illusory or real, the experience is the same. This being the case, it seems more sensible to conclude that some are engaging in wishful thinking to conclude that pain or evil is not real. To rephrase Sigmund Freud , one could ask: Why is it that we wish so desperately that evil is not real when it is so universal, persistent, and unavoidable? Could it be that our belief that evil is not real is the great illusion?

Those who believe all is an illusion do not live that way. They avoid pain like anyone else. They eat and drink like others. Those who don’t soon experience the illusion of death. So, illusionism is literally an unlivable philosophy. It is denied in practice by those who affirm it.

Sources

M. B. Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*.

D. Clark, *The Pantheism of Alan Watts*.

———, et al., *Apologetics in the New Age*.

N. L. Geisler, *The Roots of Evil*.

Parmenides. "The Poem," in G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers*.

Immortality. *Immortality* is the term commonly applied to the belief that human persons, at least in their spiritual dimension, consciously survive death and live on forever.

Greek versus Christian Concept of Immortality. Greek and Christian concepts of immortality differ (see Ladd). According to an ancient Greek concept of immortality (e.g., Plato), human beings *are* a soul and only *have* a body. The soul is to the body what a rider is to a horse. Salvation is in part deliverance *from* the body, which is the prison of the soul. There is a basic duality of soul and *soma* (body).

The Hebrew-Christian tradition, on the other hand, while acknowledging that the soul and body separate at death, holds to a unity of the spiritual and physical dimensions of human nature. The human being is a souled body. The soul is to the body what form is to matter, or shape is to a vase. Hence, salvation is not salvation *from* the body but salvation *in* the body (*see* RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF). Indeed, the word *immortality* is used of human beings in the New Testament exclusively in the context of the resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:53 ; 2 Tim. 1:10).

Biblical Evidence for Immortality. The doctrine of immortality was revealed progressively in the Bible, more explicitly in the New Testament.

Old Testament Affirmation of Immortality. As opposed to Greek thought, the Old Testament hope of life after death was definitely bodily. The Old Testament references to an immortal state are largely resurrection passages. The Jews looked toward resurrection as restoration to life on earth of the physical corpse that had been placed in the tomb. Jews not only believed that man was created "from the dust" (Gen. 2:7) and would return to dust (Eccles. 12:7), but that at the resurrection the dead would be reconstituted from the dust. This power to bring the dead back to life is expressed in many passages (see Deut. 32:39 ; 1 Sam. 2:6 ; Job 19:25–27 ; Ps. 49:14–15).

David spoke of the resurrection (in Psalm 16) by claiming that "the Holy One will not see decay" (vs. 10). According to the New Testament (Acts 2:25–27 ; 13), Peter said of David's prophecy that "seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body (*sarx*) see decay" (Acts 2:31). Such a resurrection involved a physical body of "flesh" (*sarx*) (*see* RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF).

Jesus believed the Old Testament taught resurrection and cited it to support his position against the Sadducees who rejected it. He declared, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). Then he cited Exodus 3:6 , 15 : "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Matt. 22:32), adding, "He [God] is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Isaiah spoke of the resurrection of the dead body when he wrote, "Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy" (26:19). That bodies would arise from the dust makes evident the identification with physical resurrection. Daniel foretold that "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). The reference to "dust of the earth" again supports the idea of a physical resurrection.

Though not part of the Old Testament (*see* APOCRYPHA, OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT), the Jewish intertestamental literature also speaks of a physical resurrection. The book of *Wisdom* promises that "in the time of their visitation" the departed "souls of the righteous will be restored and "they will govern nations and rule people" (3:7–8). Second Maccabees tells of the courageous Jewish believer who suffered his tongue and hands to be cut off, saying, "I got them from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again [at the resurrection]" (7:11). Second (Fourth) Esdras predicts that after the time of the Messiah "the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who dwell silently in it" (7:32). Death is described here as a time when "we shall be kept in rest until those times come when thou [God] wilt renew the creation" (7:75).

In the apocalyptic 2 *Baruch* , God is asked, "In what shape will those live who live in Thy day?" The answer is unequivocal affirmation of belief in the material resurrection: "For the earth shall then assuredly restore the dead [which it now receives, in order to preserve them]. It shall make no change in their form, but as it has received, so shall it restore them, and as I delivered them to it, so also shall it raise them" (49:1; 50:2).

The Pharisees in New Testament times believed in the physical resurrection of the corpse from the tomb. As the Sadducees denied the resurrection (Matt. 22:23), their opponents, the Pharisees, believed in a material resurrection body (cf. Acts 23:8). They conceived of the resurrection body as being so physical that it was meaningful to ask which of her seven earthly husbands the woman would be married to in heaven (Matt. 22:28).

Mary and Martha reflected the New Testament Jewish belief in the resurrection when they implied that their brother Lazarus would be raised in the last days while his body was still in the tomb. Even Murray Harris, who rejects the Jewish view of a material resurrection, acknowledges, nonetheless, that "it was impossible, for example, for Jews to believe that Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, could be raised without the removal of the stone that lay over his burial cave and his emergence from the tomb (cf. John 11:38–44)" (Harris, 39).

New Testament Affirmation of Immortality. While the New Testament provides abundant evidence of belief in bodily immortality after the resurrection (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE OF), it also affirms a conscious existence of soul between death and resurrection.

Jesus promised the repentant thief on the cross conscious bliss that very day of his death, saying: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). The Apostle Paul wrote: "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). Contemplating death, Paul added, "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Phil. 1:23).

The "souls" of those who had just been martyred were conscious in heaven, for "When he [Christ] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained" (Rev. 6:9). Even the lost beast and false prophet who were thrown alive into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20) were still conscious "a thousand years" later (Rev. 20:10).

Moses and Elijah, who had been dead for centuries, consciously engaged in conversation about Christ's death on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:3).

Objections to Immortality. Both Greek and Judeo-Christian varieties of immortal life have come under attack. Four arguments, mostly physiological, have dominated this battle: (1) the argument from self-consciousness and the brain; (2) the argument for the dependence of the conscious mind on the brain; (3) the similar argument that the brain alone gives access to the world, and (4) an argument from personhood.

The Nature of Self-Consciousness. In order for there to be immortal life, the mind must consciously survive death. But the mind cannot function without the brain. Therefore, when the brain dies, consciousness ceases. This materialistic (*see* MATERIALISM) argument makes several false assumptions.

First, it assumes that consciousness is a physical function, that "mind" is a function of matter, a process within the brain. There is no proof behind this assumption.

Second, the argument wrongly assumes that, simply because a mind and brain function together, they must be identical. But this is not necessarily so. They could interact without being the same.

Third, the argument assumes that the self is nothing without the brain. This is a reductionist fallacy. Things that go together are not necessarily the same, any more than my ideas expressed in these words are the same as these words.

Fourth, the materialist's argument is self-defeating. "Nothing-but" statements assume "more-than" knowledge. How could I know I am nothing more than my brain unless I am more than it? I cannot put my brain in a test tube and analyze it unless I (my mind) am standing outside the test tube.

On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that the mind cannot be reduced to matter: (1) Whatever is material is limited to a particular region of space and time. If it moves, it moves in space and time. But the mind is not so limited. It roams the universe without leaving the room.

(2) Even a materialist speaks of "her" thoughts. But if strict materialism is correct, I have no discrete thoughts. They are a mere stream of electrons or some other material particle. (3) Materialists claim their doctrine is true and want others to agree with their conclusions. But this implies they are *free* to consider their arguments and change their view. This is not possible if they are mere material processes and not free beings.

The Dependence on the Brain. The mind is dependent on the brain to function. Without the brain it cannot be conscious. However, at death the brain ceases to function. Hence, consciousness must cease at this time as well. This modified materialism is known as epiphenomenalism. The mind is not identical to the brain, but it is dependent on the physical brain the way a shadow is dependent on a tree.

This argument assumes, but does not prove, dependence of mind on brain. Merely because certain mental functions can be explained in physical ways does not mean they are absolutely dependent on physical processes. There may be ways for the mind to think independently of the brain. After all, God does not have a body, and there are good reasons to believe that he exists as a sentient Being (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). The science of neurobiology is an empirical study. But this does not mean everything it examines is purely physical. It cannot explain the mind in totally physical ways, any more than the mind can be confined in a test tube. There is always the "I" standing outside the experiment. Just because certain things can be quantified does not mean that there are no qualities (such as love) that cannot be quantified. Likewise, simply because we can speak in material terms about certain functions of the mind does not mean the mind is material.

Argument from Access to the World. It is also argued that, even if materialism is false, there may still be no immortality. The mind (self) gains access to the world through the brain. But death destroys the brain. Therefore, death destroys a person's means of access to the world.

The fallacies in this argument are readily detected. The argument assumes (without proof) that the person's brain is the only way of access to the world. One could lose his body and gain another body (whether temporary or permanent) and still have access to the world. It also assumes without proof that there are no other worlds to which one can have access. Perhaps there are other worlds, physical or spiritual, or other dimensions through which one can have access.

This argument further assumes that there are no other ways to be conscious than through this world. Yet no argument is offered demonstrating that one cannot be conscious without some kind of body. God is, and we have good evidence that he exists (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). Spiritual beings are conscious, yet they have no physical bodies as we know them (Luke 24:39).

Argument from the Nature of Personhood. Some insist that what we mean by "person" involves embodiment. So no person can survive without a body. Hence, death destroys what it means to be a person.

This argument begs the question by defining "person" in a way that makes it impossible to survive death. If *person* is defined as "human person," "finite person," or "personal being," no

such conclusion follows. There may be other ways or other worlds through which a person can be conscious without a body.

Also, death only severs one dimension of consciousness—this-world consciousness. We could still be self-conscious, God-conscious, and/or other-world conscious (say, in a spirit world). No argument has been offered to show this to be impossible.

Argument from Self-Identity. The argument against immortality from self-identity takes the form: If Life after death is to involve individual immortality, then there must be some way of identifying an individual spirit. But spirits are not distinguishable since they have no bodies by which they can be distinguished. Therefore, there can be no individual immortality.

The assumption here is that physical characteristics are the only way to identify one person from another. This is not true, as blind acquaintances who have never touched each other know. So do pen pals who have no pictures of one another. Even if there are sound waves or Braille by which to get communications from others, these are only means of communication; they are not identifying physical characteristics.

There are things about individual human spirits (or minds) that differ from other human spirits. Each has a different history and memory. Each has a different personality or character, none of which is a physical difference. Beautiful music as understood in the mind (not the mere sounds in the air) is not physical. Yet we can distinguish one beautiful song from another, even in our mind.

Finally, one does not have to know what the identifying characteristics are to know that they do not have to be physical. It simply begs the question to say that they must be physical.

Nonbiblical Evidence for Immortality. Plato's arguments for immortality have since been supplemented by philosophers with other kinds of evidence. Peter Kreeft lists twenty-five arguments for immortality (*Handbook* , 235f.). Most arguments for immortality have encountered significant objections.

Weak or Fallacious Arguments for Immortality. Many of the weakest arguments for immortality seemed strong to some people at some time. Most are rejected by most thinking people.

Argument from universal belief. Others have argued from universal belief in immortality. Human beings anticipate immortality. The most ancient peoples used burial rites, embalming, and other practices. However, skeptics note that this belief is not really universal, since atheists and agnostics don't practice it. Even if it were, a universal belief is not necessarily true. The vast majority once believed the sun moved around the earth.

The argument can be revised to meet at least part of the objection. Kreeft observes that what the vast majority believe is probably true. Most believe in life after death, so life after death is probably true (ibid., 236). Even in this form the first premise admits that the statement is only

“probably” true. Even then this is questionable, since there are many things that the majority of people have believed.

The argument could be further qualified: What the sages believe is probably true. The sages believe in life after death. Therefore life after death is probably true (ibid.). This leaves us to ask who the “sages” are and whether sages have not also been wrong about many things.

Argument from innate knowledge. Plato pointed to the innate ability to know things one has never learned as proof that the soul existed prior to birth and would, therefore, survive after birth. In his book *Meno* , the slave boy was alleged to know geometry without ever having studied it.

Critics, however, insist that, while there may be innate capacities, there are not innate ideas (see HUME, DAVID). Even if there were, this does not prove that they were brought over from a preexistent state, since one could have been born with them. It is more likely that Socrates' slave boy was led along by clever questions to use his natural ability to reason to these ideas. Other so-called “memories” of previous lives have been shown to be false. In the famous Bridie Murphy case, it was later demonstrated that this young lady had not lived centuries before in Ireland, but that her grandmother had read her stories of Ireland and spoke Gaelic to her when she was a child. Under hypnosis (the power of suggestion) these childhood experiences surfaced as “memories” from a previous life (Geisler, 75).

Argument from the soul as life principle. Another argument in *Phaedo* was that since the soul is the principle of life in the body, it cannot die. Life can never admit its opposite, which is death. Hence, the soul can never die. But this proves too much, for all animals and even plants are alive too. On this ground one would have to believe in the immortality of carrots and cabbages.

Argument from the immaterial soul. Plato argued in *Phaedo* from the immateriality of the soul. Since the soul is not material, he reasoned, it is not divisible or destructible. What is indestructible is immortal. However, even his prize pupil, Aristotle , denied the validity of this argument, denying the immortality of individual souls. After all, not every form (which is immaterial) survives death, as the form of a chair, vase, or even an animal demonstrates.

From a Christian point of view the soul is not indestructible, since whatever God creates he can also destroy. But if Plato's argument is correct, even God could not annihilate a soul. Thus, if the soul is not indestructible, then even an immaterial entity could be destroyed.

Argument from near-death experiences. Some have argued from near-death experiences to immortality. Even the British humanist and logical positivist, A. J. Ayer, changed his mind about immortality after a near-death experience. In some of these experiences the consciousness is alleged to “pop out” of the body and observe things that could not have been observed from the body.

At best these experiences could only point to a brief survival of the soul, not an immortal existence of the person. Skeptics insist that these experiences are hallucinatory or imaginary, each person projecting personal images of the afterlife as a defense mechanism when facing possible death.

The so-called “hard-core” out-of-body experiences where the person allegedly saw or heard things it would have been impossible to witness can be explained from a Christian view as demonic. Many of these experiences are connected with occult activity and false teaching (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1f.). In any event, they do not prove immortality, since there are other explanations.

There is serious question from a Christian view whether the person was actually dead. The Christian definition of death (cf. Gen. 35:18 ; 2 Cor. 5:8 ; James 2:26) occurs when the soul leaves the body. If it did not leave the body, then the experience is not evidence of survival. If it did, then returning to the body would constitute a resurrection. Only God can raise the dead (Deut. 32:39 ; 1 Sam. 2:6 ; John 5:28–29 ; 11:25). But many non-Christians have had these experiences, which confirmed them in their anti-Christian beliefs. God would not perform a miracle to confirm people in error (see MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF). Further, leaving the body and returning is contrary to the Bible, which says we only die once (Heb. 9:27). By the argument that near-death experiences evidence life after death, such people would die twice.

Argument from mystical visions. Mystical (see MYSTICISM) experiences and visions of heaven are frequently reported in some parts of the church, which, if true, would constitute proof of an existence beyond life. Paul reported one such event in his own life (2 Corinthians 12), though he was careful not to characterize it as either vision or out-of-body experience.

If one is appealing to a revelation, proof must be offered for the reliability of that revelation (see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). In the case of mystical experiences, there is no rational proof. If one stays in the body while having such a vision, the skeptic can argue that internal subjective experiences are just that—subjective—and have no binding evidential force on anyone else. If the person actually leaves the body and returns, this is contrary to the Bible’s teaching that we only die once. Any claim that God has raised the person from the dead runs headlong into the problem that God would not raise someone so they could teach things contrary to his Word. The majority of those who claim an out-of-body experience do teach contrary to Scripture (see Abanes).

Argument from communication with the dead. Another utterly unbiblical claim is that life after death can be substantiated through communication with the dead through mediums or in trances. This is common to occult and new age circles. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, author of *Death and Dying*, claims to have had such experiences. Skeptics, however, explain such experiences as hallucinatory or an eruption of one’s subconscious mind. Christians point out that the Bible condemns contact with the dead (Deut. 18:11) and warns of deception by the demonic (1 Tim. 4:1 ; 1 John 4:1).

Argument from the purpose for life. Some have pointed to the meaning, purpose, or goal of life as proof of immortality. The argument has been stated: Life must have a worthwhile purpose. A life that ends in annihilation does not have a worthwhile purpose. Therefore, there must be life after death (Kreeft, *Handbook*, 248).

The answer from critics, of course, is that life need not have a worthwhile purpose (see CAMUS, ALBERT ; EXISTENTIALISM ; SARTRE, JEAN-PAUL). Others would challenge whether this worthwhile purpose cannot be the promotion of species survival in this life.

Plausible or Probable Arguments for Immortality. Apparently, the best ways to fill in this gap are to appeal to evidence which is proven in another argument. There are more plausible reasons to believe in immortality; some appear to be very strong. The strongest of all is the argument from the physical resurrection of Christ.

Argument from Christ’s resurrection. Immortality is proven by the fact that Christ returned from the dead (see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). That evidence is:

The New Testament (see NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS, RELIABILITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF) reveals that more than 500 witnesses saw Christ after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6) on twelve different occasions, scattered over a forty-day period (Acts 1:3). He was seen and heard on each occasion. He was touched at least twice (Matt. 28:9 ; John 20:17 ; see also Luke 24:39 ; John 20:27). He ate (Luke 24:30 , 42–43 ; John 21:12–13 ; Acts 1:4 ; cf. 10:41). His crucifixion wounds were visible (Luke 24:39 ; John 20:27). The disciples saw his empty tomb and the cloths with which his body had been wrapped. These experiences transformed followers of Christ from scared, scattered skeptics to the world’s greatest missionary society, preaching the resurrection. Nothing else accounts for all of this evidence except the literal bodily resurrection of Christ.

Naturalistic alternatives to the resurrection have been proposed, but none are plausible. They fall into two categories. One denies that Jesus really died, though the evidence for his actual death is more than substantial (see CHRIST, DEATH OF). The second group denies that he rose, offering a naturalistic alternative. These are all easily refuted by the evidence (see RESURRECTION, ALTERNATIVE THEORIES).

Argument from the existence of a personal God. Granted a theistic God exists, one could argue that a created human being with a rational, moral, and immaterial dimension would not have been created to be destroyed. The argument goes:

1. There is good evidence that a personal theistic God exists.
2. Human beings are created like God, as personal, rational, and moral beings.
3. A personal theistic God would not annihilate what is like himself in these most significant ways.
4. Therefore, human beings are immortal.

The evidence for the first two premises is given in the articles *Cosmological Argument; God, Evidence for; God, Moral Argument for; Kalam Cosmological Argument*. The third premise is defended under *Annihilationism*. Critics note correctly that this is an *a priori* argument. It is based on what we would expect God would do, but there is no necessity for him to do so. While this is correct, it does not take away the force of the argument in an existential or moral sense.

The kind of beings humans are—personal, rational, and moral—wards off the criticism that even Christians believe that God annihilates the souls of animals. Why does he not destroy humans? The answer seems plausible: Humans are made in his image.

Argument from God's love. A similar argument reasons from God's love. A theistic God is a good and loving God (*see* GOD, NATURE OF). But if God is loving he would will the good of those he loves. Immortality would seem to follow: A loving being does not annihilate another; it wills the continued existence of the object of its love. God is absolutely loving. Therefore God wills the continued existence of all persons (*ibid.*, 246).

This argument does not prove too much, as some might object. It does not insist that God *must* will an immortal creature into existence, nor even necessarily will its immortal existence. It merely affirms that, given the fact that God has chosen to will into existence other persons, it is reasonable to assume that his personal love for other persons he had made would prompt him to continue to will their existence. Of course, in this form it is not a full proof of immortality, but only a reasonable expectation.

Argument from ultimate justice. A theistic God is also absolutely just. The argument from God's justice is stated:

1. God is the ultimate standard of justice.
2. There is no ultimate justice for many things in this life.
3. Therefore, there must be another life in which ultimate justice is achieved.

Attacks on the first premise overlook the argument for God's existence (*see* MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD), or they boomerang when pressed. For to insist, as antitheists do, that there are ultimate injustices in this world is to posit an ultimate standard of justice by which injustice is known (*see* ATHEISM ; EVIL, PROBLEM OF).

Likewise, one is hard-pressed to show that there is ultimate justice in this life. One could appeal to reincarnation by arguing that injustice will be taken care of in another incarnation. But this will not help, since reincarnationists believe in the survival of the soul and/or immortality. And without such a recourse it would seem that one must admit that there are unresolved injustices in this life. In view of this, one finds it difficult to explain why an absolutely just God would not rectify these in another life. If appeal is made to annihilationism as a punishment, then presumably at least some would receive eternal life.

Argument from moral duty. Immanuel Kant offered an argument from practical reason: The greatest good for all persons is that they have happiness in harmony with duty. But persons are not able to realize the greatest good in this life. Nor can they find this good without God. Therefore, we must postulate a God and a future life in which the greatest good can be achieved.

Critics of Kant say he did not really prove immortality. He only proved that immortality makes sense. We also perceive that a moral duty makes sense. But we have no proof that there

really is a real moral duty. These arguments have validity, but they do not really destroy the rational persuasiveness in the need to posit immortality as an explanation of morality. This ultimate reason often takes the form of the argument from ultimate justice.

Argument from the longing for heaven. C. S. Lewis (*Mere Christianity* , *Surprised by Joy* , *The Pilgrim's Regress* , *The Problem of Pain* , *The Weight of Glory*) stated an argument that runs:

1. Every natural innate desire has a real object that can fulfill it.
2. Human beings have a natural, innate desire for immortality.
3. Therefore, there must be an immortal life after death.

In defense of the first premise, it is argued that if there is hunger there is food, if thirst, drink; if *eros* , sexual fulfillment; if curiosity, knowledge; and if loneliness, society (Kreeft, *Handbook* , 250). The second premise is supported by an appeal to a strange, mysterious longing that differs from all other longings because it is undefinable and unobtainable in this life, and the mere presence of this desire is felt to be more precious and joyful than any other satisfaction. However inadvertently we express it, what we all long for is paradise, heaven, or eternity (*ibid.*).

If these premises are true, there is "more" than this life. The fact that we complain about this world, with its pain and death reveals a deep-seated desire for eternity. We may never attain it, but this no more disproves its existence than life-long singleness proves there is no marital bliss or starvation proves there is no food anywhere (*ibid.*). This argument was a positive moral force.

The "Pascal's Wager" argument for immortality. While Blaise Pascal 's wager was used primarily as an argument for God's existence, it can also be applied to immortality. In brief, if we have everything to gain and nothing to lose by believing in immortality, then it would be foolish not to believe in it. The criticism can be offered that this is not really a proof for immortality, but an argument for believing in it with or without proof. In this respect it is like Hume's argument against miracles. At best it only shows why people should *believe* miracles do not happen. It may be that there is no immortality, even though it is foolish not to believe in it.

Conclusion. Whatever intimations, anticipations, or conclusion about the afterlife might be inferred from human consciousness and experiences, the most sure proof (Acts 1:3 ; 2 Tim. 1:10) of immortality comes from the resurrection of Christ and those whom he and other prophets and apostles raised from the dead in the Scriptures. Other alleged resurrections are without verification (*see* RESURRECTION, CLAIMS IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS), usually turning out to be fraudulent or mistaken claims (*see* Kole). The other plausible arguments supplement the resurrection, but do not appear to be definitive without it. However, some of them have merit. Taken together they provide some evidence from general revelation (*see* REVELATION, GENERAL) apart from Scripture for the immortality of human beings.

Sources

R. Abanes, *Journey into the Light*

W. L. Craig, *Knowing the Truth about the Resurrection*

R. Geis, *Life after Death*

N. L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection*

——— and J. Y. Amano, *The Reincarnation Sensation*

M. J. Harris, *Raised Immortal*

A. Kole, *Miracle and Magic*

P. Kreeft, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*

———, *The Heart's Deepest Longing*

G. Ladd, "The Greek Versus the Hebrew View of Man," in *The Pattern of New Testament Truth*

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

———, *Surprised by Joy*

———, *The Pilgrim's Regress*

———, *The Problem of Pain*

———, *The Weight of Glory*

J. P. Moreland and G. Habermas, *Immortality: The Other Side of Death*

Plato, *Phaedo*

———, *Republic*

Inclusivism. See PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS .

Indeterminacy, Principle of. Some have mistakenly taken Werner Heisenberg's "principle of uncertainty" or indeterminacy as support for an attack on the principle of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF ; FIRST PRINCIPLES) and thereby on the arguments for the existence of God (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). It is used to show that not all events have causes, that some things happen spontaneously and unpredictably, especially on the subatomic level. Thus, the principle is also used to support the view of human freedom known as indeterminism (*see* FREE WILL ; INDETERMINISM).

Understanding the Principle. Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty is a principle of quantum mechanics which states that "the position and speed of a particle cannot be simultaneously known with complete certainty. If one is known with high certainty, the other becomes very uncertain." For example, according to this theory, "it is possible to accurately predict what fraction of [uranium atoms] will radioactively disintegrate over the next hour, but it is impossible to predict *which* atoms will do so" (Lightman, 560).

However, this principle of uncertainty does not support the view that events arise without a cause or that human actions are uncaused. Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty does not say there is no cause of the events, but simply that one cannot predict the course of a given particle. Hence, it is not to be understood as the principle of *uncausality* but the principle of *unpredictability* . The principle of causality affirms that there is a cause, even if we do not know precisely what it is. Were there no cause, there would be no effect or event. In fact, modern science was built on the principle that things do not arise without a cause (*see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF).

Heisenberg's principle does not even deny predictability in general. It states only that "physical systems must be described in terms of probabilities" (Lightman, 553). That is, one can accurately predict what fraction of the particles will react in a certain way but not *which* atoms will do so (*ibid.*). Even though a particular particle's position cannot be predicted, the overall pattern can be predicted. That implies a causal connection. The point is that scientists, *with their limited instruments and observational abilities* cannot now predict the courses of individual subatomic particles.

An infinite Mind could predict both course and speed. If I empty a sack of ping-pong balls above several open bins, it is not possible for me to predict which of the falling balls will fall into which bins. *In practice* it is not possible to know and properly calculate all the physical factors involved in the falling and bouncing. We can only know that about twice as many will fall into the bins that are twice as large. This does not mean that, *in principle* , it is impossible to know which balls will fall in which bins.

Heisenberg's principle describes the subatomic realm, which is not known without investigator interference. Electron microscopes, by which the subatomic realm is observed, bombard the subatomic particles in order to "see" them. As Mortimer Adler noted, "At the same time that the Heisenberg uncertainty principles were established, quantum physics acknowledged that the intrusive experimental measurements that provided the data used in the mathematical formulations of quantum theory conferred on subatomic objects and events interdeterminate character. . . . It follows, therefore, that the indeterminacy cannot be intrinsic to subatomic reality" (Adler, 96–100). Hence, unpredictable behavior may result in part from the attempt to observe it.

Not all physicists accept quantum physics and the uncertainty theory. In response to it, Albert Einstein complained, "God does not play dice with the universe."

Misapplication of the Principle. It is a category mistake to apply a principle from physics to metaphysical and/or moral realms without justification. Even if there is indeterminacy in physics,

this would not mean indeterminacy automatically invades the *moral* realm. By definition, physics deals with what *is* (in the physical realm) and morality with what *ought to be* .

Mistakes of Indeterminacy. Neither do principles of physics automatically apply to the metaphysical. Etienne Gilson has shown the methodological fallacy of this kind of thinking in the history of Western philosophy (see Gilson). There are serious mistakes in assuming that the metaphysical (real) world operates without causality.

Presuming no causes for events makes science impossible, since both operation and origin sciences are dependent on the principle of causality. Assuming there are no causes for events makes the world irrational. It is contrary to reason to affirm that things happen without a cause. Other problems are noted in the article.

Sources

M. J. Adler, *Truth in Religion*

E. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*

N. L. Geisler, *Origin Science*

——— and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion*

W. Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*

S. Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*

A. Lightman, et al., *Origins*

Indeterminism. Indeterminism is a view that some or all human actions are uncaused. Actions are totally contingent and spontaneous (*see* FREE WILL). Charles Pierce and William James were indeterminists. Some contemporary indeterminists appeal to Werner Heisenberg’s principle of indeterminacy (*see* INDETERMINACY, PRINCIPLE OF) to support their position. According to this principle, events in the subatomic realm (like the specific course of a given particle) are unpredictable.

Opponents of indeterminism offer several objections. They contend

- that Heisenberg’s principle is misapplied, since it does not deal with *causality* but *predictability* .
- that it would make all science impossible, since all depend on the principle of causality.
- that it makes the world irrational if things happen without a cause.
- that the principle of causality is well established and undeniable (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF).

- that it robs humans of moral responsibility if they have no stake in their actions.
- that, at least on a cosmic scale, it denies God’s role as Originator and Sustainer of all things (Genesis 1 ; Col. 1:15–16 ; Heb. 1:3).

Conclusion. Indeterminism asserts that actions are unconnected to free choices or any other “cause.” This may be compared with the theories of Determinism, which asserts that all actions are determined by forces outside the individual and self-determinism, which affirms that all actions are self-caused, with no outside factors. Each is based on an inadequate foundation. Indeterminism violates fundamental laws of thought and, if true, would eliminate moral responsibility.

Inductive Method. Inductive and deductive logic are quite different. Deductive logic reasons from general ideas to particular instances. Human beings are mortal. Therefore John, a human being, is mortal.

Inductive logic reasons from particular instances to general conclusions. Socrates, Aristotle, Moses, Adam, Tom, Dick, and Harry are all mortal. This is evidence that all human beings are mortal.

While deductive logic looks at the cause (or condition) and determines its effects/consequents, inductive logic observes the effects and tries to find the causes.

Deductive logic is *a priori* reasoning and inductive logic is *a posteriori* . These Latin terms mean that deductive logic draws its conclusions before, or prior to, examining experience. Inductive logic draws conclusions only *after* (posterior to) looking at experience. Of course, an inductive premise or procedure can be put in a deductive form: Humans who are born eventually die. Mary was just born. Therefore, Mary will eventually die. The form of this whole argument is deductive, but the major premise is based on an inductive survey.

The canons for deductive logic were laid down by Aristotle in the fourth century B.C . The rules were first set forth by Francis Bacon in *Novum Organum* in 1620 and later elaborated on by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873).

The Nature of Inductive Reasoning. One of the major differences between deductive and inductive logic is the kinds of conclusions reached. In contrast to the certainty of deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning provides degrees of probability.

Degrees of Probability. In deductive logic, if the premises were true, then the conclusion *must* be true (*see* CERTAINTY/CERTITUDE). The only certain induction is a *perfect induction* , such as “All the coins in my right hand are dimes.” If there are only three and we can see and count all three, then we have a perfect induction and certainty. The reason inductions usually yield only probable conclusions is that they are usually argued by analogy or a generalization. An analogy is an assertion that, because there is a similarity between two things, they will be similar in other respects also. If we were to diagram such an argument it might look like this:

A, B, C, and D all have qualities p and q.

A, B, and C all have quality r.

Therefore, D has quality r also.

This seems reasonable, as long as there is some connection between qualities p and q and quality r. But this usually cannot be known for sure. For example, suppose we choose sparrows, sea gulls, and humming birds for A, B, and C above as animals having wings (p) and feathers (q). Now if D is Canadian honkers, then it follows and is true that they do also have quality r, the ability to fly. For almost all birds, this argument works fine. But what if D is a penguin? It has wings and feathers, but it can't fly. Here we see that our conclusion must remain only probable, and we can never claim it to be the absolute truth. The stronger the analogies we draw, though, the more probable our conclusions will be.

The Nature of Probability. Because induction argues from analogy, extending observations of some to the whole class, it usually involves an *inductive leap*. It must extend beyond its particular findings to make broad, general statements. Usually, inductive conclusions cannot be called universally true because they are generalizations, and exceptions are always possible. Rather than being true or false, they involve degrees of probability. Sometimes, these degrees can be measured as to their percentage of accuracy; other times, a percentage can be guessed. Inductive conclusions should be evaluated for where they stand on this scale:

99 percent—Virtually certain: overwhelming evidence. Example: the law of gravity.

90 percent—Highly probable: very good evidence. Example: No two snowflakes have identical structures.

70 percent—Probable: sufficient evidence. Example: The efficacy and safety of medicines that have been tested and approved.

50 percent—Possible: no evidence or about equal evidence pro and con. Example: Our team will win the coin toss.

30 percent—Improbable: insufficient evidence in its favor. At this point, no one believes it except the few for whom it worked.

10 percent—Highly improbable: very little evidence in its favor. The theory that Jesus spent his early years studying with a Hindu guru falls into this category.

1 percent—Virtually impossible: almost no evidence in its favor. The evidence for the existence of unicorns is at this level.

Sometimes there are real numbers to calculate the probability. This is *statistical probability*. When the numbers are not there, evidence must be weighed by *empirical probability*.

Statistical Probability. When figuring the degree of probability for a statistical problem, there are rules to follow:

Clearly define terms. One cannot meaningfully debate whether “all men are created equal” until the terms *all men*, *created* and *equal* are clarified.

Sufficient classes must be devised to cover all data. Classes *Catholic*, *Protestant*, and *Jewish* are insufficient to cover all the data of American religion. These categories leave out Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, secular humanists, and a plethora of minor religions. The categories *monistic*, *polytheistic*, *theistic*, and *nontheistic* would likely be sufficient to cover American religions.

Only one principle of classification can be used. Only one question should be raised at a time. If the question is: “Are you Republican or Democrat?” then one should not ask as part of the same question: “Are you conservative or liberal?” This confuses the categories.

Classes cannot overlap. Republican and Democrats contain both conservatives and liberals. If two answers are possible for some people, both will be received from some, none from others, and still others will answer one or the other without letting us know that there is an overlap. Such statistics are worthless, because there is no way to know which answers give the information desired.

The most appropriate method for reporting the results must be selected. There are three ways that statistics can be stated. The *mean* (average), the *mode* (most frequent), and the *median* (the halfway number). The *mean* is the average that can be found by adding together all of the figures and dividing by the number of figures we added. (The mean of 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 is $7 [5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 = 35 \div 5 \text{ numbers} = 7]$.) It can be used to find out where the group as a whole stands, such as for the average score of an examination. If you want to find out what score most people earned on the exam, the *mode* is more appropriate. It is found by simply finding what number occurs most often. If the grades are 5, 6, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 9, then 8 is the mode.

Sometimes it is helpful to know where the middle of the road is for a given question. This is the *median* of the group which represents the halfway point between the highest and lowest numbers in our data. The median of our 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 series is 7, the same as the average. Often the median will be close to the mean, but not in cases where there is one piece of data that is much higher or much lower than the other numbers. The median of 1, 2, 3, 49, 50, is 3. That may not be the best way to represent the data.

Empirical Probability. There are four basic questions that must be asked of every inductive argument where empirical data is given.

1. *How many cases were examined?* How broad is the sample?
2. *How representative is the evidence?* How well did those chosen represent the spectrum of economic, social, racial, and religious ideas found in this country? The more

differences there are among cases, the stronger the conclusion. If the cases studied don't reflect what the real world is like, the conclusion will not hold true.

3. *How carefully was the evidence examined?* How were the similarities studied? How many differences were studied? Were all possible explanations accounted for? Were effected results isolated from other causes? Was all the evidence presented? Just how critically was the evidence evaluated?
4. *How does information gained correlate with preexisting knowledge?* Does it contradict any certainties? Does it help explain things better? Sometimes new evidence can rock the foundations of issues that we thought were settled, but their degree of probability and explanatory usefulness make them welcomed discoveries.

Kinds of Probability. Other than a perfect induction, inductive reasoning yields one of two kinds of probability: *a priori* or *a posteriori*.

A Priori Probability. *A priori* or mathematical probability has to do with working out odds and possible combinations. It offers a mathematical way to evaluate the likelihood of an event. There are various mathematical formulas for finding the odds of different kinds of events. For example, some events are simple and exclusive: Either this happens or something else happens. When you flip a coin, you get either heads or tails. Other events are more complex, like finding how many possible combinations of amino acids there are that would combine to make the proteins necessary for life (*see* CHANCE).

A priori probability for exclusive events. An exclusive event is not in combination with or dependent on other events. A single coin has two sides. So when it is flipped the chances are one in two (or one out of two) for getting heads. Likewise, there are six faces on a single die, so the odds for rolling any of the numbers are one in six. The odds of drawing the ace of spades from a deck of cards is one in fifty-two. This does not mean of course that it will actually take fifty-two draws to get it. It might show up on the first draw. It only means that the *a priori* probability of getting it in advance of drawing is one in fifty-two. It means that if one drew an infinite number of times, that he would get it on the average about every fifty-two times.

A priori probability for independent events. This deals with the mathematical probability in advance of the results of two or more coins, or die. These are separate and independent events and, hence, the odds must be multiplied together. This means that the probability of getting two heads from flipping two coins is 1/2 times 1/2 = 1/4 or one in four. Likewise, the probability of rolling a six on two dice is 1/6 times 1/6 = 1/36 or one in thirty-six. If one coin and one die are used then the odds are 1/2 times 1/6 or one in twelve.

A priori probability for dependent events. Sometimes one event is dependent on another, in which case we must know how many different combinations or permutations are possible. For a simple permutation, where we want to find how many combinations there are for a given number of known events, we multiply that number (n) by (n - 1) x (n - 2) x (n - 3) and so on until we reach 1. Stated another way, we multiply every whole number between 1 and n together to find out how many combinations there are. For example, to find out how many permutations there are

for a string of three letters we multiply $3 \times 2 \times 1 = 6$. For example, the possible combinations are for the letters A, B, and C. They are:

ABC	BAC	CAB
ACB	BCA	CBA

If a magician passes out four cards to four people, there are twenty-four possible combinations of what order those cards might appear ($4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 24$). If a security system has ten digits on the keypad and each is to be used once, then there are $10 \times 9 \times 8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 3,628,800$ possible entry codes. In music there are 479,001,600 possible twelve-tone rows (a series of notes that uses each step of the chromatic scale once).

A series in which several possibilities might fit into each place is a *complex permutation*. Rather than a simple combination where each number is used only once, numbers may be repeated in a complex permutation. Instead of just punching in ten numbers in a specific order (a simple permutation), a complex permutation is more like the lock on a brief case that has three dials, each of which has the numbers 1 to 10. Any of those numbers can drop in to any position in the series. So the total number of possible combinations is $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1000$.

To figure the number of possible combinations for a complex permutation, you must take the number of options for each position and raise it to the power of the number of positions. For instance, in a face-making toy that has four possible noses, four chins, four mouths, four sets of eyes, four hair sets, and four foreheads, then there are four options for each position and six positions in all. We take the number of options (4) and multiply it by itself the same number of times as the number of positions (6). So we get $4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4$ (or 4^6) = 4096 different faces.

Apologetic value of a priori probabilities. There are many applications of mathematical probability to apologetics. For example, according to Fred Hoyle (in *Evolution from Space*), a former atheist, when the possible combinations are taken into account, the chances that the first living cell could emerge without a Creator are about 1/1040,000. With odds like that how can anyone deny that the universe was created and still be called reasonable? Likewise, astronomer Hugh Ross has figured the odds for the simplest life form to have occurred by pure chance. He says that it would require a minimum of 239 protein molecules. Each of these molecules is composed of (on the average) 445 amino acids linked together. Now each one of those links must be made by a particular 1 of 20 different amino acids. So the chance that even the simplest life form came together at random is 1 in $20^{445} = 1/10137,915$. Is it reasonable to believe that, not only the simplest life form, but all complex life forms arose from a fortunate accident?

Evolutionist Julian Huxley once calculated that the odds for the evolution of the horse were 1 in 10001,000,000. He admitted that no one would ever bet on anything so improbable (Huxley, 45-46). Of course, many evolutionists know about these odds and say, "Well, given enough time, anything can happen." But is there enough time? Suppose the entire universe were made of amino acids (which is far from the truth). There would be 1077 molecules to work with. If we linked all these amino acids together at random at a rate of one per second for the widely

accepted age of the universe (about 15 billion years), then the chances of that simple life form appearing shrink to 1/1014,999,999,905. That's one in ten to the fifteen billionth power. Twenty billion years is just not long enough even if the universe were packed with the building blocks to produce life.

To counter this attack, an evolutionist might respond, "But it only had to happen once. Being dealt a perfect bridge hand is a highly unlikely event too, but it has happened." This is true. It is possible; but is it probable? What is the degree of probability that the evolutionary hypothesis is true? David Hume said, A wise man always proportions his belief to the evidence. All of the evidence says that the universe is too small and too young to permit the random assembly of life, even in a simple form. Following Hume's maxim, how can a wise man believe that life came about spontaneously and by chance when the evidence says that is virtually impossible?

On the other hand, what are the chances that Moses' record of creation just happened to put the events of creation in the right order? Suppose there are eight successive events (creation of the universe, light, water, atmosphere, seas and land, sea life, land animals, and man) which could have been put into any order. This is a simple permutation ($8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 40,320$). Then the odds for Moses recording these events in the right order was only 1 in 40,320.

Further, it has been calculated that there are 191 prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah. These include where he would be born (Micah 5:2), how he would die (Isaiah 53), when he would die (Daniel 9), that he would rise from the dead (Psalm 16). The odds that forty-eight of these prophecies were fulfilled in one man is about 1/10157. That is a 1 with 157 zeros after it. If a gambler had managed to guess forty-eight horses right without a single mistake, it would be reasonable to suspect that he had inside information. Likewise, it is highly probable that the Old Testament prophets had some help to know so much about events that happened hundreds of years after their deaths. It is certainly the reasonable thing to believe.

A Posteriori Probability. A *posteriori* probability is empirical probability. Unlike a *priori* probability, it is not probability known in advance of the mathematical likelihood an event will occur. Rather, it is the actual probability after the fact that an event has occurred. Such probability is known by use of the scientific method. In origin science (see ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF) it is known primarily by means of the principles of causality (see CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF) and analogy or uniformity.

Sources

F. Bacon, *Novum Organum*

N. L. Geisler, *Origin Science*

——— and R. M. Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason*

F. Hoyle, *Evolution from Space*

J. Huxley, *Evolution in Action*

J. McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*

J. S. Mill, *System of Logic*

H. Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*

B. Russell, "On Induction," in *Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*

P. W. Stoner, *Science Speaks*

Infants, Salvation of. Many critics have impugned the justice of God because of the status of the unborn. Belief is considered a necessary condition for salvation (John 3:18–19 ; Acts 16:31), and yet innocent young children have not yet reached the age at which they can believe. But it seems eminently unjust to condemn innocent infants who have not yet committed a sin nor are even old enough to believe and be saved.

Christians have struggled with the issue of the eternal status of infants. Yet nowhere does the Bible directly treat the issue. Hence, we are left to arguments based on general principle and inference from Scripture.

Baptized Infants Only. This view is held by sacramentalists, who believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. Some Roman Catholics, some Lutherans, and Anglicans espouse the position.

Statement of the View. Ambrose set forth this position: "no one ascends into the kingdom of heaven, except by means of the sacrament of baptism. . . . Moreover to this there is no exception, not the infant, nor he who is unavoidably prevented." He adds mercifully, "They have however immunity from pains" (cited by Sanders, 291). In Ambrose's notion that babies sent into damnation would at least be immune from pain is found the beginnings of a doctrine of "limbo."

Augustine was less charitable. Born within the fall, infants inherit real depravity, so the wrath of God abides on unbaptized babies (Augustine, 1.28, 33–35). He did allow, however, that unbaptized infants must not suffer as severely as those who lived to adulthood and committed actual sins (ibid., 1.21). The argument for this position is straightforward: Baptism is essential for salvation. No unbaptized person—including infants—can be saved.

Augustine's nemesis Pelagius reacted against this harsh view on unbaptized infant damnation, saying, "where they are not, I know; where they are, I know not" (cited in Sanders, 292). Pelagius was certain infants were not in hell, although he was not certain where they were. Eventually he conceived of a middle place between heaven and hell later called limbo. Thomas Aquinas held Augustine's view but softened it by claiming that unbaptized infants do not experience the pain of hell.

Other theologians have used the Catholic idea of "baptism of desire" to solve the problem—that is, that some can be saved who desired baptism but were prevented from obtaining it. Since it is difficult to see how infants could desire baptism, some posited that their parents' or the

church's desire was sufficient. This idea goes back at least to Hincmar Rheims (A.D . 860; *ibid.*, 293). But how can the desire of someone else be effective for infants?

Critique of the View. This entire scenario depends on a sacramental theology which demands infant baptism as a condition for salvation. The Reformed and most Anabaptists (except those in the Campbellite theological tradition) reject this in favor of the biblical exhortation that personal faith is the only condition for salvation (John 3:16 , 36 ; 5:24 ; Acts 16:31 ; Rom. 1:17 ; 4:5). After all, baptism is a “work of righteousness” (Matt. 3:15), and the Bible makes it clear that we are not saved by works of righteousness (Rom. 4:5 ; Eph. 2:8–9 ; Titus 3:5–7). Those in the Campbellite theological tradition, for example, Disciples of Christ, are sacramentalists regarding adult baptism, but they do not accept infant baptism or regard it as needed for salvation.

The sacramental view of infant salvation seems harsh and cruel, whereas the Bible reveals a God of infinite mercy and grace. Some have asked how a child innocent of any personal fault can be banned from heaven? Are not people held responsible only for their personal sins and not those of others? Did not Ezekiel write: “The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him” (Ezek. 18:20). While such passages are about personal righteousness, not inherited depravity from the fall, nonetheless, many hold that the principle seems to apply.

“Elect Infants” Only. Another view asserts that among infants only “elect” babies go to heaven. Since Protestants believe in only two possible destinies, this implies that all nonelect infants go to hell. Many who hold this view are agnostic about whether some or all infants are “elect.” They state the issue thus because the Bible is silent on the issue. Christians who take this view are in the covenant theology tradition.

Statement of the View. In his interaction with the Augustinian doctrine of salvation, John Calvin rejected the idea that only baptized infants are saved. He included in his soteriology a provision that elect infants go to heaven (Calvin, 4.16.17). He contended that while salvation is ordinarily obtained through hearing the Word of God, nonetheless, God is not limited to that means. Infants who are saved are not saved because they are innocent. They are radically depraved in Adam (Rom. 5:12). Some elect die in infancy and others grow to become adults. Thus, Calvin implied that nonelect infants go to hell .

Except among the Puritans, most Reformed writers have avoided the issue of what happens to the nonelect infants and have stressed God's ability to save infants as he elects to do so in his wisdom and mercy. The Canons of Dort reassure that “godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleased God to call out of this life in their infancy” (art. 17). The Westminster Confession of 1646 affirms that “elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ” (10.3). The Westminster divines had no consensus about what extent of infants might be “elect.” Some have argued that elect infants are those born to parents who are themselves inside the covenant community.

The rationale for only elect infants being saved is that since God chose the elect before they were born, even before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4 ; cf. Rom. 8:29), it is reasonable

to infer that he chose at least some infants to be saved, though perhaps not all. Ultimately, salvation does not come from the will of man (Rom. 9:16). Indeed, God has to give faith to the elect (Eph. 2:8–9 ; Phil. 1:29). So, it is possible that, through the blood of Christ, he can impute righteousness to elect infants who are not old enough to believe for themselves.

As for the justice of God according to this view, it is argued that God justly condemns the whole human race because of Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12–21). We are all sinners by nature (Eph. 2:3), from the moment of conception (Ps. 51:5), who deserve eternal hell. God has no obligation to save anyone. Only by his grace and Christ's sacrifice can he give some the righteousness necessary to stand in his presence. Christ's death was sufficient to atone for all human beings, although it efficiently applies only to those the Holy Spirit draws to him. Among these, God is at least able and is surely willing to include infants. But just as with adults, only those who are justified can go to heaven.

Critique of the View. The elect infant view has not found a home outside of very strong Calvinistic circles. It denies universally accessible salvation. The Bible affirms that Christ did not just die for the elect but for all. And salvation is not offered only to the elect; it is offered to all. The Bible clearly affirms that Christ died for all, not just for some. John wrote that Christ “is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world” (1 John 2:2). In the same context he adds that “world” means the entire unbelieving, fallen world (vs. 15–17). Peter spoke of the apostate as being “bought” by Christ's blood (2 Peter 2:1). But if salvation is for all, then why limit its availability only to elect infants?

These passages must be taken in light of Scripture at large so as not to advance universal salvation. For adults at least, Christ's atonement saves only those who accept him as Savior and Lord.

The Bible states that God desires to save everyone. Peter wrote: God “is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Paul speaks of God “who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). But if God really desires all to be saved, and it is possible to save some infants apart from their personal faith, then why does he not elect all of them to salvation? In other words, if there can be universal salvation for the children of the elect apart from their personal faith, then why not a universal salvation for the children of nonelect parents?

It is of no comfort to know that elect infants are saved. Limiting salvation to only infants of believing parents, as some do, would offer no hope for the heathen (*see* “HEATHEN,” SALVATION OF). This problem is especially acute in view of the fact that the heathen have not heard the Gospel. It is reassuring to believe that God could still be calling out a people for his sake from “every tribe, kindred and nation” (Rev. 7:9), from among infants in nations that have not heard the Gospel.

The elect-infant-only view entails a very severe concept of God's justice. While all orthodox theologians accept that humans are born in sin, not all see this as sufficient grounds for excluding God's mercy from anyone. That is, while there is nothing in fallen humans that merits salvation,

there is something in an all-loving God that prompts him to try to save all, namely, his infinite love (John 3:16 ; Rom. 5:6–8 ; 1 Tim. 2:4).

This view fails to distinguish between an inherited sin nature (on which all orthodox Christians agree) and a personal rebellion against God which only those old enough to sin can do consciously (John 9:41). That is, the natural bent toward sin is one thing but personal rebellion against God is another. Since infants have not exercised the latter, they are not in the same category as rebellious adults.

Admittedly, it is difficult to reconcile the infant election view with the seemingly universal demand that one believe in order to be saved (John 3:36 ; Acts 16:31 ; Rom. 10:17). Yet there seems to be no way a tiny infant can express conscious explicit faith in God. So-called implicit faith will sooner or later have to become explicit and conscious in heaven—otherwise they would be in eternal limbo. Further, the verses that seem to say faith is a gift of God are rejected as support of this view on two grounds. First, none of them clearly teach that faith is a gift which God gives only to some. For example, in Ephesians 2:8–9 it is not faith that is the gift but salvation. For the “it” in the phrase “It is the gift of God” is neuter in form as opposed to “faith” which is feminine. Further, it would contradict the rest of Scripture to say faith is a gift given only to some, since the Bible everywhere calls on people to believe (Rom. 10:13–14) and condemns them for not believing (John 3:18–19). This presumes they have the ability to believe.

Those God “Foreknows.” According to this position, God, as an omniscient Being, foreknew which infants would have believed if they had lived long enough. God saved only those infants. The rest are lost, since they would not have believed if they had lived long enough to do so.

Statement of the View. This view has common aspects with the elect-infant-only view (above) and the evangelization-after-death view (below). It argues that the Bible declares that God is omniscient (Ps. 139:1–6). As such, he knows “the end from the beginning” (Isa. 46:10). Indeed, he “foreknew” the elect (Rom. 8:29). And there seems to be no logical reason why these could not have included persons who would die in infancy among the elect.

One advantage over the elect-infant view is that the foreknowledge approach avoids the criticism that God is unmerciful and/or unjust in not trying to save all he possibly can. It takes account of the need for faith as a condition for receiving salvation (John 3:16–19). That is, it avoids the criticism that God saves some apart from their willingness to receive salvation. Another value of the view is that it preserves God’s omnibenevolence, his manifest love for all.

Critique of the View. There are some drawbacks to this position. God’s foreknowledge is based on human free will rather than in himself as the sovereign God. That is, it holds that God saves these infants because of foreseen faith. This negates the unmerited grace of God who acts solely “out of the good pleasure of his will” (Eph. 1:5) and not based on anything we do (Eph. 2:8–9).

However, since one need not hold that God’s foreknowledge is based on anyone’s free choice but simply, as the Scripture’s say, in accord with it (cf. 1 Peter 1:2). They are simply coordinate, coeternal acts of God with no dependence of God on anything we do. God could have simply and graciously ordained that their potential free choice would be the means through which he would elect them. It is difficult to understand just how God could save people simply in view of their potential faith. If the free choice of believing is a necessary condition for receiving salvation, then it is difficult to understand how the fact that God knew that they would have believed is sufficient. This is knowledge of an alternative reality and so not knowledge in the sense of precognition. Of course, on the assumption that babies “grow up” in heaven they have a chance to actually believe. This would resolve the difficulty of how potential belief can count for actual belief. But if this is the case, it is no longer a matter of infant salvation, since they would have been actually saved after they were infants when they were old enough to believe for themselves. Also, salvation would be effected, not by potential or implicit faith, but through explicit faith.

Like the first view, this view lacks clear biblical support. It seems to be merely a theological possibility. There are no Scriptures declaring this is what God will do with infants.

Can someone be saved by potential faith? If faith is an absolute condition for salvation, then simply knowing that they could have believed is not enough. And responding that they not only would but do believe after death (when they “grow up”) is to reduce the view to the view that only those infants who believe when evangelized after death are saved (see below).

Some modern Catholic theologians speak of infants as exercising “implicit faith,” but it is very difficult to make sense out of the concept. How can someone whose faculties are not even developed enough to think or make moral choices possibly express any kind of faith? Certainly babies are dependent on their parents for food and other things, but they make no deliberate choice to do this. It is instinctive. But faith, at least conscious faith, is not automatic; it is voluntary. And this infants cannot do as infants.

This foreknowledge view involves the seemingly horrible injustice of condemning to eternal damnation tiny infants who have never sinned, which seems harshly unjust. A proponent of this view could argue that *all who die in infancy would have believed had they lived long enough* . Of course, one cannot deny this possibility. But then this modified position fades into the next one, that God in his mercy will save all infants.

All Infants. Since the seventeenth century the view that all infants are saved has become the most popular in varying theological traditions. Some believe that all infants will eventually believe. Others believe that God will save infants apart from the condition that they would believe.

Statement of the View. According to proponents of this teaching, there is no heaven for those who *will not believe* . Those who willingly reject God’s offer of salvation will perish (John 3:18 ; 2 Peter 3:9). But there is no verse that says those who *cannot believe* because they are not old enough to do so will be excluded from heaven (see Lightner). They appeal to a number of verses for support.

Jesus said “little children” are part of “the kingdom of God.” Mark wrote Jesus’ words, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14b). Yet Jesus made it clear that “no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3). It would follow, therefore, that these little children would all be in heaven.

Those who object point out that there is no proof that the term “children” refers to infants or those prior to an age of belief. Further, the phrase “the kingdom of God belongs to these” could refer to the fact that all must become as little children (and humble themselves) in order to enter the kingdom (Matt. 18:4).

King David prayed for his fatally ill child until the child died. Then he immediately ceased praying and said, “But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:23). King David went to heaven (Ps. 16:10–11 ; Heb. 11:32). And surely his hope that he would see the child again encompassed more than their bodies being in the same grave. Hence, it would follow that David’s baby went to heaven.

Critics of this interpretation point out that the phrase might mean no more than “The dead do not return; we go to be with the dead.” In the Old Testament, the conception of life after death was not explicit. But David clearly anticipated resurrection (Ps. 16:10–11) as did Job (cf. Job 19:25–26).

Psalms 139:13–16 speaks to God of creating and knowing him in his mother’s womb. His life was recorded before it began. David refers to himself as a person, an “I” in the womb. This is taken by some to mean that God not only personally knows little embryos and infants but he covers them with his love so that they are written in his book in heaven.

Critics note that the “book” may be a figure of speech of God’s omniscience or the book of his remembrance. There is no clear indication that it refers to the book of life of Revelation 20:12 .

As to the age of accountability, Isaiah spoke of a little child before “he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right” (Isa. 7:15). This seems to imply that there is an age of moral accountability. Jesus said even of adults, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains” (John 9:41). How much more would this apply to infants who do not yet know moral right from wrong?

In response, critics observe that even if this referred to an age of accountability, it would not thereby prove all infants are saved. For there are still at least two other issues that must be settled before one can prove this, namely, that inherited depravity in itself is not enough to send one to hell and that faith is not an absolute essential to salvation. In short, Isaiah’s reference to a young child not yet knowing good and evil may refer only to personal or social guilt, not to inherited sin.

Paul declared explicitly that “just as through the disobedience of the one man the many [i.e., all] were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man *the many* [i.e., all] will be

made righteous” (Rom. 5:19 , emphasis added). Since the text is clear that all are made righteous by Christ’s death, it remains to ask in what sense were all saved by Christ’s death.

Since universalism is clearly excluded by the context and by other Scriptures, this can not mean they were all *actually* made righteous. Further, it does not appear to refer to declaring us righteous in the sense of justification, for that comes only by faith (Rom. 1:17 ; 3:21–26). It can mean, however, that original sin brought about by Adam is canceled by Christ. If so, then no human being is hell-bound because of Adam’s sin. They must commit sins of their own to go there. In this case, since infants have not committed personal sins, they could all be saved even though they are not yet old enough to believe. The judicial condemnation brought by Adam (Rom. 5:12) was reversed, and God is free to save any and all. This being the case, there is no reason that God must condemn infants. Christ died for them. God can save them if he wishes to do so. But since God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), and since the infants cannot believe, God saves them through the finished work of Christ.

Critics of this view point to its novelty and deny its necessity. It is possible and traditional to interpret the verse in other ways. They also observe that this view tends toward universalism. In fact, universalists take all being “made righteous” to support their view. Most importantly, it eliminates faith as a necessary condition of salvation.

Critique of the View. The merits of this view is that it both satisfies the justice of God and magnifies God’s omnibenevolence. In addition, it offers some plausible basis in Scripture. Nonetheless, it is hard to find clear scriptural justification for it and plenty of statements that faith is a necessary condition for receiving the gift of eternal life (John 3:36 ; Acts 16:31 ; Heb. 11:6). In response, it can be argued that faith is a *normative* requirement for salvation but not an *absolute* one. That is to say, faith may normally be a condition for salvation; it is the way God requires of all adults. But there may be no inherent necessity that little children must believe in order to be saved.

It is argued that, by its very nature, salvation of free creatures involves a free consent. It is not possible to force someone to be saved. Saving infants against their will is no more possible than saving adults against their will. Free creatures cannot be forced into the fold.

In response, proponents note that infants are not saved *against their will* but simply *apart from their will*—because they are too young to believe. They insist that there is a significant difference in God saving persons who *will not* believe and saving those who *cannot believe*—because they are not yet old enough to believe. The fact remains that they are saved *without believing*—which violates the belief that faith is necessary for salvation.

It is always possible that all infants are the class of those who would have believed had they been old enough to do so. And that they will be given the opportunity to do so when they “mature” in heaven. In this case, the problem of faith and freedom is resolved.

Critics point out that nowhere does the Bible spell out any age of accountability. Thus, it is purely speculative. In response, it is noteworthy that there is some evidence in Scripture that there is some point of moral responsibility in one’s life. In addition, both experience and

common consent inform us that tiny children are not morally responsible. This is why small children do not stand trial for wrongs they do. Psychologically, when they are infants and small children, their rational faculties have not even developed to discern good from evil. Finally, the fact that it is difficult to point to a precise age at which this occurs is not an insurmountable problem. Like self-consciousness, even if we do not know precisely when it occurs, we know that it occurs. In fact, the precise age of accountability may differ individually, depending on their moral development. Perhaps it is earlier for those who are exposed to concepts of moral right and wrong earlier. At any rate, it probably occurs sometime between ages four and twelve. The point at which it occurs is when the individual is old enough to understand the difference between moral right and wrong and the consequences of making moral choices. In biblical terms, when they are aware of the “law written in their hearts” (Rom. 2:15). They are morally accountable when they are old enough to know that what they do is against the moral law of God. Or, as Isaiah said, they are morally responsible when they are old enough to “to reject the wrong and choose the right” (Isa. 7:15).

Criticisms of this view are not definitive. It is theologically possible and biblically plausible. The most problematic issue is the need for these infants to eventually exercise conscious faith of their own. This, however, is not insurmountable, especially in view of the possibility that God foreknew that they would be among those who would eventually “grow up” and believe. At this point, of course, the view merges with both the foreknowledge view and the evangelization after death view.

In Limbo. The above views all assume there are only two possible places for infants to go. Perhaps there is a third place or condition—limbo.

Statement of the View. Some Roman Catholic theologians have posited limbo for babies who die unbaptized (= unsaved). It is possible to detach limbo from a sacramental theology and simply argue that all nonelect babies go there or all babies who would not have believed had they been old enough to exercise it.

Even proponents find it difficult to adduce Scripture in support of limbo. It is more a result of theological speculation. The argument seems to be that God cannot justly allow them into heaven nor can he mercifully send them to hell . Hence, he sends them to a kind of neutral place, or at least a painless condition.

Critique of the View. Many contemporary Catholic theologians reject limbo as purely speculative. There is a total lack of references to any such view in the Bible. All references that can be appealed to in support speak merely about the baby having not yet reached a state of consciousness or one where they are no longer conscious of this world (cf. Job 3). And why should not God do the same for the heathen who have not heard the Gospel? After all, like infants they have not rejected Christ, since they have not even heard about him. Yet there is no evidence that God has a limbo for the heathen.

The very status of limbo is nondescript. Would it be a place of annihilation? If so, there are serious objections (see ANNIHILATIONISM). Are individuals alive but not conscious—as in a coma? There are more questions than answers.

Evangelization after Death. The remaining position contends that infants will mature or grow up after death, at which time they will be given an opportunity to believe. Those who believe will go to heaven. Those who do not (if there are any) will be lost.

Statement of the View. A minority view holds that young children will be allowed to “grow up” in heaven, hear the Gospel, and decide for themselves where they will spend eternity. This belief goes back at least to Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century. Some Roman Catholic theologians now hold it (Boros, 109–11). Sanders summarizes it: “People are condemned to hell for their own willful sin. Jesus died for all people, including young children who die. All people receive sufficient grace for salvation. The act of faith is necessary for salvation” (Sanders, 298). The belief that young children who die receive an opportunity to accept Christ is one of the few positions that does justice to all four premises.

Critique of the View. Admittedly, there is an absence of any biblical text which states that infants will “grow up” in heaven, although this is not an uncommon belief as applied to the size and shape of the resurrection body. In response, proponents point out that neither are there biblical texts explicitly stating the doctrine of the Trinity, but that does not mean it has no foundation in Scripture. Doctrines can be properly deduced or inferred from other biblical teachings.

However, even if infants do mature in heaven, there is no evidence that they will be evangelized there. The only place for evangelism mentioned in the Bible is earth (Matt. 28:18–20). It is explicitly stated in Scripture that there is no hope for salvation beyond the grave. For “man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Heb. 9:27 ; cf. Luke 16:26–31 ; John 8:24). In response, it is argued that these texts apply only to those who have lived to an age of accountability and have rejected the light God has given them, not to those who have not.

Conclusion. All the views have difficulties. The foreknowledge, salvation for all, and evangelization after death views seem to be the best options, having the most merit and indirect biblical and theological support.

If faith is not absolutely essential, then a distinction must be drawn between personal innocence and conscious rejection by adults. If so it makes more sense to speak of all infants being saved. If faith is an absolute essential for salvation—and numerous Bible passages seem to affirm that it is—there is no heaven for those who cannot believe. All must believe to enter. In this case, belief that infants will mature in heaven and be given a chance to believe makes more sense.

If God does not offer a real opportunity to believe, then the views that affirm only baptized or elect infants go to heaven makes sense. But the Bible seems to say that God genuinely offers salvation to all. If so, then it would follow logically that those who would believe, if they die before they can, will be given a chance after they die. God’s love and/or justice would seem to demand that this be so.

Inherited Depravity and Condemnation. If innate, radical depravity is inherited from the womb, then it would seem that only baptized infants or elect infants might go to be with God. If,

however, one's own personal decision in rejecting God's message is needed before one goes to hell, then they lose plausibility. The salvation-for-all view depends on the fact that children have not had the opportunity to reject Christ, and that makes the difference.

It is worth noting that the views that allow for the possible salvation of all infants are not only compatible with God's justice and love, but they also help solve the problem of heathen salvation. Since God is just and since one cannot be saved without the Gospel (*see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ; PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS ; WORLD RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY) and since many heathen lands have not had the Gospel, it is reasonable to infer that God's elect will be taken from every tribe, kindred, and tongue could have been taken from the infants who die. Since it is estimated that in heathen countries one-half of the babies born die before the age of accountability, then it follows that there will be innumerable heathen in heaven who never heard the Gospel—possibly all the infants who died before they could even understand the Gospel.

Sources

J. Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius* , Vol. 1

Augustine, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and on the Baptism of Infants*

L. Boros, *The Mystery of Death*

J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* , Bk. 4, chap. 16

R. Lightner, *Heaven for Those Who Cannot Believe*

M. Luther, *Luther's Works* , 54:56–58

P. Melancthon, *On Christian Doctrine*

J. Sanders, "Limbo" in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*

———, *No Other Name* . Appendix

B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology*

R. A. Webb, *The Theology of Infant Salvation*

Infinite Series. An infinite series is a beginningless or endless (or both) series of events, points, entities, or causes. It is often used of a series that has no beginning, that is, that has no beginning going backwards. In this sense it is more proper to speak of an infinite regress.

There are two kinds of infinite series: mathematical and metaphysical (actual). Mathematical infinities are abstract. The line between A and B can have an infinite number of points or dimensionless intersections of two lines. Actual infinities are concrete, and it is not possible to get an infinite number of actual entities between A and B no matter how small these entities may be.

An actual infinite series (regress) is impossible. Since an infinite series has no beginning and since a series of moments succeed one another, no matter how long the series it would always be possible to add one more. But one more cannot be added to an infinite number. Hence, one can never reach an infinite number. One can only indefinitely add one more. Infinity can never be achieved. Second, an infinite number of moments can never be traversed. But the number of moments before today has been traversed. Otherwise, today would never have come. Hence, there was not an infinite number of moments before today. Time began. This fact is used to prove the existence of a First Cause in the *kalam cosmological argument* for God's existence. Briefly stated: Everything that had a beginning had a cause. The universe had a beginning (since there could not have been an infinite number of moments before today). Therefore, the universe had a Cause.

An infinite series of causes may be actual or potential. An actual infinite series is one that is completed. A potential infinite series is one that continues to go on without end.

An infinite mathematical series can go forward or backward. A series of causes reaching backward to infinity is not possible because there needs to be a cause to get the series of causality going. However, a potential series of causes or events is possible going forward into eternity, since there is no reason why a cause cannot continue to produce a series of effects without end forever. Such a series, however, would not be actually infinite but only potentially infinite. That is, it would never be complete, always being capable of having one more added to its series.

Not only is an infinite series of moments or events impossible but so is an infinite series of causes. Atheists sometimes argue that even if the world needs a cause there is no reason to stop positing a cause for that cause and so on infinitely. However, this is a misunderstanding of what it means to be a cause of the existence of something. For in every infinite series of causes of existence *at least one* cause must be actually causing the existence of the world. But by definition in every infinite series of causes *every* cause is being caused by a prior cause. If this is so, then the one cause that is causing existence is also causing its own existence, since every cause in the series, including itself, is being caused. But it is impossible to cause one's own existence, for a cause is ontologically prior to its effect, and something cannot actually be prior to itself. Therefore, an infinite series of causes of existence is impossible.

There are two ways to avoid this dilemma, both of which fall into the hands of the theists. First, the causality could come from outside the series so as to avoid a self-caused cause in the series. But in this case we either have another self-caused cause outside the series (which is impossible) or an uncaused Cause (which is theistic), or else we have another infinite series behind this cause (which is impossible). Or the atheist can claim that not every cause in the series is being caused. But in this case then at least one cause in the series is an uncaused Cause (which is theistic). No matter which way the atheist turns he runs either into impossibilities or into a First uncaused Cause (God).

There are other objections to the impossibility of an infinite series of events or causes. Two call for comment.

Some defenders of the possibility of an infinite series contend that they must be possible since the future is infinite, and God can know the future. If he cannot, then he is limited and theism is wrong. This objection confuses an *actual* infinite series in the future, which is not possible with an endless or *potential* infinite series, which is possible. While it is always possible to add one more event or moment to the future (a potential infinite series), it is not possible to achieve a completed number of events in the future to which one more cannot be added (i.e., an actual infinite series). Second, as has been shown, an actual infinite series of causes is impossible. And God cannot know the impossible. He can only know the actual and the possible. Hence, God cannot know an actual infinite series of causes.

Sources

Al-Ghazali, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

Bonaventure, *2 Sententiarium*

W. L. Craig, *The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe*

———, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*

John Duns Scotus, *God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions*

C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*

J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

Information Theory. See ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE ; EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL .

Ingersoll, Robert G. American agnostic Robert G. Ingersoll (1833–1899) was born in Dresden, New York. Ingersoll popularized higher criticism of the Bible (*see* BIBLE CRITICISM), as well as humanistic thought (*see* HUMANISM, SECULAR). With little formal education, he became an attorney in 1854 and enjoyed a prosperous profession. He was a popular national orator. Ingersoll considered himself an agnostic (*see* AGNOSTICISM). His principal popular lectures were published as *Some Mistakes of Moses* (1879) and *Why I Am an Agnostic* (1889). His complete writings are found in *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll* (12 vols., 1902), edited by Clinton P. Farrell.

Innate. *Innate* means “inborn; natural to; possessing independent of experience.” Innate ideas are those with which one is born or has prior to any sensory experience. Plato believed in innate ideas. Aristotle rejected them, claiming that we are born a *tabula rasa* or blank slate; all ideas are derived from our sense experience (*see* HUME, DAVID).

Isaiah, Deutero. Isaiah includes amazingly specific prophecies that came true centuries later with exact accuracy (*see* PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE). The apologetic value of this prophecy, however, has been blunted by the critic’s charge that there were at least two Isaiahs. They claim that the second, later Isaiah records history, rather than sets out predictive prophecy.

The traditional view of the book of Isaiah is that it was written by Isaiah, son of Amoz, between 739 and 681 B.C . However, negative critics argue that “Proto-Isaiah” encompasses chapters 1 through 39 , while Deutero-Isaiah wrote chapters 40 to 66 in the fifth century B.C . If so, then the amazing prediction by Isaiah including the one that a king named Cyrus (Isa. 45:1) would be raised up by God to discipline Israel loses its prophetic punch. For if one and the same Isaiah did not write this some 150 years before Cyrus was born, but after he had lived, then there is nothing amazing about knowing his name.

A Response to the Hypothesis. The traditional view that the book of Isaiah is a single work written by the prophet Isaiah is supported by several arguments.

The critical view that separates Isaiah into two or more books is based on the assumption that there is no such thing as predictive prophecy. Modern scholars claim that the prophecies in chapters 40–55 concerning Cyrus must have been written after Cyrus ruled in Persia. This view is antisupernatural and tries to explain these sections of Isaiah as history. However, since God knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10), it is not necessary to deny the supernatural element in Isaiah’s prophecies (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST).

Differences between the two halves of the book can be explained in ways other than the two-author approach. Chapters 1 through 39 prepare the reader for the prophecies contained in chapters 40 through 66 . Without these preparatory chapters, the last section of the book would make little sense. Chapters 1 through 35 warn of the Assyrian menace that threatens to destroy God’s people. Chapters 36–39 form a transition from the previous section to chapters 40–66 , by looking forward to the invasion of Sennacherib (chaps. 36–37), and at the spiritual decline that is causing the downfall of Jerusalem (chaps. 38–39). These four intervening chapters (36–39) are not in chronological order because the author is using them to prepare the reader for what is to follow.

The difference in words and style of writing between the two sections of the book has been used by critical scholars to substantiate their claim that there are at least two different books. However, these differences are not as great as has been claimed, and the differences that do exist can be explained as a difference in subject matter and emphasis. No author writes in exactly the same style using precisely the same vocabulary when writing about different subject matter. Nevertheless, a number of phrases found in both sections attest to the unity of the book. For example, the title “the Holy one of Israel” is found twelve times in chapters 1 through 39 and fourteen times in 40 through 66 .

Similar Phrases in the Two Parts of Isaiah

Chapters 1–39	Chapters 40–66
1:15b —“Your hands are full of	59:3a —“For your hands are defiled with blood.”

blood.”

28:5 —“In that day the Lord Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people.”

35:6b —“Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.”

62:3 —“You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord’s hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.”

41:18 —“I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.”

In Luke 4:17 Jesus rose to read in the synagogue and “was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah.” The people in the synagogue and Jesus himself assumed that this book was from the prophet Isaiah. Other New Testament writers accepted Isaiah as the author of the entire book. John 12:38 states that Isaiah was the one who made the statement that is found in Isaiah 6:1f . and 53:1 . Other instances where the New Testament ascribes portions of chapters 40–66 to Isaiah include Matthew 3:3 ; Mark 1:2–3 , and John 1:23 (Isa. 40:3); Matthew 12:17–21 (Isa. 42:1–4); Acts 8:32–33 (Isa. 53:7–8); and Romans 10:16 (Isa. 53:1).

The Dead Sea Scrolls include the earliest complete copy of the book of Isaiah, and there is no gap in the scroll between chapters 39 and 40 . This indicates that the Qumran community accepted the prophecy of Isaiah as a seamless book in the second century B.C . The Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, which dates from the second century B.C ., treats the book of Isaiah as a single book by a single author, Isaiah the prophet.

Even if the critic could show that part or all of Isaiah was written in the fifth century or later, it would not disprove the supernatural nature of the predictions about Christ. Those were fulfilled centuries later than even the latest possible date for its appearance. Isaiah predicted the virgin birth of the Messiah (Isa. 7:14), his ministry (Isaiah 11 ; 61), and his death for our sins (Isaiah 53 ; see CHRIST, DEATH OF). Isaiah 53 is so specific and so messianic that even rabbinical interpretation of it before the time of Christ viewed it as a prediction about the coming Messiah (see Driver). Indeed, even if the writing is dated to the late fifth century B.C ., it is a clear and specific supernatural prediction about Christ given hundreds of years in advance. If Isaiah had a supernatural source for this prophecy, then there is no reason to believe he did not have the same supernatural source for his predictions about Cyrus.

Conclusion. The attempt by Bible critics to posit a second and later Isaiah does not negate the supernatural nature of his specific predictions. They do not even succeed in proving that there was a later Isaiah who wrote 40–66 . Hence, Isaiah’s predictions which mention Cyrus by name over 150 years before he was born still stand. Even were Isaiah dated later in part or in whole, the book is filled with specific predictions, especially those literally fulfilled by Christ that were made centuries in advance.

Sources

O. T. Allis, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics*

———, *The Unity of Isaiah*

G. L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*

S. R. Driver, et al., trans., *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters*

N. L. Geisler and T. Howe, *When Critics Ask*

R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*

Isaiah, Virgin Birth in. See VIRGIN BIRTH .

Islam. *Islam* means “submission.” A follower of this religion is called a *Muslim* , “a submitted one.” Muhammad, the founder of the Islamic faith, was an Arabian trader from Mecca who was born around 570 and died in 632. As Christians measure history from the birth of Christ, so Muslims set the hinge date of history at 622, the year Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina. This *Hijra* (*hijj* means “flight” in Arabic) marked Muhammad’s turning point of submission to God and his proclamation of a new revelation from God. Muslims believe Muhammad to be the last prophet of God, superseding Christ, the prophet who was before him.

Muslims believe in submitting to the one and only one God, named *Allah* . They are categorically opposed to the Christian belief in the tri-unity of God (see TRINITY). To believe that there is more than one person in God is an idolatry and blasphemy called *shirk* .

Beliefs. The Word of God. Although Muslims hold that God revealed himself in the Jewish Law (*tawrat*), the Psalms (*zabur*), and the Gospels (*injl*), they claim that today’s Christian Bible is corrupted, or *tahrif* . They assert that the *Qur’an* is the final Word of God (see QUR’AN, ALLEGED DIVINE ORIGIN OF). It is divided into 114 chapters or *suras* and is about the size of the New Testament.

Doctrines. There are five basic Muslim doctrines:

1. There is one and only one God.
2. There have been many prophets, including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad.
3. God created angels (jinn), some of which are good and others evil.
4. The *Qur’an* is God’s full and final revelation.
5. A final day of judgment is coming, followed by heaven for the faithful and hell for the lost.

Besides these five central beliefs, there are five basic pillars of Islamic practice:

1. All that is necessary to become a Muslim is to confess the *shahadah* : “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.”

2. One must pray the *salat* , usually five times a day.
3. One keeps an annual fast (*sawn*) through the ninth lunar month of *Ramadan* .
4. One gives alms (*sakat*) to the needy, one-fortieth of one's income.
5. Every able Muslim must make one pilgrimage during life to Mecca.

Muslims also believe in jihad or holy war, which some radical groups have exalted to the level of a pillar. While this may involve killing infidels for their faith, more moderate Muslims think of it as being a sacred struggle with the word, not necessarily with the sword.

Many doctrines are shared with Christianity, such as creation (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF), angels, heaven, hell , and the resurrection of all people. As for Christ, they affirm his prophethood, virgin birth , physical ascension, second coming, sinlessness (*see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF), miracles , and messiahship.

Muslims deny the heart of the Christian message, namely, that Christ died on the cross for our sins (*see* CHRIST, DEATH OF ; CHRIST'S DEATH, MORAL OBJECTIONS TO ; CHRIST'S DEATH, SUBSTITUTION LEGEND) and that he arose from the grave physically three days later (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ; RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF).

God as Absolute One. Allah is described by Muslims in terms of several basic attributes. Fundamental to all is the attribute of absolute unity. Of all the Islamic God's attributes, the most important is his undivided unity. To deny this is blasphemous.

The Islamic God is his absolute and indivisible unity. In sura 112, Muhammad defines God in these words: "Say: He is God, The One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none Like unto Him." This sura is held to be worth a third of the whole *Qur'an* . The seven heavens and the seven earths are founded upon it. Islamic tradition affirms that to confess this verse sheds one's sins "as a man might strip a tree in autumn of its leaves" (Cragg, 39).

Two words are used in the *Qur'an* to describe the oneness of God: *ahad* and *wahid* . *Ahad* is used to deny that God has any partner or companion. In Arabic, this means the negation of any other number. The word *wahid* may mean the same as the first word or it may also mean "the One, Same God for all." That is to say, there is only one God for Muslims, and he is the same God for all peoples. God is a unity and a singularity.

God's Oneness is such a fundamental aspect of Islam that, as one Muslim author put it, "Islam, like other religions before it in their original clarity and purity, is nothing other than the declaration of the Unity of God, and its message is a call to testify to this Unity" (Mahmud, 20). Another Muslim writer adds, "The Unity of Allah is the distinguishing characteristic of Islam. This is the purest form of monotheism, that is, the worship of Allah Who was neither begotten nor beget nor had any associates with Him in His Godhead. Islam teaches this in the most unequivocal terms" (Ajjola, 55).

It is because of this uncompromising emphasis on God's absolute unity that the greatest of all sins in Islam is the sin of *shirk*, or assigning partners to God. The *Qur'an* sternly declares "God forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with God, hath strayed far, far away (from the Right)" (sura 4:116).

God as Absolute Ruler. In the words of the *Qur'an* ,

God—there is no god but He—the Living, The Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things In the heavens and on the earth. Who is there that can intercede in His presence except As He permitteth? He knoweth What (appears to His creatures As) Before or After Or Behind them. Nor shall they compass Aught His knowledge Except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend Over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them For He is Most High, The Supreme (in glory). [sura 2:255]

God is self-sustaining and does not need anything but everything needs him. This attribute is known as aseity, or self-existence. God is The Mighty and The Almighty. He is The Willer of existing things and the things which will exist; and nothing happens apart from his will. He is the Knower of all that can be known. His knowledge encompasses the whole universe which he has created and he alone sustains. God is completely sovereign over all his creation.

Many of God's ninety-nine Islamic names speak of his sovereignty. He is:

Al-Adl , the Just, whose word is perfect in veracity and justice (6:115);

Al-Ali , the High One, he who is high and mighty (2:225–26);

Al-Aziz , the Sublime, mighty in his sublime sovereignty (59:23);

Al-Badi , the Contriver, who contrived the whole art of creation (2:117);

Al-Hakim , the Judge, who gives judgment among his servants (40:48–51);

Al-Hasib , the Accounter, who is sufficient as a reckoner (4:6–7);

Al-Jabbar , the Mighty One, whose might and power are absolute (59:23);

Al-Jalil , the Majestic, mighty and majestic is he;

Al-Jami , the Gatherer, who gathers all men to an appointed day (3:9);

Al-Malik , the King, who is King of kings (59:23);.

Al-Muizz , the Honorer, who honors or abases whom he will (3:26);

Al-Muntaqim , the Avenger, who wreaks vengeance on sinners and succors the believers (30:47);

Al-Muqsit , the Observer of Justice, who will set up the balances with justice (21:47–48);

Al-Mutaali , the Self-Exalted, who has set himself high above all (13:9–10);

Al-Qadir , the Able, who has the power to do what he pleases (17:99–101);

Al-Quddus , the Most Holy One, to whom all in heaven and on earth ascribe holiness (62:1);

Al-Wahid , the One, unique in his divine sovereignty (13:16); the Unique, who alone has created (74:11);

Al-Wakil , the Administrator, who has charge of everything (6:102);

Malik al-Mulk , Possessor of the Kingdom, who grants sovereignty to whom he will (3:26).

God as Absolute Justice. Several of God's names bespeak his absolute justice: the Majestic, the Gatherer, the Accounter, the Judge, the Just, the Most Holy One, to whom all in heaven and on earth ascribe holiness, the Observer of Justice, and the Avenger.

God as Absolute Love. Contrary to a popular misunderstanding, Allah is a God of love. Indeed, some of God's names depict this very characteristic. For example, God is *Ar-Rahman* , the Merciful, the most merciful of those who show mercy (sura 1:3; 12:64), and *Al-Wadud* , the Loving, compassionate and loving to his servants (11:90, 92). He has imposed the law of mercy upon himself (sura 6:12). He says, "My mercy comprehends all" (7:156). Muhammad said in the *Qur'an* , "If you do love God, Follow me.; and God will love you And forgive you your sins. For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (sura 3:31).

God as Absolute Will. There is a certain mystery about God's names. Historian Kenneth Cragg affirms that these names "are to be understood as characteristics of the divine will, rather than laws of his nature. Action, that is arising from such descriptives, may be expected, but not as a matter of necessity." What gives unity to all God's actions is that he wills them all. As Willer he may be recognized by the descriptions given him, but he does not conform to any. The action of his will may be identified from its effects, but his will of itself is inscrutable. This accounts for the antithesis in certain of God's names (see below). For example, God is "the One Who leads astray," as well as "the One Who guides."

God as Absolutely Unknowable. Since everything is based in God's will and since his effects are sometimes contradictory and do not reflect any absolute essence, God's nature is utterly unknowable. Indeed, "the divine will is an ultimate beyond which neither reason nor revelation go. In the Unity of the single will, however, these descriptions co-exist with those that relate to mercy, compassion, and glory" (Cragg, 64) God is named from his effects, but he is not to be identified with any of them. The relation between the Ultimate Cause (God) and his creatures is

extrinsic, not intrinsic. That is, God is called good because he causes good, but goodness is not part of his essence.

Evaluation. Muslim monotheism is vulnerable to many criticisms, particularly from a Christian perspective. Crucial is their rigid idea of absolute unity.

The Problem of Absolute Unity. Islamic monotheism is rigid and inflexible. Its view of God's unity is so strong that it allows for no plurality at all in God. Hence, it sees nothing between monotheism and tritheism (three gods), and Christians are placed in the latter category. There are several reasons for this misunderstanding. For one thing there appears to be a misunderstanding of the biblical text related to God (MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED BIBLICAL PREDICTIONS OF). Muslims also have a rather grossly anthropomorphic view of what it means for Christ to be a "Son" of God. This often seems to demand some kind of sexual generation, according to their thinking. But the terms "Father" and "Son" no more necessitate physical generation than the term *alma mater* implies that the school from which we were graduated was our physical womb. Paternity can be understood in more than a biological sense.

There is a deeper and more basic philosophical problem. In the final analysis God has no (knowable) essence or nature from which one can distinguish his three persons or centers of consciousness (see TRINITY). This position is known as nominalism . God is absolute will, and absolute will must be absolutely one. A plurality of wills (persons) would make it impossible to have any absolute unity. And Muslims believe God is absolutely one (both from revelation and by reason). Reason informed Muhammad that unity is prior to plurality. As Plotinus put it several centuries earlier (205–70), all plurality is made up of unities. Thus unity is the most ultimate of all. Accepting this neoplatonic way of thinking leads logically to a denial of the possibility for any plurality of persons in God. Hence, by the very nature of his philosophical commitment to the kind of neo-Platonism prevalent in the Middle Ages, Islamic thought about God was solidified into an intractable singularity which allowed no form of trinitarianism.

This rigid monotheism is not entirely consistent with some of Islam's own distinctions. Muslim scholars, consistent with certain teachings in the *Qur'an* , have made distinctions within God's unity. For example, they believe the *Qur'an* is the eternal Word of God. Sura 85:21–22 declares, "Nay, this is a Glorious *Qur'an* , (Inscribed) in a Tablet Preserved! [in heaven]" And in sura 43:3–4, we read, "We have made it a *Qur'an* in Arabic, that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom). And verily, it is in the Mother of the Book, in Our Presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom" (cf. sura 13:39). This eternal original is the template of the earthly book we know as the *Qur'an* .

Muslims insist the true *Qur'an* in heaven is uncreated, and perfectly expresses the mind of God. Yet they acknowledge that the *Qur'an* is not identical to the essence of God. Some Muslim scholars even liken the *Qur'an* to the divine *Logos* view of Christ, held by orthodox Christians (see CHRIST, DEITY OF). As Professor Yusuf K. Ibish stated of the *Qur'an* , "It is not a book in the ordinary sense, nor is it comparable to the Bible, either the Old or New Testaments. It is an expression of Divine Will. If you want to compare it with anything in Christianity, you must compare it with Christ Himself." He adds, "Christ was the expression of the Divine among men, the revelation of the Divine Will. That is what the *Qur'an* is" (Waddy, 14).

Orthodox Islam describes the relation between God and the *Qur'an* by noting that speech is an eternal attribute of God, which as such is without beginning or intermission, exactly like His knowledge, His might, and other characteristics of His infinite being (see Golziher, 97). But if speech is an eternal attribute of God that is not identical to God but is somehow distinguishable from him, then does not this allow the very kind of plurality within unity which Christians claim for the Trinity? Thus, it would seem that the Islamic view of God's absolute unity is, by their own distinction, not incompatible with Christian trinitarianism. The basic Muslim logic of either monotheism or polytheism is invalid. They themselves allow that something can be an eternal expression of God without being numerically identical to him. Thus, to use their own illustration, why can't Christ be the eternal "expression of Divine Will" without being the same person as this Divine Will?

The Problem of Voluntarism. At the very basis of the Islamic view of God is a radical voluntarism (see ESSENTIALISM) and nominalism. For traditional Islam, properly speaking, God does not have an essence, at least not a knowable one (see GOD, NATURE OF). Rather, he is Will. True enough, God is said to be just and loving, but he is not essentially just or loving. And he is merciful only because "He has imposed the law of mercy upon Himself" (sura 6:12). But since God is Absolute Will, had he chosen to be otherwise he would not be merciful. There is no nature or essence in God according to which he must act.

There are two basic problems with this radical nominalism: one metaphysical and one moral.

The metaphysical problem. The orthodox Islamic view of God claims, as we have seen, that God is an absolutely Necessary Being. He is self-existent, and he cannot not exist. But if God is by nature a necessary kind of being, then it is of his nature to exist. He must have a nature. Orthodox Islam believes that there are other essential attributes of God, such as, self-existence, uncreatedness, and eternity. But if these are all essential characteristics of God, then God must have an essence. Otherwise the attributes could not be essential. This is precisely how essence is defined, namely, as the essential attributes or characteristics of a being.

The moral problem. Islamic voluntarism poses a serious moral problem. If God is only will, without an essence, then he does not do things because they are right; rather, they are right because he does them. God is arbitrary about what is right and wrong. He does not have to do good. He does not have to be loving to all; he could hate, if he chose to do so. Indeed, in sura 3:32 we read, "God will love you. . . . God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful," but verse 33 says that "God loveth not those Who reject Faith." So love and mercy are not of the essence of God. God could choose not to be loving. This is why Muslim scholars have such difficulty with the question of God's predestination.

The problems of agnosticism. Since God has no essence, at least not one that the names (or attributes) of God really describe, the Islamic view of God involves a form of agnosticism. Indeed, the heart of Islam is not to *know* God but to *obey* him. It is not to *meditate* on his essence but to *submit* to his will. As Pfander correctly observed of Muslims, "If they think at all deeply, they find themselves absolutely unable to know God. . . . Thus Islam leads to Agnosticism" (Pfander, 187).

Islamic agnosticism arises because Muslims believe God caused the world by extrinsic causality. Indeed, "the Divine will is an ultimate, beyond which neither reason nor revelation go. In the Unity of the single Will, however, these descriptions co-exist with those that relate to mercy, compassion, and glory" (Cragg, 42-43). God is named from his effects, but he is not to be identified with any of them. The relation between the Ultimate Cause (God) and his creatures is extrinsic, not intrinsic. That is, God is called good because he causes good, but not because goodness is part of his essence.

Among the significant weaknesses inherent in this agnosticism, a moral, a philosophical, and a religious problem stand out immediately.

First, if God is not essentially good, but only called good because he does good, why not also call God evil, since he causes evil? (see EVIL, PROBLEM OF) Why not call him sinful and faithless, since he causes people not to believe? It would seem consistent to do so, since God is named from his actions. If Muslims reply that something in God is the basis for calling him good, but nothing in him is the basis for calling him evil, then they admit that God's names do tell us something about his essence. In fact, they admit an intrinsic relation between the cause (Creator) and the effect (creation). This leads to a metaphysical problem with the Islamic view of God.

Second, at the root of medieval views of God, an entrenched neo-Platonism springs from Plotinus. Plotinus' belief that the Ultimate [God] was absolutely an indivisible One heavily influenced Muslim monotheism. Further, Plotinus held that the One is so utterly transcendent (above and beyond all) that it cannot be known, except by mystical experience. This influenced both orthodox Muslim agnosticism and Sufi mysticism. The fundamental reason there can be no similarity between the One [God] and what flows from It (the universe) is because God is beyond being, and there is no similarity between being and what is beyond it.

Thomas Aquinas provided the definitive answer to plotinian agnosticism and mysticism. Aquinas argued that an effect must resemble its cause. "You cannot give what you have not got." Hence, if God causes goodness, he must be good. If he caused being, he must be (Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas*, chap. 9).

Objections to this view generally confuse either a material or instrumental cause with an efficient cause. The efficient cause of something is that *by which* it comes to be. The instrumental cause is that *through which* it comes to be. And the material cause is that *out of which* it is made. Material and instrumental causes do not necessarily resemble their effects, but efficient causes do. The painting does not resemble the artist's paint brush, but it does resemble the artist's mind. The brush is the instrumental cause, whereas the artist is the efficient cause.

Another mistake is to confuse material and efficient causality. Hot water is soft, yet it can cause an egg to get hard, because of properties in the egg. The same hot water softens wax. The difference is the material receiving the causality. Thus an infinite God can and does cause a finite world. God is not thereby finite because he caused a finite cosmos. Nor is he contingent because he, as a Necessary Being, caused a contingent universe. Finiteness and contingency are part of the very material nature of a created being. God is unlike creation in these kinds of ways. On the

other hand, everything that exists *has* being, and God *is* Being. There must be a similarity between Being and being (*see* ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF). God is pure actuality, with no potentiality whatsoever. Everything else that exists has the potential not to exist. So all created things have actuality, since they actually exist, and potentiality, since they could possibly not exist. God is like creatures in their actuality but unlike them in their potentiality. This is why when we name God from his effects we must negate whatever implies finitude and limitation or imperfection, and attribute to him only the pure attribute or perfection. This is the reason that evil cannot be attributed to God but good can. Evil implies imperfection or privation of some good characteristic. Good, on the other hand, does not in itself imply either limitation or imperfection (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF). So God is good by his very nature but he cannot be or do evil.

Third, religious experience within a monotheistic context involves the relation between two persons, the worshiper and God. It is, as Martin Buber correctly observed, an “I-Thou” relationship. But how can a person worship someone about which he can know nothing? Even in Islam, one is supposed to love God. But how do we fall in love with someone of which we know nothing? As atheist Ludwig Feuerbach put it, “The truly religious man can’t worship a purely negative being. . . . Only when a man loses his taste for religion does the existence of God become one without qualities, an unknowable God” (Feuerbach, 15).

Some critics have suggested that the extremely transcendent Muslim view of God has led some Muslim sects to deify Muhammad. Since relationship with the transcendent God is seen to be distant, it is only through Muhammad that one even dares to approach the throne of God. In *Qawwalis* (a popular cultural event), Muhammad is praised in verse. This often takes the form of deification: “If *Muhammad* had not been, God himself would not have existed!” This is an allusion to the close relationship Muhammad is supposed to have with God. Muhammad is often given titles like “Savior of the World” and “Lord of the Universe.” The popular deification of Muhammad, who so violently opposed any such idolatry, only shows the theological bankruptcy of the Muslim view of a God so distant and so unknowable that the devotee must make contact with something they can understand, even to the extent of deifying the prophet who condemned idolatry.

The problems of extreme determinism. Since in Islam the relationship between God and human beings is that of Master and slave, God is the Sovereign Monarch and humans must submit (*see* DETERMINISM ; FREE WILL). This overpowering picture of God in the *Qur’an* has created its own tension in Muslim theology regarding God’s absolute sovereignty and human free will. Despite protests to the contrary, Orthodox Islam teaches the absolute predestination of both good and evil, that all our thoughts, words and deeds, whether good or evil, were foreseen, foreordained, determined, and decreed from all eternity, and that everything that happens takes place according to what has been written for it. Sura 6:18 says “He is the Irresistible.” Commenting on these kinds of *Qur’anic* statements, Cragg points out that God is the *Qadar*, or “determination,” of all things and his *taqdir*, or “subjection,” covers all people and all history. Nature, whether animate or inanimate, is subject to his command and all that comes into existence—a summer flower or a murderer’s deed, a newborn child or a sinner’s disbelief—is from Him and of Him.” In fact if “God so willed, there need have been no creation, there need have been no idolatry, there need have been no Hell, there need have been no escape from Hell” (Cragg, 44–45).

There are four basic problems with this extreme form of predetermination: logical, moral, theological, and metaphysical. In order, it involves a contradiction; it eliminates human responsibility; it makes God the author of evil, and it gives rise to pantheism.

The logical problem with Islamic determinism is that even Muslim commentators are forced to acknowledge that God performs contradictory actions (*see* FIRST PRINCIPLES). Islamicist Ignaz Goldziher summarizes the situation. “There is probably no other point of doctrine on which equally contradictory teachings can be derived from the *Qur’an* as on this one” (Goldziher, 78). One Muslim scholar notes, “The *Qur’anic* doctrine of Predestination is very explicit though not very logical” (Stanton, 54–55). For example, God is “the One Who leads astray,” as well as “the One Who guides.” He is “the One Who brings damage,” as also does Satan. He is “the Bringer-down,” “the Compeller” or “Tyrant,” and “the Haughty.” When describing people, all these concepts have an evil sense.

Muslim scholars sometimes attempt to reconcile this by pointing out that these contradictions are not in God’s nature (since he does not really have one), but are in the realm of his will. They are not in his essence but in his actions. However, this is an inadequate explanation. God does have a knowable nature or essence. Hence, Muslim scholars cannot avoid the contradiction that God has logically opposed characteristics by placing them outside his essence within the mystery of his will. Further, actions flow from nature and represent it, so there must be something in the nature that corresponds to the action. Salt water does not flow from a fresh stream.

Others attempt to downplay the harsh extremes of Muslim determinism by creating a distinction, not found in the *Qur’an*, between what God *does* and what he *allows* his creatures to do by free choice. This solves the problem, but, only through rejecting clear statements of the *Qur’an*, tradition, and creeds.

These statements can be seen in connection with the moral problem with Islamic determinism. While Muslim scholars wish to preserve human responsibility, they can only succeed in doing so by modifying what the *Qur’an* actually says. Sura 9:51 declares: “Say, Nothing will ever befall us save what Allah has written for us.” Sura 7:177–79 adds, “He whom Allah guides is he who is rightly guided, but whom he leads astray, those are the losers. Indeed, We have assuredly created for Gehenna many of both jinn and men.” Sura 36: 6–10 reads: “Verily the sentence comes true on most of them, so they will not believe. We, indeed, have set shackles on their necks which reach to the chins so that they perforce hold up [their heads]. And We have set a barrier in front of them, and a barrier behind them, and We have covered them over so that they do not see. Thus it is alike to them whether thou warn them or dost not warn them; they will not believe.”

The *Qur’an* frankly admits that God could have saved all, but did not desire to do so. Sura 32:13 declares: “Had we so willed We should have brought every soul its guidance, but true is that saying of Mine: ‘I shall assuredly fill up Gehenna with jinn and men together.’ ” It is extremely difficult to understand how, holding such a view, one can consistently maintain any kind of human responsibility.

There is also a theological problem with this severe view of God's sovereign determination of all events: It makes God the author of evil. In the *Hadith* traditions Muhammad declares "the decree necessarily determines all that is good and all that is sweet and all that is bitter, and that is my decision between you." According to one tradition, Muhammad slapped Abu Bakr on the shoulder and said: "O Abu Bakr, if Allah Most High had not willed that there be disobedience, he would not have created the Devil." Indeed, one of the most respected Muslim theologians of all time, Al-Ghazzali, frankly acknowledges that "He [God] willeth also the unbelief of the unbeliever and the irreligion of the wicked and, without that will, there would neither be unbelief nor irreligion. All we do we do by His will: what He willeth not does not come to pass." And if one should ask why God does not will that men should believe, Al-Ghazzali responds, " 'We have no right to enquire about what God wills or does. He is perfectly free to will and to do what He pleases.' In creating unbelievers, in willing that they should remain in that state; . . . in willing, in short, all that is evil, God has wise ends in view which it is not necessary that we should know" (Haqq, 152).

In the metaphysical problem with Islamic determinism, this extreme view led some Muslim scholars to the logical conclusion that there is really only one agent in the universe—God. One Muslim theologian wrote, "Not only can He (God) do anything, He actually is the only One Who does anything. When a man writes, it is Allah who has created in his mind the will to write. Allah at the same time gives power to write, then brings about the motion of the hand and the pen and the appearance upon paper. All other things are passive, Allah alone is active" (Nehls, 21). This pantheism is at the heart of much of medieval thought. Thomas Aquinas wrote *Summa contra Gentiles* to help Christian missionaries dealing with Islam in Spain.

This radical predeterminism is expressed in Muslim creedal statements. One reads: "God Most High is the Creator of all actions of His creatures whether of unbelief or belief, of obedience or of rebellion: all of them are by the Will of God and His sentence and His conclusion and His decreeing" (Cragg, 60–61). Another confesses:

God's one possible quality is His power to create good or evil at any time He wishes, that is His decree. . . . Both good things and evil things are the result of God's decree. It is the duty of every Muslim to believe this. . . . It is He who causes harm and good. Rather the good works of some and the evil of others are signs that God wishes to punish some and to reward others. If God wishes to draw someone close to Himself, then He will give him the grace which will make that person do good works. If He wishes to reject someone and put that person to shame, then He will create sin in him. God creates all things, good and evil. God creates people as well as their actions: *He created you as well as what you do* (*Qur'an* 37:94). [Rippin & Knappert, 133; emphasis added]

Conclusion. The attitude of God's absolute control over every aspect of his creation profoundly influences Islamic theology and culture. Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, reflected the fatalistic strain of Muslim theology when he wrote:

'Tis all a chequer-board of night and days
Where destiny with men for pieces plays;
Hither and thither moves and mates and slays,

And one by one back in the closet lays.

Articles related to Islam and Muslim apologetics include ALFARABI ; AVICENNA ; AVERROES ; BIBLE, ISLAMIC VIEW OF ; MAIMONIDES ; NEW TESTAMENT CORRUPTION, ALLEGED ; MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED BIBLE PREDICTIONS ; MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED DIVINE CALL ; MUHAMMAD, MIRACLES OF ; MUHAMMAD, MORAL CHARACTER OF ; QUR'AN, DIVINE ORIGIN OF , and QUR'AN, ALLEGED MIRACLES IN .

Sources

K. Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*

L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*

N. L. Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal*

———, and A. Saleeb. *Answering Islam*

I. Golziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology*

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*

S. Zwemer, *The Moslem Doctrine of God*