



Kabir (Kabirpanthis). Kabir was an Indian teacher and religious reformer who flourished in fifteenth-century North India. He revolted against the caste system of Hinduism (*see* HINDUISM, VEDANTA) and spawned a number of sects, the last of which was Sikhism . His disciples were called Kabirpanthis and were drawn from Hinduism and Islam.

Not surprisingly, he was disliked by both Hindus and Muslims. Brahmans decried him as an associate of a woman of ill-fame. Kabir was denounced by the king of Delhi for allegedly laying claim to deity. He died at Maghar near Gorakhpur. His followers believe that he was an incarnation of deity whom his mother found floating on a lotus (*see* APOTHEOSIS ; DIVINE BIRTH STORIES). There are also legends about his mother being a virgin, or that he was born from his mother's hand while she was widowed.

Kabir left no writings, but he did inspire rhyming couplets, hymns, poems, and odes (found in Khas Grantha). Some fifty years after his death many of Kabir's sayings were compiled by Bhago Das. A number of these are included in the Adi Granth of the Sikhs. He was probably a disciple of Ramanand of the Viasnava school of thought. His teaching was one of the main sources drawn on by Nanak Shah, the founder of Sikhism. He was one of the first thinkers to try to influence both Hinduism and Islam. He had some knowledge of Sufism, a mystical cult of Islam (*see* ISLAM ; MYSTICISM).

It is not clear whether he believed in a distinct heaven or hell . He did, however, believe in reincarnation. His followers believe that souls enter into heaven or hell between their incarnations (Burn, 633). Kabir was antiritualistic. He rejected the outward symbols and practices of Hinduism. He was also theistic, believing in a supreme being called Ram. His God had several names: Ram, Ali, and Karim. Polytheism is an illusion (*maya*). Contrary to Hinduism and Islam, he believed that salvation was by faith, not by works. In the search for God a guide is necessary. However, such a teacher should not be accepted blindly without being tested. Since we all owe our existence to the same God, we should show tenderness to all that live.

An important teaching of Kabir is the doctrine of the Sabda, or the Word. Any one who wished to know the truth must turn from the many words to the Word. The Word is the gateway to truth. He said, "I am a lover of the Word, which has shown me the unseen (God)" (Burn, 633).

The Alleged Resurrection of Kabir. After his death in 1518, his Muslim and Hindu followers were divided over whether to cremate his body, a practice Hindus favor and Muslims oppose. Kabir himself is said to have appeared to stop the controversy. When he directed them to draw back the cloth placed over his body, they found only flowers. His Hindu followers burned half of the flowers and the Muslims buried the other half. There are significant problems with any attempt to verify such claims. And the differences between them and the resurrection of Christ are decisive (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ; RESURRECTION CLAIMS IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS).

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Kahler, Martin. Martin Kahler (1835–1912) studied theology at Heidelberg, Tübingen, and Hälle and was professor at the University of Hälle. He once referred to his studies under F. C. Baur at Tübingen as a "critical cold water bath" (see Strimple, 90). His principal works in theology were *Die Wissenschaft der christlichen Lehre* (1883) and *Geschichte der protestantischen Dogmatik im 19. Jahrhundert* (pub. 1962). His most influential work, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (1892) was translated into English in 1964.

Kahler is credited as the impetus for the "second quest" for the historical Jesus (*see* CHRIST OF FAITH VS. JESUS OF HISTORY ; QUEST FOR HISTORICAL JESUS). Kahler attacked the nineteenth-century attempt to reconstruct the Jesus of History as an exercise in speculation. He claimed the "real Christ" is the Christ of faith, not the Jesus who is the result of so-called historical research (*see* BIBLE CRITICISM). The real Christ is the Christ of the Christian *kerygma* (proclamation), who is available to all.

Kahler's views gave impetus to both conservatives and liberals. Liberal and neo-orthodox accepted his conclusion that faith cannot be dependent on historical research (*see* FIDEISM). Conservatives rejoiced when he repudiated attempts to separate the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith.

Misunderstanding Kahler. Kahler is the father of the German distinction between the "historical" (*historisch*) Jesus and the "historic" (*geschichtlich*) Christ. However, it is doubtful that he meant this distinction to be used as it has been in New Testament critical scholarship. When Kahler referred to the "so-called" historical Jesus, he had in mind the reconstructed Jesus who resulted from liberal critical scholarship, not the Jesus of the first century. As Robert

Strimple put it, “Kahler’s treatise and its title are misused when they are appealed to in support of the twentieth-century distinction between ‘the Jesus of History’ and ‘the Christ of faith.’ ” As Carl E. Braaten said in his “Introduction” to the English translation of *The So-Called Historical Jesus*, “The ‘historical Jesus’ is not the earthly Jesus as such, but rather Jesus insofar as he can be made the object of historical-critical research. The term has primary reference to the problem of historical knowledge, and does not intend to deny or devalue the historicity of revelation” (Strimple, 92).

Kahler never denied the historical reliability of the New Testament. He did not reject the general picture of Christ presented in Scripture. He simply insisted that neither the Gospel sources nor the historian’s naturalistic methods were adequate to produce a true biography of the real Jesus (ibid., 93). He did not deny that the Gospels present “a trustworthy picture of the Savior for believers” (ibid., 94).

Kahler emphasized that using Ernst Troeltsch’s principles of analogy cannot yield the real Jesus. This requires analogies in the present through which we can understand the past (*See ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF ; HISTORY, OBJECTIVITY OF*). “The distinction between Jesus Christ and ourselves is not one of degree, but of kind” (ibid.).

Thus the canons of naturalistic history can never discover the incarnate Son of God.

“Kahler sought to deliver the Christian believer from the tyranny of the expert, the papacy of the professor” writes Strimple (ibid., 95). He asked, “Should we expect [believers] to rely on the authority of the learned men when the matter concerns the source from which they are to draw the truth for their lives? I cannot find sure footing in probabilities or in a shifting mass of details, the reliability of which is constantly changing” (Kahler, 109, 111). This is reminiscent of Gotthold Lessing and his “ugly ditch” and the later question by Søren Kierkegaard, “How can something of an historical nature be decisive for an eternal happiness?” (Kierkegaard, 86). However, Kahler never understood his view in the sense in which Bultmann and later critics have taken it to pit the Christ of faith against the Jesus of history.

Reliable but Not Inerrant. Kahler did reject verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture (*see BIBLE, EVIDENCE OF*), which he called an “authoritarian faith” (Kahler, 72). He derided the idea that only the inerrancy of Scripture regarding every incidental matter could guarantee its trustworthiness about the central point. He believed we should “approach the Bible without detailed theories about its nature and origin.” The Gospel tradition was “inherently fallible” and the Bible as a book “contains” God’s revelation (Kahler, 91, 106, 112–14).

Nevertheless he maintained that the Bible is the only fully sufficient means of coming to the “safe harbor” of faith in the living Christ. For “the more converse a person has with the Bible itself, the more he finds that the drawing power of the Savior merges with the authority of the Bible” (ibid., 76). He added, “We have been hasty in following Lessing’s counsel to read the Bible as we read other books” (ibid., 123).

According to Kahler, the Bible presents a generally reliable picture of the historical Christ. “The biblical picture of Christ, so lifelike and unique beyond imagination, is not a poetic

idealization originating in the human mind. The reality of Christ himself has left its ineffaceable impress upon this picture” (ibid., 79–90, 95). This impression of Christ is once again found in the “big picture” of the Bible, not the minute one:

Nowhere in the Gospels do we detect a rigorous striving for accuracy of observation or for preservation of detail. . . . Nevertheless, from these fragmentary traditions, these half-understood recollections, these portrayals colored by the writers’ individual personalities, these heartfelt confessions, these sermons proclaiming him as Savior, there gazes upon us a vivid and coherent image of a Man, an image we never fail to recognize. In his incomparable deeds and life (including his resurrection appearances) this Man has engraved his image on the mind and memory of his followers with such sharp and deeply etched features that it could be neither obliterated nor distorted. [ibid., 141–42]

This is “a tangible human life, portrayed in a rich and concrete though brief and concise manner.” Once we get past the demand for an infallible biblical record, we can appreciate even the trustworthiness of the legends, so far as this is conceivable” (ibid.). This is not a fundamentalist’s view of Scripture, but it is far from the radical liberal who denies the basic historicity of the Gospels.

While Kahler upheld the general reliability of Scripture, he did not place his faith in the historical. Faith is generated in the heart by God. He wrote, “We want to make absolutely clear that ultimately we believe in Christ, not on account of any authority, but because he himself evokes such faith from us” (ibid., 87). The independent faith of the New Testament, was in Kahler’s mind expressed by the Samaritans in John 4:42 : “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (ibid., 76–77).

Evaluation. The question of the historicity and inspiration of Scripture is dealt with in detail in such articles as *ACTS, HISTORICITY OF ; BIBLE CRITICISM ; BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ; LUKE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN ; MIRACLE, MYTH AND , and NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF* . The attempt to separate fact and faith is treated in such articles as *FIDEISM ; FAITH AND REASON , and KANT, IMMANUEL* . The attempt to build a wall between faith and history is discussed in the articles *CHRIST OF FAITH VS. JESUS OF HISTORY* and *JESUS SEMINAR* .

While it is true that faith is ultimately not based on the historical, but on God who evokes it, this does not mean that the Christian faith is not focused in and supported by the historical (*see HOLY SPIRIT, ROLE IN APOLOGETICS*). Neither does it mean that the revelation from God that evokes true faith is not mediated through the historical. God is the primary and remote cause, but the historical data about Christ is the secondary and mediate cause of the revelation that evokes faith.

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Kalam Cosmological Argument. The cosmological argument is the argument from creation to a Creator. It argues *a posteriori*, from effect to cause and is based on the principle of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF ; FIRST PRINCIPLES). This states that every event has a cause, or that every thing that begins has a cause.

The *kalam* (Arabic: "eternal") argument is a horizontal (linear) form of the cosmological argument. The universe is not eternal, so it must have had a Cause. That Cause must be considered God. This argument has a long and venerable history among such Islamic philosophers as Alfarabi , Al Ghazli, and Avicenna . Some scholastic philosophers also used it, especially Bonaventure. The argument, however, was opposed by Thomas Aquinas, who believed it philosophically possible (though biblically untrue) that God could have caused the universe from eternity.

Essence of the Argument. The basic outline of the *kalam* argument is:

1. Everything that had a beginning had a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning.
3. Therefore, the universe had a cause.

Scientific and philosophical lines of evidence are generally given in support of the crucial second premise. The scientific evidence is based heavily on the Second Law of Thermodynamics (*see* THERMODYNAMICS, LAWS OF), which affirms that the universe is running out of usable energy and, hence, cannot be eternal. Other supportive evidence is taken from big bang cosmology, including the expanding universe and the purported radiation echo of the original explosion—all of which are taken to support the idea of a beginning of the universe.

The philosophical argument for a beginning can be summarized:

1. If an infinite number of moments occurred before today, then today would never have come, since it is impossible to traverse an infinite number of moments.

2. But today has come.

3. Hence, there was a finite number of moments before today; the universe had a beginning.

Criticisms. Criticisms have been offered against the *kalam* argument. The most significant are included here, with responses by proponents of the argument (*see also* BIG BANG THEORY).

Eternal Eventless Universe. Some suggest that big bang only signals the first eruption in a previously eternal universe. That is, the universe had eternal quiescence before this first event. The big bang singularity only marks the transition from primal physical stuff. Hence, there is no need for a Creator to make something out of nothing.

No known natural laws could account for this violent eruption out of eternal quietude. Some theists assert that an eternally quiet universe is physically impossible, since it would have to exist at absolute zero, which is impossible. Matter at the beginning was anything but cold, being collapsed into a fireball with temperatures in excess of billions of degrees Kelvin. In a lump of matter frozen to absolute zero, no first event could occur. Finally, positing eternal primordial stuff does nothing to account for the incredible order that follows the moment of the big bang (*see* ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE). Only an intelligent Creator can account for this.

Rebounding Universe. Some scientists have suggested that the big bang may only be the most recent in an eternal process of expansion and collapse. There are several problems with this hypothesis. There is no real scientific evidence for this speculation. It contradicts the Second Law, which would demand that, even if the universe were expanding and contracting, it would still be running down, so that it would ultimately collapse anyway. Logically and mathematically, the evidence for the big bang suggests that originally there was no space, no time, and no matter. Hence, even if the universe were somehow going through expansion and contraction from this point on, at the beginning it came into existence from nothing. This would still call for an initial Creator.

Steady State Theory. Fred Hoyle devised the steady-state theory to avoid the need to posit a first cause. According to this hypothesis, hydrogen atoms are spontaneously coming into existence to keep the universe from running down. If so, then it would not need a beginning, since it is not running out of usable energy. There are, however, two serious problems with this speculation. First, there is no scientific evidence that hydrogen atoms are coming into existence. This has never been observed anywhere. Second, the belief that hydrogen atoms are coming into existence out of nothing is itself *ex nihilo* creation (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF). It does not explain what (or Who) is creating them. Indeed, it is contrary to the fundamental principle of science (and rational thought) that everything that comes to be had a cause.

No Need for a Cause. Some atheists argue that there is nothing incoherent about something coming into existence from nothing. They insist that the universe could come into existence "by nothing and from nothing" (Kenny, 66). Proponents of the *kalam* argument offer several points in response. First, this is contrary to the established principle of causality. It is contrary to the scientific enterprise, which seeks a causal explanation. It is counterintuitive to believe that things

just pop into existence. Many argue that the idea that nothing can cause something is logically incoherent, since “nothing” has no power to do anything—it does not even exist.

An Infinite Series. Some thinkers believe an infinite number of moments is possible, since in mathematics infinite series are possible. For example, an infinite number of points exists between the ends of my ruler (*see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR). In response to this objection, proponents of the *kalam* argument insist that there is a difference between a *mathematical* infinite series and an *actual* infinite series. Mathematical series are *abstract*, but actual series are *concrete*. In a concrete series it is impossible to have an infinite number, since no matter how long it is one more can always be added. But this would make it more than infinitely long, which is impossible. Further, that one can get an infinite number of abstract (dimensionless) points between the book ends on my desk does not mean one can get an infinite number of books (or even sheets of paper) between them, no matter how thin they are.

Others object that if God knows the future, which is endless, then he knows an infinite series of events. And if he knows it, then it must be possible no matter how contrary to our intuitions it may be. But defenders point out that the future is not an *actual* infinite series but only a *potential* one, there always being the possibility of one more event. Further, if an actual infinite series is impossible, then God cannot know it, since God cannot know the impossible, only the actual and the possible.

No Personal God. Some have objected that the *kalam* argument does not prove God is personal or intelligent. Hence, it is not helpful to Christian theism which believes in an intelligent Creator. In response, some theists argue that only a being with free choice could bring something from nothing. Also, few theists believe that the cosmological argument *alone* proves a theistic God. It must be combined with the teleological argument and/or moral argument to show that God is also intelligent and moral. Second, some proponents of the *kalam* argument offer arguments for the personality of the First Cause, apart from the teleological or moral arguments. Three have been suggested.

The argument from a First Cause can be stated:

1. The universe had a First Cause.
2. This First Cause’s act to create was either determined, undetermined, or self-determined.
3. But it cannot be determined, since there is nothing before the First Cause.
4. Neither can it be undetermined, since this is contrary to the principle of causality.
5. Hence, the act to create must have been self-determined.
6. But self-determined acts are free acts, for this is what is meant by a free act (*see* FREE WILL).

7. Therefore, the act by which the First Cause created the world must have been a free act of an intelligent, personal being.

The argument from the nature of intellectual causes can be stated:

1. An intelligent cause is characterized by effects which have ordered, regular effects.
2. According to the anthropic principle the universe was “fine tuned” or “pre-fitted” from the very moment of its big bang origin for the eventual emergence of human life. The most infinitesimal change of conditions in any way would have made life as we know it impossible.
3. Therefore, the First Cause must have been an intelligent cause.

The argument from the nature of natural causes states that natural causes have certain characteristics not present prior to the moment of the creation of the universe. The argument can be stated:

1. Natural causes have predetermined conditions.
2. But there were not predetermined conditions before the moment of the big bang origin of the space-time universe.
3. Therefore, the Cause was not a natural cause; it must have been a non-natural cause without predetermined conditions.
4. The only known cause which has these characteristics is a free cause.
5. Hence, the First Cause was a free cause.

Limits to the Argument. *The Argument and God’s Continued Existence.* Three objections have more validity than others. They do not invalidate what the *kalam* argument demonstrates, but they show its severe limitations. This argument cannot prove that any God now exists. Therefore, it cannot disprove deism. Further, its assumptions are unacceptable to a pantheist, so it is useless against pantheism.

The *kalam* argument as such does not prove that any God now exists or necessarily exists. It is an argument about how the universe *originated*, not how it is *sustained*. It shows that a First Cause was needed to explain how the universe *came into being*. This does not mean there is no way to rectify this inadequacy. One can argue that this First Cause must now exist, since the only kind of being that can cause a contingent being (i.e., one that can come to be) is a Necessary Being. A Necessary Being cannot come to be or cease to be. However, this borrows from the vertical cosmological argument to make up the lack in the horizontal cosmological argument. It might be easier just to begin with the vertical form.

The Argument and Deism. Since the *kalam* argument as such does not prove that God is necessary to sustain the here-and-now existence of the universe, it has deistic (*see* DEISM) tones. This does not mean that this argument denies the possibility of miracles, but it denies the ontological basis for God's immanence. A God who is not, as the horizontal cosmological argument shows he is, the here-and-now cause of the very existence of the universe, is deistically remote. The argument shows that God was needed to get the universe going, which is precisely what deists believe occurred. Again, this problem is not rectifiable unless one imports help from the vertical form of the cosmological argument, showing how a Necessary Being is necessary at all times to sustain all contingent beings at every moment of their existence.

The Argument and Pantheism. Neither does the *kalam* argument disprove pantheism. In fact, it begs the question with pantheism by assuming the reality of the finite world. No pantheist would grant the premises that a finite, space-time world really exists and is actually running down, or that time is real, involving actual discrete units that pass in succession. Hence, the *kalam* argument is not effective in combating pantheism. What value to theism is an argument that eliminates neither deism or pantheism? There appears to be no solution that does not involve appeal to the vertical form of the cosmological argument. The vertical form of the cosmological argument would appear to be necessary to sustain the *kalam* argument.

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Kant, Immanuel. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was born in Königsberg, East Prussia. He studied and later taught at Königsberg University. He never married, and lived a highly regulated life. Kant's major works were *General History of Nature and Theory of the Heavens* (1755) which propounds the nebular hypothesis; *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781); *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783); *Critique of Practical Reason* (1790); *Critique of Judgment* (1790); *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793); *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797).

Kant's Philosophical Agnosticism . Before Kant the two dominant European streams of thought were rationalism and *empiricism. The rationalists included René Descartes (1596–1650), Bene dict de Spinoza (1632–1677), and Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716). The empiricists were led by John Locke (1632–1704), George Berkeley (1685–1753), and David Hume (1711–1776). The rationalists stressed the *a priori* and the empiricists the *a posteriori* . Rationalists

believed in innate ideas, but empiricists insisted we are born a *tabula rasa* . Kant was trained in the rationalist tradition, but in his own words he was "awakened from his dogmatic slumbers" by the Scottish skeptic Hume.

The genius of Kant was in synthesizing these two divergent epistemologies (*see* EPISTEMOLOGY). The empiricists, he concluded, are right that we are born blank slates, with no innate ideas. The content of all knowledge comes *a posteriori* from experience. On the other hand, the rationalists correctly stress that there is an *a priori* dimension to knowledge. While the *content* of all knowledge comes through the senses, the *form* or *structure* is provided by the *a priori* forms of sensation and categories of the mind (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 173–75, 257–75).

The price of the Kantian synthesis was high: Lost in his model of the knowing process was the ability to know reality. If Kant was right, we know how we know, but we no longer really know. For if all knowledge is formed or structured by *a priori* categories, we can only know things as they appear *to us* , not as they are *in themselves* . We can know *phenomena* but not *noumena* . Thus, the net epistemological gain was the ultimate ontological loss. Reality or the thing-in-itself, including God, is forever beyond us. What is left for us is the thing-to-me, which is appearance but not reality. Thus, Kant's view ends in philosophical agnosticism.

Kant offered a second reason for his agnosticism, the antinomies of reason (*see* ANTINOMY). When categories of understanding are applied to reality, antinomies result. Two will illustrate the point. The antinomy about time states:

Thesis: The world must have had a beginning, otherwise an infinite number of moments passed by now. But this is impossible, since an infinite cannot be traversed.

Antithesis : But the world could not begin in time, otherwise there was time before time began which is impossible.

In the antinomy of causality:

Thesis: Not every cause has a cause, otherwise the series would never begin, which it has. So, there must be a first cause.

Antithesis: But the series cannot have a beginning, since everything has a cause. So, there cannot be a first cause.

Since reason, when applied to reality, ends in contradictions, one must be content to apply reason only to the *phenomenal* world, the world to me and not to the *noumenal* world, the world in itself.

Kant's View of God. Kant believed in God, but he insisted that God's existence cannot be proven (*see* GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR). All proofs for God are invalid. The cosmological argument and teleological argument are based on the ontological argument, which is invalid. Each depends on the concept of a Necessary Being. But statements about existence are not necessary. Necessity characterizes thought, not existence. A Necessary Being is not a self-clarifying concept. What is logically necessary is not actually necessary. Beside this, an infinite

regress is possible. And a *noumenal* (real) cause can't be derived from a phenomenal (appearance) effect.

The ontological argument leaves experience (when speaking of the highest possible cause) and soars into the realm of pure ideas. Further, existence is not a *predicate* (attribute) but only an *instance* of something. For example, the dollar in my mind has the same attributes as the one in my wallet. The only difference is that one exists and the other does not.

Kant did not believe the existence of God could be proven by theoretical reason, but did believe it was a necessary postulate of practical reason (see MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD). A summary of his reasoning in *Critique of Practical Reason* goes like this:

1. The greatest good for all persons is that they have happiness in harmony with duty.
2. All persons should strive for the greatest good.
3. What persons ought to do, they can do.
4. But persons are not able to realize the greatest good in this life unless there is a God.
5. Therefore, we must postulate a God and a future life in which the greatest good can be achieved.

Kant's Antisupernaturalism. Kant not only synthesized rationalism and empiricism but gave impetus to modern agnosticism and deism. His impact on the history of philosophy has been felt especially in epistemology and metaphysics. In one sense, Kant's view of miracles is far more helpful to naturalism than is Hume's. Hume's attack on supernaturalism is frontal, while Kant's is subterranean (see MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST). For Kant, miracles are not essential to true religion.

Morality and True Religion. Like Spinoza, Kant believed that morality is the heart of true religion, though their justifications for this conclusion differed from one another. According to Kant, theoretical reason can never reach God (see *Critique of Pure Reason*). God can only be known by practical reason (see *Critique of Practical Reason Alone*). In view of the fact that we cannot know that there is a God but must fulfill the moral imperative, we must live assuming there is a God.

Foreshadowing Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Kant claimed that practical or moral reason must determine what is essential to religion. This moral reason should be a guide to interpreting the Bible (see BIBLE CRITICISM). He even admitted that “frequently this interpretation may, in the light of the text (of the revelation), appear forced—it may often really be forced; and yet if the text can possibly support it, it must be preferred to a literal interpretation” (*Religion within the Limits*, 100–1). The Bible's moral teaching “cannot but convince him of its divine nature” (ibid., 104).

With morality as the rule for truth, miracles become an appropriate introduction to Christianity, but not strictly necessary for it. Moral religion must “in the end render superfluous the belief in miracles in general.” To believe that miracles can be helpful to morality is “senseless conceit” (ibid.).

Kant affirmed that the life of Christ may be “nothing but miracles,” but warned that in the use of these accounts “we do not make it a tenet of religion that the knowing, believing, and professing of them are themselves means whereby we can render ourselves well-pleasing to God” (ibid., 79–80). By this he implies that belief in miracles is not essential to Christian faith.

Naturalistic Biblical Criticism. The very nature of a miracle is unknown. “We cannot know anything at all about supernatural aid,” Kant wrote (ibid., 179). One thing of which we can be sure is that, if a miracle flatly contradicts morality, it cannot be of God. What father would kill a son who is, so far as he knows, perfectly innocent (ibid., 82)? Thus the moral law disqualifies the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22 . Kant carried this moral argument to the conclusion that miracles never happen. In a revealing passage, Kant argued:

Those whose judgment in these matters is so inclined that they suppose themselves to be helpless without miracles, believe that they soften the blow which reason suffers from them by holding that they happen but seldom. How seldom? Once in a hundred years? . . . Here we can determine nothing on the basis of knowledge of the object . . . but only on the basis of the maxims which are necessary for the use of our reason. Thus, miracles must be admitted as [occurring] daily (though indeed hidden under the guise of natural events) or else never. . . . Since the former alternative [that miracles occur daily] is not at all compatible with reason, nothing remains but to adopt the later maxim—for this principle remains ever a mere maxim for making judgments, not a theoretical assertion. [For example, with regard to the] admirable conservation of the species in the plant and animal kingdoms . . . no one, indeed, can claim to comprehend whether or not the direct influence of the Creator is required on each occasion. They are for us . . . nothing but natural effects and ought never to be adjudged otherwise. [ibid., 83–84]

One who lives by moral reason, then, “does not incorporate belief in miracles into his maxims (either of theoretical or practical reason), though, indeed, he does not impugn their possibility or reality” (ibid., 83). So, miracles may be possible, but it is never rational to believe in them, since reason is always based on universal laws.

In view of this moral naturalism, it is not surprising that Kant rejects the resurrection of Christ (see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). He wrote, “The more secret records, added as a sequel, of his resurrection and ascension . . . cannot be used in the interest of religion within the limits of reason alone without doing violence to their historical valuation” (ibid., 119).

Rather than looking at the historical evidence for Scripture, he summarily dismissed it as inauthentic because it was morally unessential. Again, a forced moral hermeneutic is preferable to the “literal” understanding. Why? Not because the historical facts support it. Rather, Kant's understanding of the moral law demands it. According to Kant, historical truth is determined a

priori by moral law, not *a posteriori* from the facts. In a moral hermeneutic, what was is understood through what ought to have been.

If the argument is sound, we should live as if miracles do not occur—even if some have. We should order our life by (practical) reason, even if it is contrary to fact. We should “reason” in practice that what is true is false.

Evaluation. This is an unreasonable use of reason, and its effects have devastated Western epistemology.

Philosophical Consequences. Philosophically, the post-Kantian world cannot know God or reality. Kant’s philosophy particularly contradicts Paul that God’s power and divine nature are clearly seen through nature (Rom. 1:20). Nor can Scripture tell what God is really like. Scriptures do not inform us of how God really is *in-himself*, but only the way he is *to us*. The Bible tells how God wants us to *think about him*. It merely presents God-talk which never really talks about God.

Theological Consequence. Kantian theology has followed this radical disjunction between what appears and what is. Accepting the gulf between appearance and reality, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) existentially proclaimed God to be “wholly other” and insisted that human reason played no part in the defense of the Gospel. Kierkegaard wrote, “If God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset, in beginning my proof, I will have presupposed it . . . otherwise I would not begin, readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if he did not exist” (*Philosophical Fragments*, 31–35).

Three of Kant’s views, if true, would destroy Christian faith. First, Kant is a philosophical agnostic (*see* AGNOSTICISM). Second, he held that no arguments for God’s existence are valid (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). Third, he denied the right to believe in miracles.

Both of Kant’s arguments for agnosticism are invalid. His antinomies fail in that one premise is false. There need not be time before time; there could be eternity. Theism does not hold to creation *in* time but to the creation *of* time with the world. Not everything needs a cause, only contingent (finite, temporal) beings. Hence a first, eternal, Necessary Being does not need a cause (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF).

The argument that we cannot know the real world is self-defeating. The very statement “We cannot know reality” is a statement that presupposes knowledge about reality. The attempt to undermine theistic proofs likewise fails, as is discussed in the article God, Objections to Proofs for.

Kant implies, but does not elaborate, a crucial premise (premise three below) in his argument against miracles, that reason operates according to universal laws. From his writings, the argument can be reconstructed:

1. We cannot know the real world (the world in itself) by theoretical reason.

2. Everything in our experience (the world to us) must be determined by practical reason.
3. Practical reason operates according to universal laws.
4. Miracles must occur either daily, seldom, or never.
5. But what occurs daily is not a miracle; it occurs according to natural laws.
6. And what occurs seldom is not determined by any law.
7. But everything must be determined by practical reason that operates on universal laws.
8. Therefore, miracles never occur.

In support of the crucial third premise, Kant wrote, “In the affairs of life, therefore, it is impossible for us to count on miracles or to take them into consideration at all in our use of reason (and reason must be used in every incident of life)” (*Religion within the Limits*, 82). Miracles are theoretically possible but practically impossible. If we live as if they occur, we overthrow practical reason and moral law, which are the essences of true religion. Therefore, admitting that miracles occur and living in their light is actually harmful to religion. Even if there are supernatural acts, we must live (and think) as if there are none.

Kant made a radical disjunction between the unknowable world of things as they are (the *noumena*) and the world of our experience (the *phenomena*). However, philosophers have noted two things about this agnosticism. First, Kant was inconsistent, since he sometimes wandered over into the *noumenal* (real) world to make statements about it. And in so doing he implied that the noumenal world *is* knowable. Second, one cannot consistently separate the two realms without some knowledge of both. A line cannot be drawn, unless one can see beyond it. To say, “I know that reality is unknowable” is to make a claim to know something about reality. Complete agnosticism is self-defeating.

Like other naturalists, Kant begs the question by laying down a uniformitarian rule, some interpretive framework by which the naturalist demands a uniformitarian understanding of the world. For Spinoza, the rule is rational, for Hume, it is empirical, for Anthony Flew, it is methodological, and for Kant, it is moral. Kant regulates all of life by a universal moral law (practical reason). Since he allows no exceptions to a law, there are no exceptions to the rule: “Live as if there are no miracles.”

But this begs the question. Why should one assume there are no exceptions to any laws? And why should we assume that everything comes under some law? Maybe there are singularities, such as the origin of the world or the history of the earth, that defy classification (*see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF). Kant himself originated the nebular hypothesis about a scientific singularity at the beginning of our solar system.

Science now knows more, and the model changed. Natural law is now thought of as general and statistical, but not necessarily universal and without exceptions. Immanuel Kant believed, as

did others of his day, that Newton's law of gravitation was universally true, with no exceptions. If Kant is wrong in his view of scientific law—insisting that every event be subsumed under some natural law, then his moral objection to miracles fails.

Hermeneutical Consequences. According to post-Kantian fideism, the Bible is not an adaptation to human *finitude*; it is an accommodation to human *error*. It does not contain anthropomorphisms, but myths. The task of hermeneutics is not to "lead forth the truth" (*exegesis*) of the text, but to extract the truth of the text from the error surrounding it. Objective truth is out of reach anyway, so the Bible student seeks subjective "truth." Thus, post-Kantian hermeneutics is locked out of real knowledge about God from Scripture or anywhere else.

Apologetic Consequences. With this scenario, apologetics can only be fideistic or presuppositional. It is no accident that there were no presuppositionalists (*see* PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS) before Kant and fewer nonpresuppositionalists after him (*see* CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS). Those who accept Kant's conclusions are forced to forsake reason for mere faith (*see* FAITH AND REASON). They can no longer fulfill the biblical imperative to "give a reason of the hope that is within them." Karl Barth 's neo-orthodoxy denied even Emil Brunner's limited contention that there is a capacity to receive the revelation of God. Barth forbid natural theology and would not allow even for analogy of God in creation. In Kierkegaard and Barth, modern Christian fideism was born, proclamation but no verification of truth claims.

Evangelistic Consequences. When Christianity is reduced to declaration without defense, its mission is seriously hampered. Among the diverse views of the intellectual marketplace, it is necessary to both declare Christ and to defend the declaration. God who created human reason in his image and who invites us to reason with him (Isa. 1:18) demands the sacrifice of sin, not reason, as a condition for entering the kingdom. Unlike Kantian agnosticism, Kierkegaardian existentialism, or pantheistic mysticism, Christianity is not a "leap before you look." Rather, it bids all to look before they leap. Augustine noted rightly that "no one indeed believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed." Hence, "it is necessary that everything which is believed should be believed after thought has led the way" (*On Predestination* 5).

Conclusion. Kant's attack on miracles is fundamental. He sees miracles as fundamentally unnecessary to true religion. To him, true religion is to live in accord with a universal law of practical reason. However, Kant's agnosticism is self-defeating, he begs the question by assuming a moral uniformitarianism, and he assumes the nature of a scientific "law" to be a universal *sine qua non*, rather than a statistical generalization. For Kant to avoid the miraculous, he had to eliminate the miracle accounts from the basic documents of Christianity, without any historical reason for doing so.

Historic Christianity claims miracles to be a true and essential part of the religion's belief system (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:12–32). Christianity without miracles is Christianity without Christ, whose life was (and is still) characterized by miracles (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST).

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Kierkegaard, Søren. Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) was born in Copenhagen, the son of Michael Pederson, a poor Jutlander who amassed a fortune selling drapes, then sold his business in 1786 to study theology. Kierkegaard said he was reared with severity and piety by a melancholy old man. His mother and five of his six brothers died when he was young, the result, it was said, of a curse on the family. He referred to the deaths in the title of his first book, *From Papers of One Still Living*. He was of high intellect, but lazy, and he loved the theater, especially Mozart. A spine deformity may have colored his view of life. Hans Christian Andersen portrayed the frequently drunken young Kierkegaard as a principal character in his novel, *Shoes of Fortune*. Converted to Christianity and reconciled with his father in 1838, he studied from 1831 to 1841 before receiving a master's degree in philosophy. He became engaged to Regina Olsen after graduation, but decided not to marry.

Writings. Kierkegaard's amazing literary output began when he was twenty-one years old in 1834 and continued to 1855. His works can be categorized:

Starting with *From the Papers of One Still Living*, the writer produced many aesthetic and philosophical essays and books. These works include the discourses "The Expectation of Faith," "Every Good and Perfect Gift is from Above," "Love Shall Cover a Multitude of Sins," "Strengthened in the Inner Man," "The Lord Gave and the Lord Hath Taken Away," "To

Acquire One's Soul in Patience," "To Preserve One's Soul in Patience," "Patience in Expectation," "The Thorn in the Flesh," "Against Cowardice," "The Righteous Man Strives in Prayer with God and Conquers—in that God Conquers," "A Confessional Service," "On the Occasion of a Wedding," and "At the Side of a Grave."

His books in aesthetics include *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Johannes Climacus or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*, *Philosophical Fragments*, *Prefaces*, *Repetition*, *Stages on Life's Way*, *The Concept of Dread*, and *The Concept of Irony*.

The explicitly religious writings of Kierkegaard include *Armed Neutrality*, *Attack upon "Christendom," Judge for Yourself*, *On Authority and Revelation: The Book of Adler*, *On the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle*, *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, *Reply to Theophilus Nicolaus (Faith and Paradox)*, *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, *The Dialectic of Ethical and Ethico-Religious Communication*, *The Gospel of Suffering*, *The High Priest—The Publican—The Woman that Was a Sinner*, *The Individual*, *The Lilies of the Field*; *The Point of View*, *The Present Age*, *The Sickness unto Death*, *The Unchangeable God*, *Training in Christianity*, *What Christ's Judgment Is about Official Christianity*, and *Works of Love*.

Other works that fit no single category include: *Meditations from Kierkegaard*, *Newspaper Articles*, *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, and *The Prayers of Kierkegaard*.

Basic Beliefs. Theologically Kierkegaard was orthodox. He wrote that he was not out to change the doctrines taught in the church but to insist that something be done with them (*Journals and Papers*, 6:362). He believed in the inspiration of Scripture (see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR), the *virgin birth*, miracles, the substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the final judgment (see HELL). In "Thoughts Which Wound from Behind," he is aghast that Christendom has replaced the resurrection with platonic immortality.

Three Life Stages, One Eternal. Kierkegaard's overall beliefs are expressed in his three stages of life: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. His entire purpose is to get one from the aesthetic life of pleasure to the religious life of commitment by way of the moral life of duty. In *My Point of View for My Work as an Author*, he wrote, "I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem of becoming a Christian, with a direct or indirect polemic against the illusion that in such a land as ours all are Christians of a sort" (*ibid.*, 5–6).

Some contrasts are helpful to summarize these three levels:

The Aesthetic Stage	The Ethical Stage	The Religious Stage
Feeling	Deciding	Existing
Self-centered	Law-centered	God-centered
Routines of Life	Rules for Life	Revelation to Life

Centered in Present	Centered in Life/Time	Centered in Eternity
Individual Is Spectator	Individual Is Participant	
Live by Personal Whims	Live by Universal Norms	
Life of Deliberation	Life of Decision	
Life of Intellect Immediate Interests	Life of Will Ultimate Concerns	
	Respect of Moral Law	Response to Moral Law Giver
	The Universal	The Individual
	Propositions about God	Person of God
	Objective Truth	Subjective Truth
	Essential Realm	Existential Realm

Kierkegaard describes the conflict between the aesthetic and ethical spheres in his work *Either/Or* (1843), an attack on the dialectical thinking of G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831). Kierkegaard believed that passion is the culmination of existence. There is no real value in either the objective storing of knowledge, nor the blissful, mystical intuition of it. Life is not found in neutral facts nor blissful insights but in responsible choices.

Volume 1 is a dramatic presentation of the aesthetic life by a sophisticate who sees the inevitable pathos of pleasure. In this hedonism, one's own reflective experience is the object of pleasure. The refined esthete is morally indifferent, rather than defiant. The aesthetic experience is one of endless possibility, never present reality. The author despairs of ever becoming a true self and merely tinkers with his environs. He chooses, not between good or evil, but between choosing and not choosing. The ultimate for the aesthetic life is commitment to despair. The esthete has immediate interests but no ultimate concern.

Volume 2 presents the other pole—moral responsibility. A meaningful life is impossible apart from moral effort. To be ethical means to be ruled by the eternal; to be aesthetic is to be ruled by the temporal. Ethical and aesthetic are qualitatively distinct but naturally related in that the former is a prior condition to the latter. The ethical means accepting responsibilities under the sovereignty of God. Hence, self-realization is not mere self-creation but integration of the eternal and the temporal.

In this Kierkegaardian Ecclesiastes, the basic choice of the aesthetic lifestyle is ultimately to merge good and evil, while the ethical lifestyle will inevitably choose good. This is reminiscent of the Augustine maxim: "Love God and do what you will." Kierkegaard is chiefly concerned with how one lives (passion), rather than what one does (content). But the ethical person also

ends in despair of finding meaning. This moves the reader toward the third stage, the religious. The ethical life leads to a failure to reach one's ideals. That leads to repentance, a precondition of faith.

Kierkegaard introduces God as the Moral Law-Giver. Ethical repentance ends in sorrow in response to one's failure. That in itself does not lead to redemption. Ethics leads to the law, with its failure, not to the Law-Giver.

This key work prepares for the religious stage without entering it. The law ends self-reliance, but it does not itself bring God-reliance. The individual in the end arrives at an "either/or"—either the religious or despair.

Kierkegaard hoped his aesthetic writings would provoke people to want to choose the religious as a way of finding eternal meaning. He wrote several "edifying discourses" to provide the answer to the despair of the aesthetic and ethical stages. Unfortunately, he found that people preferred entertainment to edification. In "Expectation of Faith," a response to the aesthetic stage, he affirmed that solace is found only in the eternal. It is a guiding star to a sailor faced with the monotonous repetition of the waves. The tedium of the temporal is overcome only by the tranquillity of the transcendent. Faith is a passion for, and response to, the eternal. Even doubt can be an instrument that helps awaken the eternal God.

In "Every Good and Perfect Gift," a response to the life of ethical duty, Kierkegaard shows how God uses the moral gloom for our good. Even denied prayer is not unjust. The one praying is changed for better, even if the answer is for worse. Even tragedies can be triumphs if received with thanksgiving. Every personal tragedy is somehow redeemed by God's sovereignty. Suffering is beneficial in destroying self-will.

The Religious vs. the Ethical. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard reveals how the ethical is transcended by the religious. Abraham is devoted to God's law, which forbids killing. Nevertheless, God tells him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Unable to explain or justify his action, Abraham suspended the ethical and made a "leap of faith" to the religious. In so doing, he dethroned the ethical without destroying it.

Kierkegaard believed religious faith to be personal, something we are. We must live it, not just know it. Spiritual truth cannot be merely acknowledged; it should be appropriated by commitment.

In *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*, a further distinction is made within the religious stage. Religion A is natural religion, while religion B is supernatural. The first is religiosity; the second is Christianity. Religion A is rational, but Religion B is paradoxical. The first focuses only in a general need; the latter is prompted by a special need for Christ.

In *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard relates faith and reason. The book is philosophical and objective. Christianity is surveyed as to its content (what), as opposed to *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*, which stresses Christianity as an existential way of life (how). This attack on human-centered philosophy profoundly influenced Karl Barth. Human beings see God

as a perplexing Unknown. God must initiate communication. Two questions are raised: First, is it possible to base eternal happiness on historical knowledge? This harkens back to Gotthold Lessing (1729–1781) and his "ditch." Second, how can the transcendent God communicate with us?

Kierkegaard uses the parable of a king who becomes a beggar to win the love of a lowly maiden to argue that one cannot get the eternal out of the purely historical, nor the spiritual out of the rational. Original sin is the elemental human fact (see *Concept of Dread*). Humanity can neither know nor find the truth unless God puts them in it through revelation. This revelation, a miraculous self-authenticating disclosure, is not part of a rational system.

Reason and Revelation. Kierkegaard compared Socrates and Christ to get at the difference between revelation and reason:

Socrates's Wisdom	Christ's Revelation
Backward recollection	Forward expectation
Truth aroused within	Truth given from without
Truth immanent	Truth transcendent
Truth rational	Truth paradoxical
Truth comes from wise man	Truth comes from God-Man

Christian truths are neither analytic (self-evident) nor synthetic, because even if factually correct, human knowledge lacks the certainty held in Christian claims. Christian claims are paradoxical and can be accepted only by a leap of faith. There is a real transcendent God, who can only be chosen in his self-revelation. This God is meaningful and real, but paradoxical. He is the unknown limit to knowing, and he magnetically draws reason and causes passionate collision with humanity within the paradox. Reason cannot penetrate God, nor can it avoid him. The very zeal of the positivists to eliminate God shows their preoccupation with him. The supreme paradox of all thought is its attempt to discover something that thought cannot think.

Proofs and Pointers. God is unknown to us, even in Christ. God indicates his presence only by "signs" (pointers). The paradoxical revelation of the unknown is not knowable by reason. Human response must be a leap of faith, which is given by God but not forced on us; we can accept faith or choose to live rationally (see FIDEISM). Faith in God cannot be either rationally or empirically grounded. Rationally we cannot even imagine how God is like or unlike himself. The most we can do is to project familiar qualities in the direction of the transcendent that never reach him. We cannot argue from the works of nature to God, for these either assume God or lead to doubt.

Those who ask for proofs for God ignore God (see GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). For one already possesses what he wonders about (see "On the Occasion of a Confessional Service in *Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life*"). Even if we could prove God's being (*in himself*) it would be irrelevant to us. It is God's existence or relatedness to us that is of religious significance. The Gospel is presented only as an existential choice, not for rational reflection (

Postscripts, 485; *Works of Love*, 74). God is not irrational. God is suprarational, which transcends finite rationality. The real absurdity in the human situation is that people must act as though certain, even though they have no reason for certainty.

Faith and the Irrational. Concluding Unscientific Postscripts adds that objective reason can never find existential truth. Proofs can neither establish nor overthrow Christianity. To try to prove God is as shameful an insult as to ignore him. To reduce Christianity to objective probability would be to make it a treasure one could carelessly possess, like money in the bank.

Faith in religious facts, such as the incarnation or the authority of Scripture, is not true faith. True faith is the gift of God and unattainable by effort. The incarnation (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF) and Bible are objective points of reference, but they are not reasons. True faith is a leap to God's revelation that does not rest on objectively rational or empirical evidence. Reason, however, plays the negative role of helping us distinguish nonsense from paradox. The Christian is prevented by reason from believing sheer nonsense (*Postscripts*, 504). He tells the parable of an insane man who wants to prove that he is sane. He bounces a ball, saying, "Bang, the earth is round." He points out that what the man said was true, but he nevertheless fails to prove he is sane. How he says it shows that he is not rightly related to the truth (*ibid.*, 174).

Volitional and Rational Knowledge of God. Sin, not our mental inability, makes God seem an absolute paradox. This absolute paradox becomes absurd in the cross, the offense offered by the Gospel. The human task, therefore, is not to intellectually comprehend God but to existentially submit to him in sacrificial love. The paradox is not theoretical, but volitional. It is not metaphysical but axiological. God is folly to our mind and an offense to our heart. The objective paradox of God in Christ is to be answered by a paradoxical response of faith and love.

Scripture. Kierkegaard believed the Bible to be the inspired Word of God (*see* REVELATION, SPECIAL). He wrote, "To be alone with the Holy Scriptures! I dare not! When I turn up a passage in it, whatever comes to hand—it catches me instantly, it questions me (indeed it is as if it were God Himself that questioned me, 'Hast thou done what thou readest there?' "). He even calls it "God's Word," adding, "My hearer, how highly dost thou esteem *God's Word*" (*Self-Examination*, 51). Kierkegaard even believed the canon to be closed and that God is giving no new revelation. He severely criticized someone who claimed they had received new revelation (*see* BIBLE, CANONICITY OF).

On the other hand, Kierkegaard did not believe it necessary or important to defend the inerrancy of Scripture. This is evident in his views on the eternal and temporal, as well as his comments on biblical criticism .

The eternal and the temporal. How can eternal salvation depend on historical (and thereby uncertain) documents? How can the historical give nonhistorical knowledge? (*see* CHRIST OF FAITH VS. JESUS OF HISTORY). Kierkegaard's answer is that, insofar as the Bible gives empirical data, it is an insufficient ground for religious belief. Only Spirit-inspired faith finds the eternal God in the temporal Christ (*see* HOLY SPIRIT, ROLE IN APOLOGETICS). The biblical writers do not primarily certify the historicity of Christ's deity (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF); rather they testify to the deity of Christ in history. Hence biblical criticism is irrelevant. The important thing is not

the historicity of Christ but his contemporaneity as a person who confronts people today by faith in the offense of the Gospel. The Jesus of history is a necessary presupposition, but history does not prove his messiahship. The only proof of his messiahship is our discipleship.

Historicity and contemporaneity. If the eternal comes as an event in history, how is it equally available to all generations? The answer is that faith does not depend on happenstance, or being in the street when Jesus walked by. This would be mere physical contemporaneity. Faith is centered in a historical event, but it is not based on it. No superficial contemporaneity can occasion faith; only spiritual contemporaneity can. For "If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: 'We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble form of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died,' it would be more than enough" (*ibid.*, 130). So time is immaterial to faith. There is no second-hand discipleship.

Biblical criticism. To the Bible's apologist, Kierkegaard exhorts, "Whoever defends the Bible in the interest of faith must have made it clear to himself whether, if he succeeds beyond expectations, there could from all his labor ensure anything at all with respect to faith." To the critic he warns, "Whoever attacks the bible must also have sought a clear understanding of whether, if the attack succeeds beyond all measure, anything else would follow than the philological result." If Bible defenders achieve their wildest dreams in proving what books belong to the canon, their authenticity, trustworthiness, and inspiration, so what? Has anyone who previously did not have faith been brought a step closer? Faith does not result simply from a scientific inquiry; it does not come directly at all. On the contrary, "in this objectivity one tends to lose that infinite personal interestedness in passion which is the condition of faith" (*Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*, 29–30). But what if the Bible's opponents have proven all they allege about the Bible, does that abolish Christianity? By no means. If the believer "had assumed it by virtue of any proof, he would have been on the verge of giving up his faith." Faith does not need the proof, he said. Faith, in fact, regards proof as its enemy (*ibid.*, 31).

Elsewhere Kierkegaard affirms that, in order to make room for faith, men and women must be freed from the shackles of historical necessity. History is not an unfolding necessity, as Hegel said, but a free response to challenge and confrontation. Freedom escapes the net of scientific explanation.

Natural Theology Rejected. Natural religion is good, but it is not Christian, because it lacks transcendent disclosure. It supplements Christianity but is pathetic without Christianity to fulfill it. It arises by a collision of reason with the unknown (a concept developed in Rudolph Otto's *Numinous*), but it never goes beyond the collision. A human being is a god-maker who deifies whatever is overwhelming. But deep in the heart of natural piety lurks a caprice that knows it has produced the deity and that the deity is a fantasy. Hence, natural religion veers either to polytheism, which collects all its fantasies, or to pantheism, which is an incongruous merger of them. So Kierkegaard concludes that the nearest reason that brings God is still the farthest from us he ever is.

Kierkegaard adds an interesting observation on comparative religion. Buddhism, he says, seeks eternal outside of time—by meditation. Socrates sought eternal before time—by recollection. But Christianity seeks eternal in time—by revelation.

Evaluation. Although Kierkegaard can be taken to be a mild evidentialist with respect to objective, historical truths, when it comes to religious truth he is almost a classic example of a fideist. He, and Karl Barth following him, are fountain heads of the Christian attack on a rational and evidential approach to Christianity in the modern world. Nonetheless, there are many values in Kierkegaardian thought, even for Christian apologetics.

Positive Contributions. Kierkegaard can be commended for his belief in the fundamentals of Christian faith. He stressed a personal encounter with authentic Christianity, the importance of individual free will vs. behavioral determinism, and a return to New Testament faith. He emphasized God's unchangeability, transcendence, and grace and human depravity. He offered creative insights into many Bible passages.

A corrective to rationalism. Some rationalists, such as Rene Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, and Christian Wolfe, stressed an extreme rational approach to God. They underemphasized the role of faith and personal encounter in a genuine relationship with God. They overstated their arguments for God's existence (see GOD, EVIDENCE FOR), claiming they were mathematically certain. Kierkegaard's attack on rationalism and stress on a personal encounter with the living God is a helpful corrective to sterile rationalism.

The classic distinction between reason and the truths of faith (see FAITH AND REASON) is sometimes forgotten in modern rational apologetics. There are truths that, while not going against reason, go beyond reason (see MYSTERY). Kierkegaard saw this clearly.

The real basis for belief. Some classical apologists (see CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS) and evidential apologists (see APOLOGETICS, TYPES OF) tend to forget that faith is not based in evidence or reason about God but in God himself. Our belief is supported by evidence. Kierkegaard emphasized this point to a fault.

Helpful preevangelism. Few have described the despair of the aesthetic life so clearly as did Kierkegaard. *Either/Or* gives an unparalleled view of the futility of life apart from God. This can be cast into an implied argument from religious need (see GOD, NEED FOR).

The historical and the eternal. Kierkegaard is correct in observing that there is more to a miracle than the mere historical dimensions, and the historical is insufficient to bring one into contact with the living God (see MIRACLES, MYTH AND). Overemphasis by historical apologists can be misconstrued to imply that one can reach God via the historical evidence alone. Pointed reminders of the gulf between the historical and the eternal are well made. He is correct in noting that, even if one had perfect historical records, that information would not in itself bring one into contact with God.

Difficulties. Fideism. As other fideists, Kierkegaard offers self-defeating reasons for fideism, which claims that one cannot offer reasons for matters of faith. More on this point is discussed in the article FIDEISM.

Separating fact and value. Following Immanuel Kant, Kierkegaard radically separates fact and value, is and ought. This gave impetus to the separation of the Jesus of History from the Christ of Faith (see CHRIST OF FAITH VS. JESUS OF HISTORY; JESUS SEMINAR; MIRACLES, MYTH AND). While the historical as such does not bring one into contact with the eternal, neither can the eternal be divorced from real history. While Kierkegaard does not deny the historical reality of miracles, he downplays the importance of that dimension. Miracles may be more than historical, but they are not less. By denying the importance of the historical, he undermines the authenticity of the New Testament and, with it, New Testament Christianity. The shift in emphasis from fact to value leads to the denial of fact and its support for faith.

Evidential support for faith. While Kierkegaard is correct that faith is based not in fact but in God, he is wrong in assuming that there is no rational and evidential support for faith. Of course, God is the basis of faith in God, but this does not mean we have no accompanying rational or evidential support for belief. Kierkegaard goes too far when he claims, "The miracle can prove nothing; for if you do not believe that he is what he says he is, you deny the miracle. A miracle can make one attentive" (*Training in Christianity*, 99).

Belief in and belief that. There is no evidence for belief *in* God. This is strictly a matter of faith. Nonetheless, there is evidence for believing *that* there is a God. Kierkegaard fails to stress the importance of having evidence that God exists. No rational person would place faith in an elevator to go to the ninth floor without evidence that the elevator could do this. Likewise, no rational person should trust in God unless it is reasonable to believe that there is a God who is trustworthy.

The role of theistic arguments. Kierkegaard offers no disproofs of arguments for God as did Kant (see GOD, OBJECTIONS TO PROOFS FOR). He offers only a kind of existential complaint against theistic arguments, that they are an offense to God. But why should the God of reason be offended when we use reason. Reason is part of the very thing that makes us like him (Gen. 1:27).

A wholly other God. The concept of God as "wholly Other" is a form of agnosticism. Like Kant's *noumenal* realm (the thing-in-itself), God can never be known. We can know only *that* he is, but not *what* he is. But it is impossible to know pure "thatness." We must know something about *what* something is or we cannot know *that* it is. Even a strange gadget we have never seen before is not "wholly other." We may not know its purpose, but we can know its size, shape, and color. The very affirmation that we know nothing about God is a claim to know something about him; hence it is self-defeating. Purely negative knowledge about something is impossible. The claim that God is not "this" implies that we know the "this." So, the view of religious language as mere pointers to God that do not really describe him leaves us in total self-defeating ignorance.

Suspension of the ethical. In his suspension of the ethical for the religious, Kierkegaard paved the way for situation ethics. Even though he believed strongly in God's moral laws, on the highest level of duty—his relation to God—there is no way to distinguish right from wrong. The existential encounter with God places one beyond rational and ethical realms. Regardless of the rational and ethical context in which one begins, the suspension of the ethical for the religious leaves one without any real guide on the highest level for right and wrong.

Subjectivity of truth. Kierkegaard did not claim that truth is subjective. He said, "Truth is subjectivity." And while he did not deny objective truth (*see* TRUTH, NATURE OF) in science or history, he did deny that religious truth is objective or testable. Not only does this leave us with a mere subjective test for religious truth, but it confuses the objective nature of religious truth with the subjective condition of receiving it. Certainly one should apply truths of Christianity to life subjectively, but this does not mean truths should be defined as subjectivity. All truth objectively corresponds to the state of affairs being described.

Minimizing the historically necessarily. When Kierkegaard spoke of the mere belief in a man named Jesus, in whom people believed God dwelt as the minimal historical facts necessary for the Christian faith, he invited the radical demythologizing of Bultmann . It flies in the face of the New Testament claim that the fact of the bodily resurrection is absolutely necessary to Christianity. As the apostle Paul declared, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17 ; cf. Rom. 10:9).

Personal and propositional revelation. Though he believed in the inspiration of Scripture, Kierkegaard's stress on the personal nature of religious truth and the need for an existential encounter with God tilted the axiological scales against propositional revelation. It was not only downplayed, but it was separated from what is really important, personal revelation. This led to the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, which denied the historic, orthodox view that revelation is propositional.

There is no need for such a disjunction. Propositional revelation can be very personal, as anyone who has ever written a love letter knows. God's love letter, the Bible, is written in propositions, but it conveys a very personal message. Those who read it and respond enter into a very personal relation to God.

The terms leap, absurd, and paradox. Kierkegaard was not an irrationalist, as some have claimed, but his use of terms make him sound like one. *Absurd* and *paradox* have generally been reserved, from Zeno through Kant, to mean a logical contradiction (*see* FIRST PRINCIPLES ; LOGIC). They are, at best, an unfortunate choice of terms and are generally misleading. Kierkegaard has been widely misunderstood, partly because he used them. Likewise, to speak of a "leap" of faith sounds irrational, as even Kierkegaard seemed later to recognize (*see Journals* , 581). Such extreme words to describe the mystery of what does not go against reason, but merely beyond it, only invite misunderstanding.

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Krishna. See HINDUISM, VEDANTA ; RESURRECTION CLAIMS IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS ; WORLD RELIGIONS, CHRISTIANITY AND .

Kushner, Harold . Harold Kushner is a late-twentieth-century American Jewish rabbi whose popular version of finite godism is expressed in his best-selling books, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* and *When All You've Wanted Isn't Enough* . Kushner challenges Christianity at several major points, particularly in his rejection of miracles and arguments for a finite God (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST).

A Limited God. According to Kushner there is one God who is limited in power and perfection. But "when we speak of one God, are we doing something more than taking a census of how many divine beings there are? Are we perhaps saying that God 'has it all together' . . . ?" (*When All You've Wanted*, 133). Further, "because He is One, He is all alone unless and until there are other people to love Him" (*ibid.*, 56). This God "cannot monopolize all the Power and leave none for us" (*ibid.*). Not only is God limited because of us, but he is limited because of his nature. As Kushner put it, "I recognize His limitations. He is limited in what He can do by the laws of nature and by the evolution of human nature and human moral freedom" (*When Bad Things Happen*, 134). We must realize "that even God has a hard time keeping chaos in check and limiting the damage that evil can do" (*ibid.*, 43).

Kushner views God's finitude as an asset to our lives, rather than a liability. For "if we can bring ourselves to acknowledge that there are some things God does not control, many good things become possible" (*ibid.*, 45). In fact, "God, who neither causes nor prevents tragedies, helps by inspiring people to help" (*ibid.*, 141). God cannot control the world and human beings, but he "is the divine power urging them to grow, to reach, to dare" (*ibid.*, 132).

God, for Kushner, is a God of love, rather than power (*When All You've Wanted*, 55). He is more kind than able (*ibid.*, 58). "God is the force that moves us to rise above selfishness and help our neighbors, even as he inspires them to transcend selfishness and help us" (*ibid.*, 183). As to our tragic circumstances, "God may not prevent the calamity, but He gives us the strength and the perseverance to overcome it" (*When Bad Things Happen*, 141). God cannot ward off our

misfortunes, but neither does he send them. “Our misfortunes are none of His doing, and so we can turn to Him for help” (ibid., 44). Even during the Jewish holocaust God “was with the victims, and not with the murderers, but . . . He does not control man’s choosing between good and evil” (ibid., 84).

Good Human Beings. Humanity is an evolved result of “God’s creation” (*When All You’ve Wanted*, 77). Each individual is made in “God’s image.” This is especially manifest in his ability to choose good and evil. Human beings are also rational beings. “When the opening pages of the Bible describe Adam as naming the animals, tribute is being paid to his unique ability to reason, to sort things into categories. Man alone can use his mind to make tools, . . . as well as to write books and symphonies” (ibid., 103, 104).

Humans not only have a mind and will but they have physical bodies that experience pain (ibid., 78). Nevertheless, the human body is good. For Kushner, “to view the human body and the whole natural world with disgust or mistrust is as much a heresy as to view it with unqualified reverence” (ibid., 83). God is good, and he also made mankind good. When the Bible describes Adam and Eve taking the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they did not fall downward; they “fell upward.” It was a moment of progress for the human race, not of catastrophe. It was a leap forward in the evolutionary process.

Kushner refers to the human mind as “the most indisputable proof of God’s hand in the evolutionary process” (ibid., 110). Elsewhere he writes of “what God had in mind when he arranged for human beings to evolve” (ibid., 135). So evolution is the means through which God expresses his creativity (*see* EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL). The human being is the highest product of that process—the creature most like God.

A Chaotic World. Even though the world is in the process of change, there are things about the world that even God cannot change. God cannot make fatal conditions less fatal or heal an illness (*When Bad Things Happen*, 110). “The laws of nature do not make exceptions for nice people. A bullet has no conscience; neither does a malignant tumor or an automobile gone out of control” (ibid., 58).

God’s hands are tied by the unfeeling laws of nature. Thus, we cannot ask God for a miracle . When highly unusual things do occur, “we would be well advised to bow our heads in thanks at the presence of a miracle, and not to think that our prayers, contributions or abstentions are what did it” (ibid.). Prayer does not put us in touch with a supernatural God. Rather, prayer puts “us in touch with other people, people who share the same concerns, values, dreams, and pains that we do” (ibid., 119).

This world is also irrational (*When All You’ve Wanted*, 111). There is no ultimate meaning in anything that happens (*When Bad Things Happen*, 136). There is no reason why some people suffer and not others. “These events do not reflect God’s choice. They happen at random, and randomness is another name for chaos, in those corners of the universe where God’s creative light has not yet penetrated”(ibid., 53).

Forgiving God for Evil. Evil is real (*When All You’ve Wanted*, 89). “To be alive is to feel pain, and to hide from pain is to make yourself less alive” (ibid.). The world is unjust, and we must adjust to it. Rather than blame God, we need to forgive God. In a poignant passage, the rabbi asks:

Are you capable of forgiving and loving God even when you have found out that He is not perfect, even when He has let you down and disappointed you by permitting bad luck and sickness and cruelty in His world, and permitting some of those things to happen to you? Can you learn to love and forgive Him despite His limitations . . . as you once learned to forgive and love your parents even though they were not as wise, as strong, or as perfect as you needed them to be? [*When Bad Things Happen*, 148]

The solution to the problem of evil (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF) is “to forgive God for not making a better world, to reach out to the people around us, and to go on living despite it all” (ibid., 147).

Maturity in Ethics. Kushner’s view of right and wrong is rooted in Jewish tradition, but blossoms in the sunlight of contemporary psychology. At times he speaks of God as Law Giver. “He commands us. He imposes on us a sense of moral obligation” (*When All You’ve Wanted*, 180). God “commands us. That’s what we’re here on earth for, to be in God’s service, to do God’s bidding” (*When Bad Things Happen*, 86). Obedience to God’s laws, however, is a lower-level ethical activity. Following psychologist Jean Piaget, Kushner believes obedience is not necessarily the highest virtue. In fact, “a religion that defines morality as obedience to its commands is appropriate to children and immature people, and may have been appropriate to humankind as a whole when civilization was immature.” Such a religion was appropriate for immature civilization, but unquestioning obedience makes perpetual children (*When All You’ve Wanted*, 127–28).

A higher level of ethical maturity is achieved by those who “understand that rules don’t come from ‘on high.’ Rules are made by people like themselves, tested and perfected over the course of time, and can be changed by people like themselves.” At this stage “being ‘good’ no longer means simply obeying rules. It now comes to mean sharing in the responsibility of evaluating and making rules which will be fair to all, so that we can all enjoy living in a fair and just society” (ibid., 123).

Hope for the Future. As to life after death, Rabbi Kushner is uncertain. Personal immortality is only a hope. “Neither I nor any living person can know anything about the reality of that hope” (*When Bad Things Happen*, 28). He does “believe that the part of us which is not physical, the part we call soul or personality, does not and cannot die.” But he adds quickly, “I am not capable of imagining what a soul without a body looks like. Will we be able to recognize disembodied souls as being the people we had known and loved?” (ibid.).

Kushner admits that belief in a world to come can help people endure the unfairness of this world. But it can excuse accepting injustice, instead of doing something about it (ibid., 29). We should live for the short run, a moment at a time. “We never solve the problem of living once and for all” (*When All You’ve Wanted*, 143). The important thing is to live in the now. Those who live in the present with integrity have no fear of dying (ibid., 155). “I have no fear of death

because I feel that I have lived. I have loved and have been loved” (ibid., 161). Most people are not afraid of dying but of living. They fear coming to death without ever having lived (ibid., 156).

We should not seek future rewards. “When you have learned how to live, life itself is the reward” (ibid., 152). Rabbi Kushner quotes approvingly the *Talmud* which says, “One hour in this world is better than all eternity in the World to Come” (ibid., 151). When we speak of God in heaven as our hope “we trivialize religion and make it harder for thoughtful people to take it seriously and find help there” (ibid., 179). Our real immortality is to have children and to plant things that others can enjoy after we are gone (ibid., 173).

Heaven and hell are on earth. Heaven “is having learned to do and enjoy the things that make us human, the things that only human beings can do.” By contrast, “the worst kind of hell I can imagine is not fire and brimstone . . . The worst hell is the realization that you could have been a real human being . . . and now it’s too late” (ibid., 157). God will not intervene someday to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. The real reward is that “he has made the human soul in such a way that only a life of goodness and honesty leaves us feeling spiritually healthy and human” (ibid., 183).

Evaluation. Positive Contributions. Even though his finite godism is false, his articulation of the view contains truths:

Acknowledgment of the problem of evil. Kushner has centered his thought in a crucial area—the problem of evil. In this regard he acknowledges the reality of evil, instead of opting for a pantheism that denies it. He is right that tornadoes have no conscience; they strike both good and bad people. They hit churches and houses of prostitution. Any adequate solution to the problem of natural evil must deal with this reality (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF). Kushner attempts to find this solution. He doesn’t relegate it to the realm of the ultimately inexplicable. Although theists do not agree with the solution (see below), nonetheless, we commend his attempt to find a solution.

Insights into the problem of suffering. Having experienced physical suffering, Kushner is not a detached observer; he is sensitive to the existential impact of suffering. His perspective is the difference between C. S. Lewis in his book, *The Problem of Pain* , when he was not experiencing it personally, and his later reflections in *A Grief Observed* , after his wife died from cancer.

Recognition of the problem in divine intervention. He also points to a problem some theists tend to overlook. Given the reality of the human condition, God cannot do everything. There are operational limits on divine intervention. God cannot violate the human freedom he gave to beings in his image. So, performing a miracle contrary to moral freedom is operationally impossible for God. Continually intervening would upset the very laws of nature that make both physical and moral life possible.

Weaknesses and Objections. Most of the objectionable aspects of Kushner’s thought are critiqued in other articles. They will be noted here with references.

First, finite godism is without foundation (*see* FINITE GODISM).

Second, Kushner’s concept of evil is inadequate (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF).

Third, Kushner’s denial of the supernatural is unfounded (*see* MIRACLE).

Fourth, his denial of immortality is contrary to the evidence (*see* IMMORTALITY). Without this denial his case crumbles, since it depends on the premise that wrongs of this life will not be rectified in the next life (see Geisler, *The Roots of Evil*, append. 3).

In spite of its popularity, Kushner’s form of finite godism, especially as it relates to evil, does not stand up to scrutiny. It has more emotional appeal than rational justification.

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